

INTEGRATING WOMEN'S PRIORITIES INTO BURUNDI'S POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY



CONFERENCE OF BURUNDI DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS
GENEVA, 29-30 OCTOBER 2012

DECLARATION BY BURUNDIAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS

We,

The members of the Delegation of Burundian women's rights organisations, working for peacebuilding, reconciliation and greater economic empowerment for women;

Recognising the major steps taken by the Government of Burundi towards the country's socio-economic reconstruction;

In keeping with the spirit of the Paris Declaration¹, which highlights the importance of the partnership between Governments and Non-State Actors, and in respect of the role that we must play alongside the Burundian Government;

Noting the ongoing relevance of UN Security Council Resolution 1325², which calls on all member States to promote the participation of women in decision-making processes, decision-making bodies and the planning of peacebuilding programmes and development policies;

Welcoming the inclusive and participative approach adopted by the Government of Burundi in the development and implementation of the Second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II);

Recognising that the commitments made by the Government in the first pillar of the PRSP II³ constitute a welcome response to the concerns and priorities outlined by Burundian women;

Reiterating our support for the Government, which by 2015 hopes to have achieved the objectives set out for the implementation of the PRSP II, and calling on it to take all measures necessary to reflect women's priorities in the budget allocated thereto;

Declare the following:

A. *In relation to the rule of law, good governance and the promotion of gender equality*

The inferior status of women and girls in Burundian society is created by the weight of prevailing mentalities and attitudes. Furthermore, the rights of women and girls, and the national and international instruments established to promote these rights, remain poorly understood by decision-makers and the beneficiaries of development.

1 Paris, 2nd March 2005.

2 New York, 31st October 2000.

3 Strengthening the rule of law, consolidating good governance and promoting gender equality.

It should also be noted that the majority of Burundian women (61.7%)⁴ are illiterate. This limits their access to information, education and their active participation in the public sphere.

In order to reach the objectives of the PRSP II, concrete actions, achievable through *a budget that is gender-sensitive*, are required:

1. Support the implementation of capacity-building programmes involving the creation of community centres and community radios across the country, in an effort to stimulate community development and a gradual change in mentalities. This would allow Burundian women in general, and especially those in rural areas, to access information about their rights, civic education, transformative leadership, and conflict transformation.

B. In relation to peacebuilding

Transitional justice is one of the key aspects of peacebuilding identified in the PRSP II. A large segment of the population affected by the conflict is made up of women, 22% of whom are widows and 60% of whom are war victims.⁵ This category faces extreme vulnerability and is in need of reparation, resettlement and socio-economic reintegration. This requires the following:

2. Establish a rehabilitation and social cohesion fund to meet the specific needs of the victims of the conflict, including women and girls. Such a fund would be able to support the implementation and smooth functioning of transitional justice mechanisms.
3. Create an early warning system that is open to participation by women's organisations in order to prevent the resurgence of violence and to combat impunity for crimes.

C. In relation to the transformation of the economy, sustained growth and job creation

We note that more than 55.2% of farmers are women⁶ and that economic growth in Burundi depends on the agricultural sector. Nonetheless, women have very limited access to the means of production, such as land and credit. Furthermore, of the 80.2% of Burundians who own land, 62.5% are men and just 17.7% are women.⁷ The almost insignificant presence of women in growth sectors, such as formal trade, banking and industry, limits their opportunity for greater economic independence. As a result, 90% of Burundian women face both monetary and non-monetary poverty.⁸

The following actions are essential:

4. Establish and finance a venture capital fund and micro-credit schemes to promote small projects initiated by women and young girls from rural communities;
5. Offer financial and technical support to a functional literacy programme based around income-generating activities (IGAs) that favour women and youths from rural communities;
6. Improve the skills of youths so they can be competitive on the labour market in the context of Burundi's integration in the East African Community. To this end, it is necessary to provide secondary schools with IT equipment and to initiate a training programme to enable young Burundians to make use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

D. Access to basic services and social welfare

One of the priorities for Burundian women is access to drinking water. There is a deplorable shortage of water standpipes in rural areas, with women spending two hours each day fetching water.

It is therefore necessary to:

7. Support rural development programmes that improve access to drinking water near households through

4 Republic of Burundi, PRSP II, March 2012.

5 Idem.

6 Idem.

7 Idem.

8 As confirmed by the 2008 General Census of the Population and Housing, as well as by several recent socio-economic studies.

the construction and responsible management of standpipes.

In order to support the efforts made by the Government and women's organisations in the fight against sexual and domestic violence, there is an urgent need to:

8. Finance the creation and running of centres that can fully meet the needs of victims of sexual and domestic violence.

E. Concerning the monitoring of the implementation of the PRSP II

Burundian women's rights organisations believe that the successful implementation of the PRSP II will require:

- **gender-sensitive financing of the PRSP II;**
- **capacity-building** in terms of the human, financial and organisational resources of all actors generally, and women and girls in particular. This is essential for development to be equitable, conflict-sensitive and gender-sensitive.

The following actions are indispensable:

9. Support the creation of a mechanism to ensure coordinated interventions and, for greater efficiency, enable this mechanism to plan, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the PRSP II;
10. Reinforce the expertise of women's organisations so that they can carry out efficient monitoring of the implementation of the PRSP II at all levels;
11. Support the creation of a "Gender" observatory to collect all gender-related data and ensure that gender issues are properly taken into account throughout the implementation of the PRSP II.

Geneva, 29th October 2012

Signatories:

Members of the delegation of Burundian women's rights organisations

1. Mrs Marie Goretti NDACAYISABA
*Association DUSHIREHAMWE*⁹
2. Mrs Godelieve MANIRAKIZA
*Association des Femmes Rapatriées du Burundi (AFRABU)*¹⁰
3. Mr Evariste NGENDAKUMANA
*Réseau Femmes et Paix (RFP)*¹¹
4. Ms Daniella KAZE
Association pour la Promotion de la Fille au Burundi (APFB)
5. Mrs Aline NIVYABANDI
*Collectif des Associations et ONGs Féminines du Burundi (CAFOB)*¹²

This declaration has been written by an elected delegation of Burundian civil society leaders representing organisations working on women's rights, ahead of the Burundi development partner conference taking place in Geneva, Switzerland from 29th to 30th October 2012. Peacebuilding NGO International Alert and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) are supporting this delegation to participate in the conference, which focuses on Burundi's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the PRSP II.

Burundian women's organisations, International Alert and UN Women aim to further gains made by the project "Making Women's Voices Heard in Peacebuilding and Reconciliation Programmes in Burundi", supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and implemented by Alert and partners. This project has supported women to define their needs and priorities both for economic development and for reconciliation, and to advocate for these to be reflected in Burundi's PRSP II.

9 352 grassroots associations.

10 59 grassroots groups.

11 18 associations.

12 75 associations.

International Alert

International Alert is a 26-year-old independent peacebuilding organisation that works with people who are directly affected by violent conflict to improve their prospects of peace. Alert also seeks to influence the policies and ways of working of governments, international organisations like the UN and multinational companies, to reduce conflict risks.

Alert has been working in Burundi since 1995. In partnership with Burundian organisations *Dushirehamwe*, *Réseau Femmes et Paix*, *Association des Femmes Rapatriées du Burundi*, and *Collectif des Associations et ONG Féminines du Burundi*, International Alert works to ensure that roles and concerns of women, and national reconciliation are central to the poverty reduction process. Burundian women's views and concerns are captured in the film *Our Voices*, available at <http://www.international-alert.org/news/our-voices-0>.

UN Women

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) is an organisation created in July 2010 as a result of the merger of four distinct UN agencies working for women's rights worldwide. UN Women mainly focuses on supporting inter-governmental bodies in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms and giving member states technical assistance for the proper implementation of these rules.

Rooted in the recognition of the special challenges faced by women around the world, UN Women's first goal is to enhance equality between men and women as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security.

Dushirehamwe

Dushirehamwe is a not-for-profit association founded in 2002. It operates as a network, with a strong community presence in 13 of the Burundi's provinces, and is represented by provincial and municipal committees. Its mission is to contribute to the consolidation of lasting peace and the promotion of fairness and equality between men and women in Burundi.

Dushirehamwe represents women's organisations in Burundi on the Joint Steering Committee for Peacebuilding, which is composed of representatives from the Government, the UN's Integrated Office in Burundi, and civil society. Dushirehamwe also coordinates a network of 38 organisations which work together as part of the Coordination Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi.

Réseau Femmes et Paix

Réseau Femmes et Paix (RFP) is a group of women's associations that received formal recognition in 1999. It comprises 18 associations and 59 groups from across the country's 17 provinces.

RFP helps increase the participation of women in peacebuilding efforts and in the promotion of development in Burundi. It actively contributes to peacebuilding, reconciliation through transitional justice mechanisms, and development through actions targeting greater empowerment for women via income-generating activities and job creation in the context of conflict-sensitive community recovery.

Association des Femmes Rapatriées du Burundi

Association des Femmes Rapatriées du Burundi (AFRABU) is a not-for-profit association that was founded in 2002. It focuses on the reintegration of returnees, internally displaced persons, former combatants and former prisoners into communities in the Gitega, Muyinga, Ruyigi, Rutana, Cibitoke and Bujumbura provinces.

It mainly targets the following issues: gender, peace and security, economic recovery at community level, entrepreneurship, social reintegration for victims of the conflict and gender-based violence. AFRABU is a support structure offering non-financial assistance to achieve greater autonomy in low-income, economically active grassroots communities.

Collectif des Associations et ONG Féminines du Burundi

Collectif des Associations et ONG Féminines du Burundi (CAFOB) was founded in 1994 and now comprises 72 women's associations which work to promote and defend women's rights throughout Burundi. Its objective is to be a collective organisation that can make a significant contribution to improved living conditions and a better socio-economic and legal status for Burundian women. It has set itself a mission to strengthen the operational capacities of women's associations and NGOs in Burundi so that they may act as effective interlocutors on issues relating to peace, gender, development and other issues affecting women.

Association pour la Promotion de la Fille au Burundi

Association pour la Promotion de la Fille au Burundi (APFB) received formal recognition in 1999. It aims to encourage young Burundian girls to become actively aware of the role they can play in the social, economic and political affairs of the country.