

Meeting on advancing local integration in Zambia

organized by World Vision Zambia, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies,
and UNHCR Zambia

17 June 2021, 9:00 am (Lusaka & Geneva time)

Introduction

In recent years, the adoption of the New York Declaration and the affirmation of the Global Compact on Refugees¹ shed new light on the objective of achieving durable solutions for refugees.

Local integration is one of the durable solutions along with voluntary repatriation and resettlement, which entails a protection-centered approach, including safeguards. The Global Compact on Refugees outlined that “*it is also important to support countries who elect to resolve a refugee situation locally. Local integration is a sovereign decision and an option to be exercised by States guided by their treaty obligations and human rights principles. A number of States have found it useful to move towards the local integration of refugees, including by providing durable legal status and naturalization, where appropriate, without prejudice to the specific situation of certain middle income and developing countries facing large-scale refugee situations*”².

At the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, the international community made a number of pledges on local integration. In particular, Member States have made significant pledges to promote local integration and local solutions for refugees and host communities.³ Among them was the Government of Zambia, a roll out country of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework that already has a number of lessons learned and a strategy on local integration.

Purpose of the note. This concept note outlines objectives, participants, provisional agenda, and guiding questions for the proposed panel discussion, planned on 17 June 2021, as a basis to further discussion with partners on refugees local integration.

Background

A total of 19,165 former Angolan refugees and 5,991 former Rwandan refugees are among some 97,000 people of concern to UNHCR in Zambia, a population that is predominantly Congolese (59,469), with a few Burundian (7,966) and Somali (3,899) refugees plus asylum seekers.

At the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, the Government of Zambia pledged “*to complete the local integration of former refugees from Angola and Rwanda. The Government is considering the possible use of other verifiable identity documents apart from national passports to obtain residence permits and to extend the validity of the temporary permits from 3 years to 10 years. An estimated three million US Dollars would be required to complete the issuance of the legal documentation*”.

¹ § 85, Global Compact on Refugees: « *one of the primary objectives of the Global Compact is to facilitate access to durable solutions*».

² § 97-99, Global Compact on Refugees.

³ In particular, “*more than a dozen States pledged to advance the local integration of refugees on their territory*”. See: Gillian D Triggs and Patrick C J Wall, ‘[The Makings of a Success’: The Global Compact on Refugees and the Inaugural Global Refugee Forum](#)’, International Journal of Refugee Law, Volume 32, Issue 2, June 2020, p.333 and note 303.

This pledge reflects the will of the Government of Zambia to achieve the local integration of former refugees initiated in 2002 under the Zambia Initiative then pursued under the Strategic Framework for the Local Integration of Former Refugees (2014-2016) launched in 2014 to achieve the legal and socioeconomic integration of former refugees into the Zambia society. In addition, the Government of Zambia, with UN support, has together developed a programme of Sustainable Resettlement (2017-2021) that began in January 2017 as a primary vehicle for shifting from a humanitarian to a long-term development approach to support the local integration of former refugees in Zambia. The initial period of the Local Integration Strategy has proven to be more complicated and lengthier than expected and the targets set were not achieved. Although various measures have been implemented, the Sustainable Resettlement has made slow progress due mainly to limited basic infrastructure and livelihood opportunities.

Former refugees from Angola

Angolan accessed asylum status in Zambia since early 60s following the war of independence from Portugal (1961–1975) and the civil war (1975-2002). Majority of Angolan refugees were either born or had lived in Zambia for more than four decades when the Cessation Clause was invoked in 2012. While many of them opted for voluntary repatriation some remained in Zambia and were subjected to the immigration laws. The criteria and procedures provide for Angolan former refugees who have continuously resided in Zambia for a prolonged period as well as their children (aged 7 years and above) to be eligible to apply for a resident permit. A holder of a resident permit is eligible to apply for citizenship after 10 years.

Between 2012 and 2020, about 3,000 passports have been issued to Angolan and 1,136 resident permits delivered. This is mainly due to the fact that the process to issue permits for former refugees is lengthy- the Government of Angola have to issue the applicant with a passport, before Zambia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs can award permits to those who meet the requirements- and has been delayed. In addition, as of 1 January 2021, the Government of Zambia revised upwards the permit fees. A resident permit now attracts a fee of approximately USD 750, previously USD 94.

The former refugees Angolan are far from achieving self-reliance due to prolonged dependency on assistance, limited rights, and limited access to income-generating activities. Also, the former refugees Angolan who have received their residence permits over the years failed, in some instances, to fully enjoy the rights and fulfil the duties associated to the said permits.

Former refugees from Rwanda

In the wake of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and the armed clashes in the northwest of the country in 1997 and 1998, thousands of Rwandans fled to Zambia where many have since remained beyond the cessation of their refugee status in 2013. In June 2015, the Government of Zambia offered local integration to the Rwandan former refugees under the same conditions as for the Angolan former refugees (the application requires a national passport for all as well as a Zambian Alien card, for those above the age of 16).

The first obstacle to Rwandan former refugees' successful integration has been their reluctance to accept Rwandan passports from their Government because of an alleged fear of persecution. The other obstacles included the cost to obtain Rwandan passport at the time it was US\$100, which was unaffordable to most refugees; the temporary permit as the name indicates is temporary and does not hold a long-term solution for former Rwandan refugees who have opted

to stay in the country; and the application criteria set by the Government of Rwanda were not encouraging and the procedure was deemed lengthy.

In December 2017, a Presidential decision was issued to lift the national passport requirement for Rwandan former refugees to enable them to apply for permits and remain legally in Zambia. This permit was temporary in nature with a validity period of three years (renewable), with all the rights attached to a residency permit as the ones issued to former Angolan refugees.

At the end of March 2021, the temporary permits held by former Rwandan refugees expired, despite the *laissez-faire* approach of the Government of Zambia, this will obviously put them at risk of arrest, imprisonment and a substantial fine. In the meantime, the Government of Zambia pledge to extend the validity of the temporary permits from 3 years to 10 years and issue permits without national passports are yet to be actualized. Additionally, the unit price for issuing or replacing a temporary permit is now approximately US\$ 904 per permit; before the increase, the unit price of a permit was about US\$ 250.

Consideration for next steps

The pursuit of definitive and durable solutions should, consider the over fifty years that the former Angolan refugees, and over 20 years the former Rwandan refugees have spent in Zambia as well as the resources invested and favour a massive regularization approach through downward revision of the high permit fees, waiver for passports and extension of temporary permits for Rwandans to 10 years or naturalization championed at the highest levels by the President and UNHCR High Commissioner with the support of donors (USA, Germany and Japan), UN agencies and national and international NGO's.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, durable solutions including local integration remained among the key priorities last year⁴ and for the upcoming months, especially in the lead-up to the High-Level Officials Meeting of 14-15 December 2021.

Objectives and expected outcomes

The objectives of this meeting will be to exchange on the way forward about local integration in Zambia, based on stakeholders' priorities, activities and capacities. Government representatives, NGOs, UNHCR and other stakeholders will be engaged to reflect on opportunities and requirements to build on the Zambia GRF pledge through e.g., developing synergies, concretizing outcomes, and generating momentum in Zambia as well as at the regional and global level.

Guiding questions:

- What are the challenges and opportunities in realizing local integration in Zambia?
- What are UNHCR's and NGOs' approaches to local integration and what can be their role in taking forward the Zambia GRF pledge on local integration?
- How to foster a whole-of-society and partnership approach in advancing local integration?
- How to promote critical policy processes and longer-term programming to address local integration?

⁴ UNHCR, [The role of the Global Compact on Refugees in the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic](#), May & July 2020

Selected references:

- [UNHCR Southern Africa Regional Update \(1-30 April 2021\)](#)
- [UNHCR Fact sheet Zambia August 2020](#)
- [UNHCR, 2019 Southern Africa pledges, November 2020](#)
- [UNHCR, Solutions Factsheet, Global Refugee Forum, 2019](#)
- [UNHCR summary, How can we make local solutions work for refugees and the communities in which they live?, Towards a Global Compact on Refugees, thematic 4, 14 November 2017](#)

Provisional Agenda:

1. Opening: Bringing more attention on local integration as a durable solution at all levels: why it is important and why now? Including perspectives on past and current efforts on local integration efforts & engagements in Zambia and an overview of 2019 GRF Local integration pledges and Zambia pledge.
2. Presentation on contributions to local integration in Zambia: existing work, projects, and initiatives.
3. Discussion: current challenges and gaps; support needed (technical, financial, material).
4. Conclusions and way forward.

Invitation will be sent to the following audience:

- The Government of Zambia.
- The Resident Coordinator, UNHCR, UNDP, IOM and NGOs.

Date:

Thursday 17 June, between 9:00 to 12:00 (Lusaka/Geneva time).

Registration & Platform:

Connection details will be provided to registered participants ahead of the meeting. Please RSVP by Tuesday 15 June CoB to: secretariat@icvanetwork.org and nsupila@unhcr.org
Registered participants are kindly ask you not to circulate the dial-in details, as they are distributed only to registered participants.

The meeting will be held fully online via *Microsoft Teams* online Platform.

Follow-up:

A summary of the meeting will be produced by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies and made available to participants in the weeks following the meeting.