

12 Lessons on Refugee Returns in the Great Lakes Region

1. Refugee return is a political process, and in-depth analysis is needed to understand it.
2. International interventions supporting return processes should prevent frictions over assistance.
3. Relations between returnees and authorities depend on the area of return, but returnees should be supported to promote their rights.
4. State presence and conflict dynamics in return zones also impact on the space for humanitarian actors.
5. Local leaders try to benefit from return processes, their involvement should be carefully managed.
6. Voluntary and assisted repatriation offers the highest chances of reintegration into society.
7. The relationship between the host state and the state of origin of refugees impacts on their return process.
8. Many communities regularly move across borders, rejecting a simple refugee-returnee dichotomy.
9. Internal migration can be precursor as well as a consequence of return movements, and should be better understood.
10. Local mediation structures should be supported to prevent land problems.
11. Addressing the causes of displacement is key to ensuring sustainable reintegration and prevent renewed displacement.
12. Coordination and information-sharing around return processes should be enhanced.

