
Insights: International Institutions, Aid
Effectiveness and Peacebuilding in Burundi

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June 2011

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We are one of the world's leading peacebuilding NGOs with more than 155 staff based in London and 15 field offices. To learn more about how and where we work, visit www.international-alert.org.

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This programme focuses on how international institutions such as the UN, the World Bank, the European Union (EU) and the African Union can strengthen their support for peacebuilding. Drawing on Alert's network of country programmes and expertise in peacebuilding, aid and governance, the programme brings together perspectives from ongoing field and headquarters-based research, analysis and dialogue processes to produce insights on international engagement and good practice. The programme seeks to facilitate reflection on institutional effectiveness and support institutional change processes. To learn more, visit: <http://www.international-alert.org/institutions>

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1. Introduction and summary of recommendations

This snapshot is a Burundi-focused briefing emerging from a larger baseline study, including two other country case studies of Liberia and Nepal, as well as a synthesis report of cross-case findings. It identifies Burundi's key peacebuilding priorities and explores how the two main international institutions (IIs) engaged there, the UN and the World Bank, have sought to address them. The findings, analysis and recommendations presented here inform the work of International Alert's International Institutions Programme, which aims to develop understanding of how institutional institutions can better support peace and development in fragile and conflict-affected countries.

The methodology included desk research but predominantly relied upon interviews which took place between October 2010 and March 2011 and, therefore, many findings are perceptions and experience based. Interviewees in Burundi included a broad range of in-country stakeholders such as civil society, government representatives, media, bilateral donors, international NGOs, the UN and the World Bank.

The first section of the snapshot outlines the key peacebuilding challenges in Burundi. The second section provides an overview of institutional engagement in Burundi, examines how institutional activities fit the context priorities, the strengths and limits of current approaches to engagement, and how the institutions' own systems and structures either facilitate or hinder their ability to deliver peacebuilding impacts. The final section summarises the main findings and ways forward, making the following recommendations to the IIs themselves:

- Build inclusive and sustained strategic partnerships beyond central government to support the development of an open, inclusive and responsive state-society relationship;
- Develop complementary strategic plans which reflect the local context and institutional comparative advantage, to avoid setting too many priorities. Shared strategic priorities should be based on agreed, widely-owned context analyses which clearly identify Burundi's peacebuilding priorities;
- Encourage deeper institutional cooperation and joint programming within and between international institutions through specific political endorsement and financial backing;
- Incorporate ongoing monitoring and analysis of context into programme cycles, and develop tools to monitor long-term peacebuilding impacts in addition to other results;
- Support in-house field staff to develop, strengthen and use their conflict analysis skills and knowledge of the local context in strategy development and programme implementation.

2. Key Peacebuilding Priorities in Burundi

Central to the challenge of Burundi's post-conflict recovery is the nexus between peacebuilding and development. Since consolidating power in the 2010 elections, the government has stressed that peacebuilding is no longer a priority and that Burundi is now moving towards development.

The government's linear analysis of the country's needs and aversion to acknowledging an ongoing need for peacebuilding approaches imposes limitations on the potential for national strategies and programmes to respond to the complex needs of Burundi as it moves towards development.

The restriction of political space and room for dialogue

The 2010 elections are often perceived as a significant milestone and indicator of Burundi's progress beyond its violent past; however, since the elections there has been a significant shrinking of political space. Challenges to ruling-party positions by political opposition and civil society have been suppressed through intimidation and violence. The restriction of political space is compounded by the absence of inclusive dialogue. Existing forums for political dialogue have broken down and, whilst some tentative steps have been made to restart dialogue, the political situation remains fragile.

Inequalities in access to economic opportunities

Despite moves to combat historical social and economic inequalities, their legacy is still experienced by ordinary Burundians. Access to wealth and employment can still be contingent on a number of factors including gender, ethnicity and political affiliation.

An under-developed economy further combines with political tensions to make Burundi ever more fragile. Unequal economic growth can fuel grievances and conflict, which may turn violent.

Safety and human security

People's perceptions of insecurity persist as a result of acts of politically-motivated violence, rumours of nascent rebellion and raids in the northern provinces. Armed attacks, including attacks on police checkpoints, are commonplace. The government blames "unknown bandits"; however, it is widely assumed that these incidents have a political dimension.

Despite security sector reforms, the security services lack public confidence and have been accused of serious abuses. A people-centred approach to security is still lacking; the security services are under resourced and unresponsive to the needs of the population.

In a context of political exclusion with many conflict drivers still unaddressed, insecurity has destabilising potential and there is a risk that it may be manipulated for political gain.

Land conflicts

Land is a key conflict issue in Burundi. The causes are multifaceted, including access to land, contradictory and discriminatory laws pertaining to land rights, the politicised nature of returnee land rights and demographic pressures. Land is of important cultural significance in Burundi and is the majority of the population's main or only source of income and food security.

Most land disputes occur between family members and neighbours. These disputes, although frequently involving fatalities, do not often spill over into wider conflicts. Land disputes involving returnees are more politically sensitive and receive greater media attention. "Ordinary" land disputes are not treated as fundamental to stability as they have not been used as a political mobiliser. Considering Burundi's rapid demographic growth and the prospect of land-intensive mining in the future, land conflicts are likely to become increasingly politicised.

Justice, Impunity and Corruption

Despite justice sector reform efforts, legal institutions are seen as weak and command little public confidence. An unreliable legal system, coupled with political manipulation, has sustained a culture of impunity, which denies many Burundians justice for past atrocities and continuing human rights violations. The transitional justice process has stalled and it remains to be seen whether eventual mechanisms will achieve redress and contribute to reconciliation.

Corruption within public institutions is cited by the international community and local actors as a key challenge. While the government has taken a strong public stance on corruption, promising "zero tolerance", it remains prevalent throughout the government and elsewhere, eroding public confidence in the state.

3. Priorities of International Institutions in Burundi: A Summary

In December 2010, the United Nations Office in Burundi (BNUB) succeeded the UN Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) with a mandate to:

- strengthen institutions
- promote and facilitate dialogue
- support efforts to fight impunity and promote reconciliation
- promote and protect human rights
- ensure economic strategies have a focus on peacebuilding and equitable growth
- provide advice on regional integration issues

Burundi was one of the first countries to be placed on the Peacebuilding Commission's (PBC) agenda in 2006. The Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding (SFP) outlined the following peacebuilding objectives:

- promote good governance
- complete the implementation of the ceasefire between the government and FNL
- security sector reform and disarmament demobilisation and reintegration
- rule of law and human rights
- land issues and socio-economic recovery
- mainstreaming a gender perspective

The UN's continuing development work is framed by the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) which outlines strategic priorities for 2010-2014, including:

- strategic aid coordination
- early recovery
- democratic governance
- national reconciliation and justice

The World Bank's priorities follow the objectives set out in the 2009-2012 Country Assistance Strategy (CAS):

- promote sustainable and broad-based economic growth
- improve access to social services
- consolidating social stability

The CAS is guided by the Burundi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The four axes of the 2007-2010 PRSP were:

- improve governance and security
- promote sustainable and equitable economic growth
- develop human capital
- combat HIV/AIDS

The second generation PRSP (2011-2015) is due to be completed in the latter half of 2011.

4. Analysing International Institutions' Peacebuilding Responses

Strategic choices

- Partnerships

International institutions' partnerships with local actors are instrumental in shaping strategic choices. In Burundi, the government is the international institutions' main interlocutor. This partnership is central to ensuring fiduciary accountability and should play a central role in strengthening local ownership; however, it is problematic in view of the restrictions on political space and limited civil society and citizen engagement in decision making and accountability. Strengthening local ownership and citizen-state relations and, thus, the legitimacy of national processes, requires partnerships that go beyond central government to include, for example, parliament, local government, media and civil society.

International institutions have made efforts to widen partnerships beyond central government, and initiatives providing support for civil society have been valuable in opening space for and strengthening dialogue, joint planning and oversight. One of the strengths of PBC engagement was its ability to engage state *and* non-state stakeholders, allowing for enhanced interaction and increased representation in planning and decision making. The development of the second PRSP has shown an improvement in its participatory approach in comparison to the first process; however civil society engagement does not guarantee translation of civil society priorities into the final plan and practice. The outcomes of the participatory process in the case of the second PRSP are yet to be seen.

- Aligning too many frameworks and priorities

In Burundi, international peacebuilding and development efforts have been implemented through multiple frameworks. This has resulted in a variety of different priorities, incoherence and gaps in addressing local peacebuilding priorities. Shared strategic priorities should be developed, based on widely-owned analyses. The second PRSP process provides an opportunity to outline shared peacebuilding and development priorities; however, concerns remain over to which degree peacebuilding concerns will be systematically integrated in the second PRSP.

Diverse interests and tensions between agencies and development partners influence their strategic choices. Trade-offs are made between political, financial, security and development priorities, as well as between short- and long-term goals. Respondents from within the UN and World Bank highlighted the practical challenges of differences in programming approaches, time frames and cycles in more closely aligning strategic frameworks across institutions.

Institutional approaches to engaging with context

- Beyond taking context as a starting point

The local context should be a key starting point to inform strategic planning and country programming. Whilst the World Bank is increasing its regional- and country-level presence, the UN has scaled down its political mission in Burundi since January 2011. Officially, the change in UN mandate is in response to Burundi's progress. Nevertheless, continued insecurity is a direct challenge to this view of steady progression towards peace and stability. Unofficially, UN staff recognise that government pressure for a reduced UN presence was instrumental in the scale down.

International institutional approaches can be influenced by an organisation's analysis of its capacity to address an issue. Land has been identified as a major cause of violent crime by the UN Secretary-General and is of particular concern in Burundi. Despite this, UN in-country staff felt that they were unable to address land issues effectively, leading to land issues being downgraded in official strategies.

Respondents expressed frustration that their organisational systems and processes limit their ability to respond effectively to the local context. Even when context analyses take into account political, socio-economic and

structural issues through consultative processes, analyses are limited to planning stages and rarely integrated throughout the programme cycle.

- Challenges in coordinated responses to a complex context

Effective coordination can improve coherence and enhance peacebuilding impact. BINUB constituted one of the first attempts at an innovative model for UN integrated missions. However, despite significant strategic-level coordination, its full coordination potential was not realised. Local contextual challenges, and unaligned agency priorities and approaches limited its success. Furthermore, there had been little political, financial or operational incentive for coordination.

As the focus in Burundi shifts from peacebuilding to development and the UN political presence is reduced, increased UN and World Bank operational cooperation becomes crucial. Respondents had contrasting views on how successful coordination at strategic and operational levels has been, pointing to a lack of systematic coordination. Many UN and World Bank respondents observed that they saw little evidence of *combined* operational responses.

Putting priorities into practice

- Quick impact mentality

Pressure for quick results often means that the emphasis is shifted from peacebuilding *impact* (contribution to peace) into *outputs* (tasks completed). In other words, the pressure to deliver in the short term limits the ability to address long-term peacebuilding needs. A significant number of respondents observed that this *Quick Impact Mentality* was driven by short-term funding and pressure for quick disbursement of funds. Complex peacebuilding issues were addressed on a short-term, project-by-project basis, for example through catalytic PBF funding, rather than through a systematic analysis of longer-term strategic requirements.

- Human resourcing

The appropriate level and expertise of in-country personnel is essential in providing effective support. High staff turnover, small teams and external consultancies have been cited by respondents as restricting their institutions' ability to build up an understanding of contextual dynamics, develop in-country relationships and grow tailored institutional responses which inform programming and survive as part of institutional memory. Institutions have

often relied on external consultants for specialist input into peacebuilding issues, rather than developing internal expertise in these areas.

Despite Burundi's importance to regional stability, it is often seen as having limited strategic importance by donors. This has a negative impact on the attractiveness of the posting for some international staff, as does the increased pressure associated with working in a conflict-affected environment for other staff.

- Innovative leadership

Key to responding effectively to the local context is the degree to which country office leadership teams support and encourage innovative approaches, and the freedom to implement these (which first requires similar encouragement from headquarters). Respondents within institutions have shown frustration at the lack of institutional support for innovation and the challenges in communicating learning from innovation on the ground within and between institutions. Although still experimental, one encouraging example is UNDP's "3x6" approach to socio-economic reintegration. "3x6" was spearheaded in Burundi and draws from experiences and learning of in-country development programmes. The lack of institutionalised systems to stimulate innovation, knowledge capture and sharing means that championing such initiatives relies heavily on the commitment of in-country leadership.

5. Conclusions

International institutions' partnerships are an important factor in shaping their strategic choices and capacity to engage effectively to support peacebuilding and development. A lack of conceptual clarity, combined with multiple priorities, results in a variety of strategic frameworks, causing incoherence and leading to local peacebuilding priorities being missed.

As the Government of Burundi insists upon a shift in focus from peacebuilding to development, it is increasingly important that the UN and the World Bank work towards greater alignment and operational cooperation in order to address outstanding peacebuilding needs. Currently, there is little evidence of *joint* operational responses on the ground.

In addition to the limitations of the current strategic approach, operational constraints restrict institutional capacity for peacebuilding impact. In effect, there is a disconnect

between high-level commitments to peacebuilding and the way institutions deliver in the field. The pressure to deliver quick results prioritises short-term interventions which often do not reflect long-term local peacebuilding needs.

6. Recommendations

- Build inclusive and sustained strategic partnerships beyond central government to support the development of an open, inclusive and responsive state-society relationship;
- Develop complementary strategic plans which reflect the local context and institutional comparative advantage, to avoid setting too many priorities. Shared strategic priorities should be based on agreed, widely-owned context analyses which clearly identify Burundi's peacebuilding priorities;
- Encourage deeper institutional cooperation and joint programming within and between international institutions through specific political endorsement and financial backing;
- Incorporate ongoing monitoring and analysis of context into programme cycles, and develop tools to monitor long-term peacebuilding impacts in addition to other results;
- Support in-house field staff to develop, strengthen and use their conflict analysis skills and knowledge of the local context in strategy development and programme implementation.

Sources: List and Number of Interviews

Government of Burundi

Ministry of Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender (1)
National Committee for Aid Coordination (CNCA) (3)
Department for Social and Economic Reform (REFES) (2)
Support Programme for the Reintegration of Persons Affected by Conflict (PARES) (2)

Local Civil Society

BIRATURABA (2)
Collective for Women's Associations and NGOs in Burundi (CAFOB) (2)
Centre for Training and Development for Former Combatants CEDAC (2)
Council for Education and Development (COPED) (1)
Collective for the Promotion of Youth Associations (CPAJ) (1)
Dushirehamwe (2)
FORSC (1)
Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC) (1)
Liguelteka (1)
Observatory for the Fight against Corruption and Embezzlement (OLUCOME) (2)
Gratis (1)
Ikibiri (1)
MiPAREC (1)
National Council of Bashingantahe (1)
Word and Action for the Awakening of Consciousness and the Evolution of Attitudes (PARCEM) (1)
Women and Peace Network (RFP) (2)
Twitezimbere (1)

International Institutions

United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) and United Nations Office in Burundi (BNUB) (12)
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (11)
UN WOMEN (2)
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (3)
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (5)
Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (1)
International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2)
World Bank (5)
European Union (EU) (2)

Bilateral

Belgian Embassy (1)

Belgian Development Corporation (1)

Department for International Development (DFID) (1)

Dutch Embassy Office (2)

South African Embassy (2)

Swiss Embassy (1)

International Non-Governmental Organisations

ACCORD (1)

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) (2)

Benevolencija (1)

Global Rights (1)

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) (1)

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ISBN 978-1-906677-14-5