About the study
This study was supported by the Local Engagement Refugee Research Network (LERRN) at Carleton University, and the Refugee-Led Research Hub (RLRH) at the University of Oxford. The report was prepared by Uwezo Ramazani, with support from Pauline Vidal (Research Facilitator, RLRH). It was published in November 2022.

About the Refugee-Led Research Series
The Refugee-Led Research Series publishes primary and secondary research that has been authored by individuals who have been affected by forced displacement. The Series comprises ‘Research Reports’ and ‘Working Papers’. We prioritise papers that apply ethical and rigorous research methods to capture the priorities of displaced communities. Through the Refugee-Led Research Series, we aim to provide evidence to stakeholders to advance policies and programmes that are responsive to refugee community needs.

About the RLRH
The Refugee-Led Research Hub (RLRH) is an initiative of the Refugee Studies Centre (RSC) at the University of Oxford. RLRH supports individuals with lived experience of displacement to become leaders in the field of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies. We do so by creating opportunities for researchers with displacement backgrounds to lead primary and secondary research studies, from start to finish. Our main research interests relate to 1) livelihoods and self-reliance; and 2) leadership and participation of displaced populations in humanitarian response and policy. RLRH also offers complementary academic programming to a global cohort of students who have been affected by displacement, supporting access to graduate degrees and professional development opportunities. The mission of RLRH is embodied in our leadership structure: the majority of our team have lived experience of displacement. Our offices are in Oxford and in Nairobi at the British Institute in Eastern Africa (BIEA).

About LERRN
LERRN is the Local Engagement Refugee Response Network. We are a team of researchers and practitioners committed to promoting protection and solutions with and for refugees. Our goal is to ensure that refugee research, policy, and practice are shaped by a more inclusive, equitable, and informed collective engagement of civil society. Through collaborative research, training, and knowledge-sharing, we aim to improve the functioning of the global refugee regime and ensure more timely protection and rights-based solutions for refugees.

Funders
The study is supported, in part, by the Open Society Foundations (OSF), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Robert Bosch Stiftung, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Impact Prize, and the IKEA Foundation.
About the author

**Uwezo Ramazani:** Uwezo is the lead researcher for the study in Tanzania. He is a former refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo and currently resides in Dar es Salaam. Prior to joining the team, he worked with Resilience Action International, an RLO operating in Kakuma. Uwezo holds an MA in Governance and Leadership from the Open University of Tanzania and an MA in Public Administration from Mzumbe University.

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Most of all, I am grateful to leaders, members, and volunteers of RLOs in Dar es Salaam and Nyarugusu who spent time with us during the study and shared their aspiration to build a more inclusive refugee response. I also thank community members and informants who participated in interviews in Tanzania. The study would not have been possible without them.

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### Acronyms

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AJAD</td>
<td>Association des Jeunes et des Adultes pour le Développement</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community-based organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCT</td>
<td>Communauté Congolaise de Tanzanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CELA</td>
<td>Center of Youth and Adult Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAFISOTA</td>
<td>DAFI Students Organization in Tanzania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGYF</td>
<td>Development Gait for Youth Future</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFT</td>
<td>École Francophone de Tanzanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EHI</td>
<td>Equipping Hope International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FASSA</td>
<td>Fighting Against Silliness School in Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBIEN</td>
<td>Institut Biblique International Evangelique de Nundu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDRC</td>
<td>International Development Research Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IETS</td>
<td>Improving English Training School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International non-governmental organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>International Rescue Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>LERRN</td>
<td>Local Engagement Refugee Research Network (Carleton University)</td>
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<tr>
<td>KII</td>
<td>Key informant interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCT</td>
<td>Malawian Community of Tanzania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHA</td>
<td>Ministry of Home Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSF</td>
<td>Open Society Foundations</td>
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<tr>
<td>RLO</td>
<td>Refugee-led organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>RLRH</td>
<td>Refugee-Led Research Hub (University of Oxford)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAT</td>
<td>Resilience Action Tanzania</td>
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<tr>
<td>RYEN</td>
<td>Refugee Youth Empowerment Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSC</td>
<td>Refugee Studies Centre (University of Oxford)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<tr>
<td>VSLA</td>
<td>Village Savings and Loans Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>WIDE</td>
<td>Women Education Development Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>WLAC</td>
<td>Women Legal Assistance Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>YADC</td>
<td>Youth Association for Development and Counselling</td>
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Executive Summary

This study was motivated by emerging evidence that refugee-led organisations (RLOs) in East Africa play a vital role in meeting community needs. As there was no available information about RLOs and the forms that they take in Tanzania prior to this study, the results fill an important knowledge gap by exploring the nature, scope, and practices of RLOs in Tanzania; the perceptions that communities and stakeholders have of RLOs and their impact; and the factors that condition RLOs’ responses and impact. This study was led by a person with a displacement background from the start to finish.

In Nyarugusu camp, many RLOs are small grassroots community-based groups that operate informally with no formal registration. Only two RLOs are considered large by the community members because they have permanent buildings, more than ten volunteers each working on a full-time basis, and operate freely. These are IBIEN, with 30 full-time volunteers, and Group MISA, with four permanent centres. In this report, RLOs without permanent premises and with fewer than five full-time volunteers are considered small. RLOs are either created by Congolese or Burundian refugees, and they mostly focus on English language training. Other activities include sexual and reproductive health, rehabilitation of houses, civic education, assistance to orphans and widows, soap-making, beading, and tailoring.

In Dar es Salaam, RLOs are also small. Former Congolese refugees register RLOs as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with the support of host community members who facilitate the registration process. Another RLO was registered and known by the government as an organisation formed by immigrants and foreigners from the Democratic Republic of the Congo living legally with resident permits. Nationality-based groups (Congolese and Malawian associations) focus on advocating for those living illegally in town to be given permits. Others focus on self-reliance.

Although there are a few exceptions, most RLOs were created between 2015 and 2020. In Nyarugusu, the creation of these organisations is partly influenced by refugees who were resettled to third countries of asylum (USA, Australia and across Europe).
In terms of gender, the team only identified one organisation led by a woman, located in Nyarugusu. Two other organisations, led by men, were found to support the empowerment of women in leadership positions.

Most RLO leaders are educated (in our sample, ten leaders have bachelor’s degrees, two have diplomas, and three have completed secondary education). All RLOs leaders in our sample are above 30 years of age.

In Nyarugusu, RLOs depend on member contributions, membership fees, income-generating activities, the diaspora, individual sponsors, and in-kind support from humanitarian organisations. In Dar es Salaam, all RLOs depend on member contributions and membership fees as the main source of funding.

RLOs do not have formal partnerships with external actors and there is no RLO network in Tanzania. There is some cooperation between RLOs, such as the sharing of information, premises, and material resources.

Refugees are motivated to create RLOs in order to fill gaps in service provision, become self-reliant, elevate personal status, apply skills as former aid workers, or create self-employment.

**Perceived impact of RLOs**

- In Nyarugusu, community members, the camp commandant, and humanitarian organisations that provide services are knowledgeable of RLOs and the types of activities they engage in. Community members who do not directly benefit from RLOs know of their activities but cannot name RLOs directly.

- In Dar es Salaam, only direct beneficiaries are knowledgeable of RLOs. Non-beneficiaries do not see any impact of RLOs on the well-being and safety of their community, arguing that those groups serve their members only.

- In Nyarugusu, community members consider the impact of RLOs to be positive in terms of education, particularly with regard to English language classes. As the camp-based education system follows the francophone Congolese curriculum, English language skills enable members to access higher education and opportunities within aid organisations. Community members also state that village savings and loan associations help beneficiaries start income-generating activities that empower them financially and in terms of skills.

- RLO activities have not yet influenced changes in humanitarian organisations’ policies and/or operations.

**Variations in impact**

- RLO impact is determined by many factors, namely access to diaspora networks, human resources and leadership, and the regulatory framework. For instance, RLO camp leaders network with fellow resettled refugees and obtain financial support. Conversely, government policies preventing RLOs from registering limit their fundraising efforts and hence the expansion of their activities.
• RLOs face many challenges, including lack of registration and few resources (e.g., qualified human resources, financial and physical resources). However, development partners want qualified leaders in terms of experience and education for fund management.

• RLOs claim the need for support from an institution to help them register, funds to increase their reach, and capacity building in terms of financial management, proposal development, and operations.

## Recommendations

• Donors should consider funding RLOs that have not yet registered through flexible cooperation arrangements, advocate for policy change at the government level, and make space for RLOs to take part in the humanitarian sector.

• The government should allow RLOs to register as CBOs or NGOs and continue to give them land to set up their offices.

• The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) should recognize the work of RLOs, implement policies developed at the regional level, and advocate for policy change at the government level.

• Aid organizations should involve RLOs in decision-making through equal-partner consortia, fund RLOs to provide meaningful peer-to-peer capacity building, promote the ideas of refugees, and combine partnerships with capacity building.

• RLOs should set up an RLO network to coordinate their advocacy efforts for registration and recognition.

The study is supported, in part, by the Open Society Foundations (OSF), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Robert Bosch Stiftung (RBS), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and the IKEA Foundation.
Introduction

Rationale and objectives

Emerging evidence suggests that refugee-led organisations (RLOs) in East Africa play a vital role in meeting community needs. RLOs increasingly took centre stage during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing protection and assistance to refugee communities while other humanitarian organisations struggled to respond effectively. Nevertheless, a preliminary literature review indicates there is no available information about RLOs and the forms they take in Tanzania.

This study seeks to fill these knowledge gaps in Tanzania by responding to the following research questions:

1. **Nature of the response**: What is the nature, scope, and practices of RLO activities in Tanzania?

2. **Perceived impact of the response**: How is the impact of RLO responses on displaced communities they serve perceived by diverse stakeholders (including regional actors, states, local authorities, humanitarian and development service providers, host communities, and refugees)?

3. **Factors that condition the response and impact of RLOs**: What are the common factors that determine the response and impact of RLOs? What factors explain the variations in response and impact of RLOs in Tanzania?

Research methods

To understand the nature and the changes brought about by RLOs in Tanzania, the study relies on the perceptions of RLO impact from a range of stakeholders, including the communities they serve and other members of the humanitarian system (including national and local authorities and traditional humanitarian and development service providers). The study uses a qualitative approach to triangulate different data sources and ensure that different perspectives are captured and analysed, over two phases.

Phase 1 of data collection

Phase 1 of the study consisted of mapping RLOs in the country through a desk review, an online search and 43 rapid phone-based interviews with refugees, community members, RLO representatives, community leaders, refugee supporting agencies, government representatives and academic experts. Preliminary mapping was critical to avoid overlooking smaller RLOs that may not have considerable resources, but still contribute to the well-being of their communities. As a result of the mapping, the team identified 42 RLOs in Nyarugusu refugee camp and Dar es Salaam. This included seven RLOs in Dar es Salaam (all self-help groups except for one medium-sized group) and 35 RLOs in Nyarugusu (including 33 self-help groups and two medium-sized groups).

Initially, the study was to be implemented in three sites: Dar es Salaam, Nyarugusu, and

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Nduta camps. During the mapping phase, respondents in Nduta were unable to provide the name of any RLOs. In Nduta, government policies prohibit refugees from starting their own initiatives; the Tanzanian government encourages Burundian refugees to voluntarily repatriate, therefore, allowing them to set up their own organisations may hinder their advocacy towards voluntary repatriation.

The team considered including the Katumba settlement in the study, which is the largest settlement of Burundian refugees in Tanzania with over 10,000 refugees. However, when the lead researcher visited the settlement, he interviewed ten residents, including the Community Development Officer and the Village Executive Officer, who both emphasised that there are no organisations set up by the refugees themselves. The lead researcher also spoke informally to several community members. The only groups he identified were village community banks, in which members meet to place small amounts of money into group savings and take out and repay micro-loans. While these may fall under the first phase of RLOs (self-help), the absence of other forms of organisations motivated the team to focus on Dar es Salaam and Nyarugusu. The absence of groups can be attributed to the change in status. The option for naturalisation has also diminished refugee identity and thus the motivation and demand for refugee-led responses.

Phase 2 of data collection

The team selected 15 RLOs (five in Dar es Salaam and ten in Nyarugusu refugee camp) for in-depth examination. The selection of the RLOs was based on a mix of purposive and convenience sampling in both sites and on a set of criteria that reflected the diversity of RLOs. The team focused on RLOs that are currently active and implementing projects regularly. The research team collected in-depth qualitative data on these 15 RLOs and the actors that benefit from them or are involved in refugee response. See Annex 1 for more details about the profiles of selected RLOs.

- 15 key informant interviews (KIIs) with RLO leaders.
- Four KIIs with external stakeholders, including state representatives, local authorities, other humanitarian and development service providers, academics, and community leaders.
- 30 focus group discussions (FGDs) with beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries. FGDs took place with both direct beneficiaries – those who have received services from RLOs selected for the study – and potential beneficiaries. Potential beneficiaries refer to community members who fall under the stated mandate of RLOs selected for the study but who had not received services at the time of the study. Each FGD included five to eight participants.
- 15 FGDs with RLO managers, staff, and volunteers.

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4 The lead researcher was referred to a woman tailor who planned to start an organisation focused on tailoring courses for girls who do not proceed with secondary education, but she did not do so due to lack of resources.
A refugee-led study
This study was led by a former refugee researcher based in Dar es Salaam. RLOs and beneficiaries reacted positively to being approached about this research project. They had many questions about the research and what benefits it could bring them. The research team took time to explain the scope and objectives of the study and to mitigate expectations. There was some suspicion among RLOs in Dar es Salaam and two declined to be interviewed. This can be attributed to the difficult regulatory framework in Tanzania. In general, local authorities were easier to access and engage than national authorities and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Image 1: Life in the Nyarugusu Camp, Tanzania
© UNHCR/Georgina Goodwin
Nature and scope of RLOs in Tanzania

There is no universally accepted definition of RLOs. In this report, we use the term RLO to describe any organisation, association, coalition, formal or informal network, faith-based group or initiative that is led by refugees or asylum seekers in urban, rural, camp, and settlement settings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition of RLOs</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Icon" /> It may include both registered and unregistered groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Icon" /> Their function is to respond to the needs of refugees and related host communities, whether these are humanitarian, developmental, or cultural.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Icon" /> While RLOs generally prioritise their national community or the refugees who live where they operate, RLOs also provide services to host community members in urban locations and settlements where they are more integrated with nationals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Icon" /> RLOs may provide direct services or focus on advocacy. They can aim at supporting their own members (self-help groups), their communities (special interest group or ethnic group), other refugees, and the host community they live with. They may have for-profit elements, but those are used (fully or partially) to fund non-for-profit activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Icon" /> RLOs may include non-refugees in their boards and management teams, but the main decision-makers and founders have a displacement background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Icon" /> We exclude from this definition refugee leadership bodies set up by authorities and UNHCR as they were not set up independently, hence their decisions are bound by authorities and UNHCR. In Tanzania, we excluded education committees and refugee community leadership structures that are implemented by international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), such as village and zonal leaders in Nyarugusu refugee camp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Icon" /> We also exclude groups created as part of INGO programmes unless those groups have expanded their activities beyond the original INGO objectives.</td>
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At the regional level, we conceptualise RLOs in three main development stages, linked to their funding capacity.

The vast majority of RLOs in Tanzania remain in the self-help phase; a few outliers have transitioned to the growth phase in Nyarugusu due to their connections with the diaspora and churches. RLOs in Tanzania are mostly dependent on members’ financial contributions, which can be paid upon registration, ad-hoc (though contribution boxes), monthly, or annually. In the case of membership-based organisations, inactive members who do not pay the monthly fee might not be supported in case of need. For example, Communauté Congolaise de Tanzanie (CCT) in Dar es Salaam expects members to purchase a TZS 10,000 membership card and contribute TZS 5,000 a month; it does not support inactive members.

Diaspora and religious funding remain significant sources of support for RLO activities in Tanzania.
Nature and scope of RLOs in Tanzania

We found difficulties to access funding due to lack of registration since development partners’ support financially only organisations that are registered. Our status caused these financial challenges
– Former RLO leader, Dar es Salaam

The RLO landscape

Dar es Salaam

There are about 200 urban refugees in Dar es Salaam. Except for the Congolese community organisation (set up in 1997 and registered in 2015), most groups were set up recently through educational networks (eg DAFI scholarship). Most active groups are small in size and tend to be led by legal immigrants and former refugees from a single nationality (Congolese and Malawian). These groups do not necessarily identify as RLOs. The Congolese and Malawian community groups focus on advocacy for those living irregularly in the city and on access to permits. They have established relationships with the immigration office. One group led by former refugees and Tanzanians runs a nursery school. Inactive organisations plan to focus on self-reliance activities (eg entrepreneurship training, small loans, education, and literacy) but have no access to funds because of registration issues. Because of those challenges, many have stopped their activities or stopped trying to raise funds. All organisations still rely on membership contributions for their activities.

Nyarugusu Refugee Camp

Refugee-led initiatives in Nyarugusu tend to be small-scale, led by a single national group and operate informally. They are considered self-help groups and can register with NGOs that provide relevant services (eg International Rescue Committee [IRC] for livelihood and education, Norwegian Refugee Council for construction) but they cannot register at...
the camp or authorities’ level. RLOs tend to focus on English language education because it is accepted as a legitimate need by camp authorities as it allows refugees to apply for scholarships. Some groups also focus on livelihood (eg tailoring, soap-making) and awareness-raising (eg education on sexual and reproductive health). Institut Biblique International Evangelique de Nundu (IBIEN) and Group MISA are outliers in terms of scale as they have many volunteers and provide regular services. Some groups already existed before their leaders moved to Nyarugusu (eg IBIEN started in 1993 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC]; Fighting Against Silliness School in Africa [FASSA] started in 2006 in Mkabila refugee camp in Kigoma, which subsequently closed). The number of groups increased because of the influence from refugees who resettled and sent remittances to the camp.

Profile of RLO leaders

Nationality
In both Dar es Salaam and Nyarugusu Refugee Camp most RLO leaders come from the Congolese community. In Nyarugusu, RLOs are created by Congolese or by Burundians, who together constitute the majority of the refugees. In Dar es Salaam all RLOs were created by Congolese refugees, with the exception of the Malawian Community of Tanzania. This reflects the nationality breakdown of these locations.

Gender
Most top management and decision-makers are men in both sites. The team was only able to identify one women-led organisation in Nyarugusu. However, the team did identify two RLOs, one in Dar es Salaam and one in Nyarugusu, that are led by men but seek to empower women in leadership positions (the RLO in Nyarugusu decided to include more women in their board to reflect their values of promoting female empowerment). Women are mostly engaged in leading village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) and struggle to scale up and form more formal groups because of cultural barriers and lower levels of education.

Education
Most RLO leaders in Dar es Salaam and Nyarugusu are educated. Ten out of the 15 RLO leaders hold a bachelor’s degree from varying disciplines, and it was apparent that leaders with a higher level of education are more successful in building trust with diaspora members and church organisations outside of Tanzania in order to secure funding.

Age
Most RLO leaders in both Dar es Salaam and Nyarugusu range in age between 30 and 55. In Dar es Salaam, community associations that advocate for legal stay of irregular migrants are led by leaders over 50 years old who have been in the city for a long time and are able to share their experience and networks.
Motivation to start RLOs

The vast majority of RLO leaders said that they founded RLOs to respond to community needs and fill gaps that were not being addressed by international and aid organisations. In many cases, RLOs were founded as self-help groups for members to support each other and advocate for more support from aid organisations in order to expand their activities to other members of the community. In urban settings, RLO leaders generally referred to the lack of support provided to urban refugees. Refugees are motivated to create RLOs in order to provide services that are seen as missing, to become self-reliant, elevate their personal status, apply skills as former aid workers or create self-employment.

In Nyarugusu, most RLOs were founded to help advocate for the rights of refugees, children and women; to equip refugees with technical skills for self-reliance; and to provide English training programmes. Scholarship programmes in refugee camps have fuelled the expansion of English learning initiatives – those proficient in English are more likely to get scholarships.

Some RLOs are built on pre-existing organisations (e.g. IBIEN) and seek to continue activities in their country of origin once they are able to return. Emerging RLOs sometimes focus on the same areas of intervention as more well-known RLOs as members consider it a better strategy to access external funding (e.g. VSLAs, English programmes and technical skills in Nyarugusu).

Inclusion of the host community

Inclusion of host communities can be both direct and indirect. Direct inclusion includes direct participation in decision-making or membership, while indirect inclusion includes facilitation in funding processes, registration, or service delivery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Beneficiaries</th>
<th>Co-managers</th>
<th>Enablers</th>
<th>Inhibitors</th>
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<tr>
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Host communities are engaged with RLOs in different ways: as beneficiaries, co-managers, and enablers. In Dar es Salaam, co-led RLOs tend to provide services to host community members. Involving host communities as beneficiaries allows RLOs to maintain good relationships with the local community as they share infrastructure and amenities. For example, due to the invisibility of refugees in Dar es Salaam, it may be challenging to identify refugee beneficiaries; it therefore makes more sense to provide area-based services than statute-based services.

As refugees cannot register organisations, some RLOs trust friends and relatives who are Tanzanians to register organisations on their behalf. Such registered RLOs, especially in Dar es Salaam, tend to involve the host community more than unregistered ones. One CBO in Dar es Salaam that does not identify as an RLO is primarily led by former refugees from the DRC, but its management also includes Tanzanians. There is also a Congolese RLO that is registered...
as an NGO due to the support of a Tanzanian national who is a member of the same ethnic group that spans both countries, although the member is not actively involved in the day-to-day operations of the organisation.

In Nyarugusu, inclusion of the host community is comparatively difficult due to strong encampment policies. For example, refugees must obtain a leaving permit from the camp commandant in order to exit the camp. This makes it difficult for RLOs to directly integrate with local communities despite the fact that some RLOs’ constitutions stipulate they assist surrounding communities. During a FGD with RLO managers regarding inter-connectedness with local communities, especially in service delivery, participants shared similar sentiments

Partnerships with the aid sector
RLOs do not currently have formal partnerships with external actors. Partnerships with INGOs and NGOs largely consist of in–kind contributions that are not based on written agreements. In Nyarugusu, for instance, the IRC provides classrooms, white boards, and exercise books for refugee-led English clubs. Plans to develop partnerships are limited at the time of writing. Aid organisations are reluctant to engage with unregistered organisations beyond in-kind contributions at the field level.

The restrictive environment in Tanzania does not grant RLOs the power to contribute to discussions on localisation or on setting priorities for the refugee response. The team found no evidence that RLOs had participated in any coordination platform for the refugee response. Without opportunities to register, it is unlikely that meaningful partnerships can take place. In October 2021, UNHCR held an information session in Nyarugusu for RLOs and asked for a list of RLOs in the camp. However, as of June 2022, there has been no follow-up. This may be attributed to tensions related to the organisation of the information session without the approval of the camp commandant.

RLO networks
There is no RLO network in Tanzania but there is some collaboration among RLOs and under the DAFI Students Organization in Tanzania (DAFISOTA). DAFISOTA is an association of former and current DAFI scholarship beneficiaries in Tanzania that represent RLOs headed by former scholarship beneficiaries based in Nyarugusu camp. Equipping Hope International (EHI) and Refugee Youth Empowerment Network (RYEN) were founded by DAFISOTA members. DAFISOTA often advocates for the registration of RLOs at the camp commandant’s office. It also uses its connections with IRC and UNHCR to source resources for its own activities and those of EHI and RYEN.
Personal connections between RLO leaders are integral to enhance collaboration. For example, the leaders of EHI and RYEN know one another because they belong to the same personal networks, accessed the same scholarship, and come from the same geographical area. Such pre-existing kinship plays a key role in supporting coordination between organisations.

These connections enable RLOs to engage in informal information-sharing or support. For example, Unifamily Organisation, Ngena Foundation and RYEN in Nyarugusu share resources and information because their leaders are close friends; and FASSA, a Burundian RLO, uses a classroom from IBIEN in the Congolese side of the camp to teach English, a relationship built because they are both faith-based organisations. RYEN also recently received books from Book-Aid and obtained funds from RLO leaders to transport the books from Dar es Salaam to Nyarugusu.

In Dar es Salaam, the Congolese Community Association sometimes hosts the Malawi Community Association in their offices because they both advocate for irregular migrants.

Aid organisations are keen to engage with formal RLO networks. One external stakeholder in Nyarugusu advised RLOs to form a network instead of operating separately. Informants suggested that networks would allow RLOs to advocate for registration, facilitate linkages with INGOs, and secure funds from humanitarian donors and organisations.

'It is good to come together and form a network instead of struggling with registration individually. The network can start by identifying all existing RLOs in the camp and then advocate and lobby for their RLO’s registration at national levels.'
- External stakeholder
Impact of RLOs on communities

Knowledge of RLOs among community members

In Nyarugusu camp, knowledge about RLOs varies among Congolese and Burundian refugees. Most Congolese refugees are aware of RLOs and the types of activities they undertake. Even non-beneficiaries could talk about RLO activities, although they could not directly name RLOs and their specific type of activities. Despite the existence of 35 RLOs that the team identified in the camp, most non-beneficiaries mentioned CELA and Group MISA as the most reputable RLOs. CELA is no longer operational in the camp, but its former office has become a base for many RLOs. Due to lack of information, community members thought that CELA was still operating. Community members rarely mentioned RLOs that were established recently.

Burundian refugees were less aware of RLOs; only a few Burundian non-beneficiaries knew the work of the two Burundian-led RLOs, FASSA and Improving English Training Center (IETS).

Community members who knew about RLOs generally had accurate knowledge except in the case of Women’s Legal Aid Centre (WLAC). They categorised WLAC as an RLO; however, it is a Tanzanian organisation serving refugees in Nyarugusu. The confusion emerged because WLAC trained a refugee group called Washekanya to become a refugee paralegal group and engaged them as its volunteers.

In Dar es Salaam, community members had little knowledge about RLOs. Almost all of the interviewed non-beneficiaries knew nothing about RLOs. Even the beneficiaries interviewed only knew about the RLOs that had supported them. This is because the more active RLOs in Dar es Salaam do not identify or advertise themselves as refugee-led and are dispersed within the city.

Knowledge of RLOs among aid organisations and government institutions

Knowledge of RLOs varied greatly between Dar es Salaam and Nyarugusu.

In Nyarugusu, external stakeholders including UNHCR, the camp commandant, and IRC knew about the existence of RLOs but mostly considered them to be self-help groups. Consequently, when RLOs seek to register at the camp commandant’s office, they are often directed to enrol at IRC, which manages education and livelihood in the camp.

In Dar es Salaam, external stakeholders had no knowledge about the existence of RLOs. The team has limited information from national authorities since they were hard to reach for interviews.
Experience of RLO beneficiaries

In Dar es Salaam, beneficiaries were generally unable to differentiate between RLOs, Tanzanian NGOs, and INGOs. Beneficiaries did state that they were treated with dignity when they received services from RLOs.

However, most of the refugees interviewed in Dar es Salaam said they were unable to compare services because they do not have permission to live in the city. There was a general feeling that RLOs have more incentives to support them as they share the same challenges, while refugees saw some NGOs and INGOs as trying to secure funds without benefiting refugees.

In Nyarugusu, refugees clearly differentiated their experiences with RLOs and INGOs and spoke positively about their experience receiving services from RLOs. They argued that RLO services were more adapted to their needs and detail-oriented because they know the community better. Beneficiaries of English classes talked about the difference between classes provided by RLOs and IRC: RLO classes were more regular and in-person, increasing the likelihood of effectively learning the language, while the IRC class was online and only once a week. RLOs were also considered fairer than INGOs when delivering services within their own groups compared to aid organisations. Given the homogenous nature of camps in Tanzania, there were concerns that RLOs would favour their own group over the general community.

Descriptions of impact

In Dar es Salaam, RLO beneficiaries saw the positive impacts of the services they received, especially in terms of access to residence permits that helped them to live in greater safety. Non-beneficiaries had nothing to comment on the issue since they had no information about RLOs. With regard to education, the opening of École Francophone de Tanzanie (EFT) has helped lessen the school fees burden to former refugee children compared to what they paid to Alliance Française.

In Nyarugusu, all respondents commented positively on RLO impact. English learning centres help refugees access higher education and opportunities within aid organisations, as the camp-based education system follows the francophone Congolese curriculum. Community members said that VSLAs help beneficiaries initiate income-generating activities that empower them financially and in terms of skills. VSLAs also help beneficiaries obtain funds to supplement those from aid organisations.

Positive impact was also acknowledged in terms of job creation and income since some RLOs (eg IBIEN and Group MISA) are able to pay incentives. RLOs therefore create opportunities for volunteers or staff that are better paid than aid organisations, as they do not follow
incentive work requirements: teachers paid by RLOs could receive USD 35 compared to USD 25 from aid organisations.

Refugees were generally understanding towards RLOs and understood their resource limitations, and they talked of the potential of refugee-led services. They acknowledged that aid organisations and RLOs are not comparable in terms of size, but that the services they are able to provide are satisfactory, and that they could do more if given more resources.
Variations in response and impact

Networks

The most significant factor in determining the success of an RLO is the leader’s ability to access a range of networks. Professional relations, gender, nationality, and education all influence a leader’s ability to access networks, which in turn unlocks their ability to raise funds, set up partnerships, and provide regular services to a greater range of beneficiaries. Congolese, camp-based, English-speaking, educated men are more likely to have opportunities to build such networks.

Networks with the aid sector: In Nyarugusu camp, RLO leaders tend to be current or former incentive workers hired by the aid sector and former DAFI scholarships beneficiaries. Experience with aid work allowed them to raise their profiles, and being alumni of DAFI scholarships allowed them access to scholarship opportunities offered by MHA, UNHCR, and its partner organisations. Experience working with INGOs also helped RLO leaders access top management, present their projects, and request support.

Networks with the diaspora: Access to the diaspora allows RLO leaders to bypass access challenges to the aid sector created by the regulatory framework. In Nyarugusu, some RLOs (eg the Youth Association for Development and Counseling [YADC] and EHI) were founded by refugees who were resettled in the Global North and who continued supporting activities financially or with fundraising. Individual diaspora networks also play a role in determining the success of RLOs. Networks with the diaspora are more common in Nyarugusu than in Dar es Salaam because most of the resettled refugees departed from the camp.

Networks with faith-based organisations: Leaders’ connections to church-based organisations allow them to unlock some access challenges. The religion of leaders is relevant in cases when obtaining support from churches (locally or abroad). One successful RLO in Nyarugusu, Group MISA, was able to obtain funding from churches in the USA. RLOs also operate under the umbrella of churches and use local churches’ registration when required to prove their legal operations; this may also help them get access to funding.

Regulatory framework

The regulatory framework has a significant influence on RLOs’ ability to access resources and partnerships and to implement their activities safely and openly. Most RLOs in Tanzania are not registered and therefore are unable to apply for funding because most donors require proof of registration.

Registration of any RLO depends heavily on the regulatory frameworks of the host country. In Tanzania, there is a gap in both the 1998 Refugee Act and the Non-Governmental Organisations Act regarding the registration of RLOs. The two acts do not mention whether refugees are allowed to register organisations they create. In Nyarugusu, refugees are unable to formally register but are given verbal authorisation by the camp commandant, who is the representative of the Ministry of Home Affairs. RLOs need permits to conduct activities, even if they have received verbal approval to operate; provision of those permits can be arbitrary and complex to navigate. For instance, in Nyarugusu, one group wanted to repair a water tank. They asked permission from the village leader, then the zone leader, the camp leader and, finally, the camp commandant.
The commandant denied their request, claiming that a humanitarian organisation was already responsible. Community members in Nyarugusu mentioned that one RLO was registered using a national church, while CELA, now inactive, was registered as a company through Tanzanian nationals. Registration by refugees has been and continues to be arduous. RLO leaders are consequently exploring alternatives to registration in Tanzania, such as registering in their countries of origin. In Dar es Salaam, due to the unclear registration process and clandestine lives of some of the refugees, some RLO leaders decide to register their RLOs as a national group or national committee.

'We no longer have intention of looking for registration in this country, we will look for formal registration when we are in our country of origin. We cannot get formal registration in this country since there is no platform to discuss.'
- RLO leader, Nyarugusu

'It is not really a simple thing to get registered as a refugee-led organisation here. You will be asked too many things such as your permit to leave the camp. If you do not have it, you can get sentenced in jail for six months or deported.
- RLO leader, Dar es Salaam

Summary of differences between urban versus camp-based RLOs
Throughout the report, we distinguish between RLOs in Dar es Salaam and Nyarugusu refugee camp and how their challenges differ.

- RLOs tend to be small in both urban and camp settings but RLO leaders have more access to networks (external actors and diaspora) in camp settings.
- RLOs in urban settings tend to include host communities as beneficiaries or staff members more so than those in camp settings.
- Urban refugee communities are less aware of RLOs than camp-based communities.
- Urban RLOs have less access to refugee authorities and therefore receive less support from them; this also makes it more difficult to register.
Conclusion

- **The regulatory framework**: Lack of registration in both sites means RLOs are unable to operate safely. In Nyarugusu, some RLOs are prohibited to engage in certain sectors. In the camp, restrictions to freedom of movement also affects RLO leaders’ ability to develop their organisations.

- **Access to funds**: Access to funds is the main challenge facing RLOs in both Dar es Salaam and Nyarugusu. Limited access to diversified sustainable sources of funding – whether from the aid sector, diaspora, income-generating activities, or individual sponsors – prevents RLOs from operating, paying access to infrastructure, scaling up their activities and providing quality services. Most RLOs in Tanzania do not have fundraising plans or proposals in place because of the lack of opportunity to receive humanitarian funding. RLOs have no clear plan or strategy given the limited space in which they operate; their priority is to register and/or follow-up on registration.

- **Lack of capacity**: Many RLO leaders are hindered by a lack of resources (few qualified human resources, financial and physical resources), which makes it difficult to operate and provide high quality services. Leaders also noted the lack of capacities relating to financial management, proposal development, and operations.

Recommendations

This section provides recommendations based on RLO priorities outlined during fieldwork: 1) Ability and support to register; 2) Access to funding opportunities; 3) Capacity building for RLO leaders and staff; 4) Access to infrastructure.

**To donors**

- **Advocate for policy change at the government level.** The restrictive regulatory framework can hinder the realisation of RLO potential, limiting their access to resources and ability to implement projects. Donors have a key role to play in advocating for policy changes on RLO registration, recognition of existing initiatives, and on refugee documentation and access to infrastructure (eg banking).

- **Fund unregistered self-help groups.** Many RLOs in Tanzania remain at the self-help stage of their development and are not able to provide services beyond their own members, despite their aspiration to do so. Promoting RLOs requires supporting those groups to help them expand their reach and activities in early stages of development. Donors should adapt funding requirements to the specific needs of RLOs.

- **Provide direct funding to RLOs.** Both philanthropic and state donors should prioritise core funding and long-term projects. Long-term or start-up funding is needed to allow RLOs to become sustainable and equal partners in aid organisations.

- **Create space for RLOs to influence the humanitarian sector.** RLOs in Tanzania are not involved in humanitarian fora. Donors should involve RLOs in donor meetings and humanitarian coordination meetings. For the sake of inclusivity, donors should fund costs associated with participating in those coordination meetings and implement translation mechanisms.
To governments and authorities

- **Create policies that allow RLOs to register as CBOs.** RLOs are not able to register as CBOs and can only be verbally authorised to operate as self-help groups at the camp level. This prevents them from seeking funds and implementing projects. The government should set up a policy and guidelines for registration that are in line with the reality of RLOs.

- **In camp and settlement settings, allocate land fairly to RLOs to set up their activities.** Camp authorities have granted access to land for some RLOs to set up their offices or to implement their activities. Authorities should continue providing land to RLOs as it is critical to their sustainability. Authorities should also develop clear criteria for what activities and under which conditions RLOs can access resources.

To UNHCR

- **Advocate for policy change at the government level.** UNHCR can partner with donors to advocate for changes on RLO registration, recognition of existing initiatives, and on refugee documentation and access to infrastructure with local and national authorities. Recognising and promoting the role of existing initiatives can raise the profile of RLOs and encourage the government to facilitate their activities.

- **Implement and adapt global UNHCR policies towards RLOs at the field level.** UNHCR in Geneva has made significant progress in developing guidelines on how to engage RLOs. UNHCR should set up a country advisory board to promote the implementation of these policies and to adapt them to Tanzania specificities. Once those are approved, UNHCR should ensure that policies are known by UNHCR staff at the national and field level.

To aid organisations

- **Involvẽ RLOs in decision-making through equal-partner consortia.** Humanitarian organisations should set up equal-partnership consortia that engage RLOs meaningfully from the project development phase onwards as co-owners of the project.

- **Embed capacity development with funded projects.** Capacity development is a key need for many RLO leaders in terms of project development, implementation, and proposal writing. Capacity-building activities that are embedded with project delivery are more likely to yield long-term results. Aid organisations should include capacity development as a core activity in the design of consortia.

- **Be long-term allies.** RLOs have significant value-added qualities to assist in the refugee response, but are hindered by structural weaknesses due to the displacement status of their leaders. Aid organisations should manage expectations of what RLOs can achieve and engage in long-term support and partnerships. They should also promote the ideas of refugees, give credit and recognition, and make space for RLOs to participate in decision-making at the policy and project levels.
**To RLOs**

- **Set up a network of RLOs.** Networks can help RLOs access opportunities, share ideas and distribute funding, as well as provide a platform for the RLOs to network with one another and with other key potential partners/stakeholders at the national, regional, and global level. The RLO network should take transparent steps to include a range of marginalised groups in their structures (women and minority nationalities).

- **Take steps to ensure community accountability.** While RLOs tend to be seen as more accountable to refugees themselves, there are concerns that they might not stay accountable to the community as they access more resources. RLOs should set up systems for record-keeping and record-sharing at the community level (e.g., use of social media, public consultations, and events).

Image 4: Life in the Nyarugusu Camp, Tanzania. © UNHCR/Georgina Goodwin
Annex 1: Profiles of selected RLOs in Tanzania

In Nyarugusu Refugee Camp

1. **Association des Jeunes et des Adultes pour le Développement (AJAD)** was created in 2016 to train people of all ages – youths, elder people and mostly young people ranging between 12 and 21 – who dropped out of school and/or are illiterate. AJAD runs vocational skills training (tailoring and soap-making) to enable their beneficiaries to become self-employed. AJAD believes that if their trainees become self-employed, they will also be able to help others and the community in general. To fund their activities, AJAD relies on members’ contributions and the small profit they make from income generating activities.

2. **Centre of Youth and Adult Education (CELA)** was established in 2003 and registered in 2006 as a company. Despite its for-profit status, CELA was operating as a not-for-profit entity focusing mainly on provision of school uniforms, exercise books, pens and school bags to orphans; sanitary pads to girls; entrepreneurship trainings and financial assistance to women-led VSLAs; tailoring, bakery and computer trainings to women and youths. CELA was the first organisation to start VSLAs in Nyarugusu refugee camp and all subsequent VSLAs (even those initiated by refugee serving organisations) are dubbed ‘CELA’. Despite its dissolution in 2014, the team included CELA in the sample to understand the factors that led to the termination of its activities and its hybrid business/not-for-profit status.

3. **Equipping Hope International (EHI)** was initiated in 2019 by a former DAFI scholarship beneficiary after being resettled to the USA in order to help refugee youths qualify for DAFI scholarships by teaching them English. Although the founder remains in the USA, EHI headquarters are in Nyarugusu where all its activities are implemented. The organisation is not registered in either the USA or in Nyarugusu camp. To run its activities, EHI depends mainly on financial support from members who are in the USA. EHI has an online presence (https://equippinghope.org/).

4. **Fighting Against Silliness School in Africa (FASSA)** was originally founded in 2006 in Mtabila camp (a now defunct camp that hosted Burundian refugees in the Kigoma region). FASSA’s main activities are Bible studies and English language training. FASSA has a vision of expanding its activities beyond Nyarugusu and Tanzania. Its beneficiaries are both men and women from age 14 and above. FASSA encourages students to contribute a small amount monthly to sustain its activities.

5. **Improving English Training Center (IETS)** was created in 2017 by Burundian refugees in Nyarugusu camp after English became a compulsory subject in secondary schools after Burundi joined the East African Community. Their main activity is English language teaching to people of all ages, including elders, youths, and children. Like FASSA, IETS encourages students to contribute a small amount monthly to sustain its activities.

6. **Institut Biblique International Evangélique de Nundu (IBIEN)** is a faith-based organisation founded in 1993 in the DRC that focused mainly on providing theological courses. With time, IBIEN introduced other courses such as computer
and English courses and began to provide assistance to vulnerable people. Although it is not registered, IBIEN implements its activities outside the camp, namely in Arusha but also in the DRC, Burundi and Mozambique. IBIEN has about 30 volunteers working on a full-time basis in Nyarugusu. IBIEN depends on church members’ financial contributions in Nyarugusu, Arusha, and the USA.

7. **Ngena Foundation Ministries** was founded in 2015 with the aim of helping people become self-reliant with available resources. It provides a number of programmes to achieve its objectives, including those focused on women’s economic empowerment, assistance for vulnerable people (disabled people, orphans, widowers and widows) and educational trainings. Ngena Foundation Ministries also has a vision of expanding its activities beyond the borders of Tanzania. Ngena Foundation relies mainly on members’ contributions to run its activities.

8. **Resilience Action Tanzania (RAT)** is a women-led RLO that developed from a former organisation known as Solidarity and Advocacy with Vulnerable Individuals in Crisis (since renamed Resilience Action International) – an NGO led by refugees in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. RAT was formed when the NGO was unable to continue funding its piloted expansion into Nyarugusu, and eventually they became a CBO in 2019. RAT is focused on adolescent and sexual reproductive health education, English language training and income-generating activities; it provides services to both school-going and out-of-school youths. RAT seeks to enhance resilience, protection and livelihoods for young people through education, entrepreneurship development and youth-friendly reproductive health services. RAT funds its activities with the profits they make with income-generating activities.

9. **Unifamily Organization** was launched in 2016 with the aim of reducing early pregnancies and marriages in the camp. Unifamily conducts awareness-raising campaigns on girls’ right to education, provides basic computer training to women, and supports orphans with food, soap and clothes. The majority of its members are women, although its leader is a man. Unifamily depends on members’ contributions to fund its activities. It has also received in-kind contributions (computers and printers) from Ubuntu Connection, an international organisation.

10. **Youth Association for Development and Counseling (YADC)** was created in 2019 in Nyarugusu and is the only RLO involved in house rehabilitation. Financial support is mainly provided by its founder, who was resettled to the USA. Other services include psychosocial support, and guidance and counselling to youths.

### In Dar es Salaam

1. **Communauté Congolaise de Tanzanie (CCT)** was founded in 1997 to assist Congolese community members living unlawfully in Dar es Salaam in times of distress, such as illness or the death of a family member. Following the arrest and sometimes incarceration of irregular migrants by immigration officers, this community expanded its activities and started advocating for irregular Congolese migrants to be lawfully recognised by the government of Tanzania. This has been
successful as many are now registered by the immigration office and provided with documentation that recognises their right to stay in the country. CCT also finally supports female Congolese irregular migrants in Dar es Salaam so they can conduct petty businesses. CCT is registered as an association and has an office in Dar es Salaam. CCT relies on members’ contributions to run its activities.

2. **Development Gait for Youth Future (DGYF)** is a co-led NGO registered in 2018. Its goal is to increase incomes and economic productivity among refugee and host community youths and to improve their competencies in entrepreneurship and small business management. To achieve this, DGYF provides interest free loans to beneficiaries who undergo their entrepreneurship accelerator programme for existing and aspiring youth entrepreneurs. This programme is no longer implemented due to lack of funding as it depended entirely on member contributions.

3. **École Francophone de Tanzanie (EFT)** was founded in 1997 after the collapse of a similar organisation (École Francophone des Grands Lacs). It enables French-speaking children to proceed with primary and secondary education using French as the medium of instruction; it does so at rates far more affordable than those of the Alliance Française school, which most parents cannot afford. EFT has an examination centre recognised by the DRC government and its primary and secondary students sit for national exams coordinated by the DRC Ministry of Education. Through parents’ contributions, EFT rents premises where classes are conducted and is able to cover transport costs and meals for teachers.

4. **Malawian Community of Tanzania (MCT)** was founded in 1997 and assists Malawian community members living unlawfully in Dar es Salaam in times of distress, such as illness or the death of a family member. Following the arrest and sometimes incarceration of irregular migrants from Malawi by immigration officers, this community expanded its activities and started advocating for irregular Malawian migrants to be lawfully recognised by the government of Tanzania. Although it is not registered, MCT is recognised by the immigration office in Dar es Salaam through its advocacy activities. MCT relies on members’ contributions to run its activities.

5. **Women Education Development Initiative (WIDE)** is a co-led RLO created in 2019 that focuses on gender equality advocacy and self-reliance programmes. WIDE is also a day care centre mainly for children whose mothers are taking tailoring and literacy courses at their centre. This organisation has both men and women in its top management team. WIDE relies on members’ contributions to run its activities.