

REFLECTING ON PEACE PRACTICE PROJECT

Cumulative Impact Case Study

The Cumulative Impacts of Peacebuilding in Burundi: Strengths and Weaknesses of a Process

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This document was developed as part of a collaborative learning project directed by CDA. It is part of a collection of documents that should be considered initial and partial findings of the project. These documents are written to allow for the identification of cross-cutting issues and themes across a range of situations. Each case represents the views and perspectives of a variety of people at the time when it was written.

These documents do not represent a final product of the project. While these documents may be cited, they remain working documents of a collaborative learning effort. Broad generalizations about the project's findings cannot be made from a single case.

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Not all the documents written for any project have been made public. When people in the area where a report has been done have asked us to protect their anonymity and security, in deference to them and communities involved, we keep those documents private.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACORD : Association de Coopération et de Recherche pour le Développement

APDH : Association pour la Promotion des Droits de l'Homme

ASEJEGI: Association d'Encadrement des Jeunes de Gitega

BLTP : Burundi Leadership Training Program

CAFOB: Collectif des Associations Féminines et ONGs du Burundi

CECI: Centre Canadien d'Etudes et de Coopération Internationale

CNDD : Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie

CNDD-FDD : Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie- Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie

COSOME : Coalition de la Société Civile pour le Monitoring des Elections

DAI : Development Alternatives INC.

FRODEBU : Front pour la démocratie au Burundi

ICCO : Interkerkelijke Coördinatie Commissie

ICG: International Crisis Group

LDGL : Ligue des Droits de la personne dans la région des Grands Lacs

MCVS: Mécanisme Conjoint de Vérification et de Suivi su cessez-le-feu

MIOB: Mission d'Observation au Burundi

MIPAREC: Ministry for Peace and Reconciliation under the Cross

NOVIB: Nederlandse Organisatie voor International Ontwikkelingssamenwerking

PADCO: Planning and Development Collaborative International

PALIPEHUTU-FNL: Parti pour la Libération du Peuple Hutu- Front de Libération National

SFCG: Search for Common Ground

AU: African Union

EU: European Union

UPRONA : Unité pour le Progrès National

1. INTRODUCTION

As a backdrop to understanding the course of the conflict in Burundi, a short summary of the country's history and geography is presented in this introduction. This is complemented by an analysis of the major political developments that have marked the country's recent history. Likewise, the methodology employed in this case study is briefly presented.

1.1. Historical and Political Context

Burundi is a small land-locked country situated in East Africa. It is bordered on the east by Tanzania, on the north by Rwanda, and on the west by the Democratic Republic of Congo. The country has a surface area of 27,834 km², 25,200 km² of which are under water. With a total population of about 7.5 million, Burundi has the highest population density in Africa after Rwanda—297 inhabitants per square kilometer. Agriculture represents the principal economic activity and the main source of income for over 90% of the population. The shrinking of the average land plot under cultivation to less than a hectare means that land has become an increasingly coveted resource in the country. Consequently, competition over land has become an increasingly frequent source of conflict between neighbors and within families.

Historically, Burundi was an old monarchy whose origins can be traced back to the 16th century. Since this period, the Kingdom of Burundi sought to expand its territory through a succession of wars against its neighbors, which only ended with the German colonization of the country. By the end of the reign of Ntare Rugamba (circa 1850), Burundi was one of the largest and most powerful African kingdoms, characterized by a dense population united by a common language, a shared culture, and the consciousness of belonging to one nation ruled by the same mwami (king).¹ This culture was and still is shared by the three ethnic constituencies (Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa) that make up the population, and represented an important factor of unity over the course of several centuries.

On June 6, 1903, King Mwezi Gisabo, after a long period of resistance against the Germans, signed the Treaty of Kiganda, which established a German protectorate in Burundi. Following the First World War, the allied powers that had defeated Germany decided to take over its colonial possessions. Burundi, like Rwanda, came under Belgian control. Until October 20, 1924, these lands were given the official title of “occupied territory placed under the administration of Belgium by the League of Nations.”²

Burundi achieved its independence on July 1, 1962, with the seeds of future ethnic divisions being sown by the disequilibria resulting from the reforms introduced under indirect Belgian administration of the colony. These divisions could be traced to the systematic elimination of Hutu chiefs and sub-chiefs from the colonial administration

¹ J. Gahama, *Le Burundi sous administration belge* (Paris: Editions Karthala, 2001.)

² Ibid.

between 1926 and 1933, as well as the selective schooling of Ganwa (princes) and Tutsis to the detriment of Hutu children. Beyond these internal causes of conflict, many observers agree that events in Rwanda during the 1960s had a significant influence on the evolution of relations between Hutu and Tutsi elites in Burundi.

In contrast to Rwanda, however, where independence was achieved under the auspices of a Hutu-led “social revolution” that overthrew the established monarchical order, in Burundi pro-independence forces were led by Louis Rwagasore, son of the king Mwambutsa Bangiricenge, and enlisted the bulk of the Hutu and Tutsi elites. Rwagasore’s death a short time after the victory of his party created an opening for disagreements that progressively increased ethnic divisions within the elite.

The monarchy, which proved incapable of overcoming the challenges posed by independence and the internal conflicts linked to the new exigencies of democratic rule, was overthrown by a military coup. This inaugurated a new era in which the country plunged into a worsening spiral of violence. Three military presidents, who came from the same province and even the same village, successively ruled the country from 1966 to 1993.

The concentration of political power and of control over access to the country’s resources in the hands of a restrictive Tutsi political and military elite deepened the country’s ethnic and, to a lesser degree, regional cleavages. This monopoly on power was consolidated through a succession of violent crises characterized by Hutu revolts that resulted in massacres of the Tutsi population (1965, 1972), followed by the largely Tutsi army’s repression of Hutus accused of having led or fomented them. The purging of the Hutu elite from the spheres of power and their consequent political marginalization culminated in 1972 with the massacre of Hutu political leaders by the Tutsi-led government. This fueled an interethnic blood feud that has torn the country apart ever since.

The succession of governments that followed the 1972 crisis has proved incapable of resolving this serious conflict. On the contrary, at the same time that the discussion of the ethnic question was made taboo during the rule of J. B. Bagaza, discriminatory practices against Hutu students who had graduated from the sixth form were uncovered and fueled a new escalation of ethnic tensions. However, in 1988, the massacres at Ntega and Marangara forced Major Pierre Buyoya to acknowledge the existence of the problem, sparking a debate and setting in motion reforms that culminated in the installation of a government of ‘national unity’ led by a Hutu Prime Minister.

This atmosphere of ethnic détente opened a period of political pluralism that coincided with the end of the Cold War and paved the way for the holding of democratic elections in 1993. These were won by a Hutu political party, the FRODEBU, leading to the installation of a Hutu President, Melchior Ndadaye. Ndadaye was assassinated in a military coup only a hundred days into his presidency. Massacres targeting Tutsis were perpetrated throughout the country, followed by severe reprisals on the part of the army against the Hutus.

This new crisis that broke out in October 1993 devastated the country, triggering widespread bloodshed, the destruction of vital infrastructure, the ethnic balkanization of the country, and a civil war which has yet to be fully resolved. The length of the crisis had a disastrous impact on the economy, which saw GDP halved from US\$ 220 per capita in 1992 to US\$ 110 in 2007. Likewise, the country's socioeconomic indicators went into a free fall, highlighting the extreme poverty that is one of the fundamental contributing causes of the conflict. Today, Burundi ranks third among the poorest countries in the world.

After several unsuccessful attempts on the part of domestic political forces to find a lasting and comprehensive solution to the crisis, the country's political and military leaders eventually agreed to submit to external arbitration. A framework for negotiation, introduced in 1998 under the auspices of a regional initiative and the international community, culminated in the Arusha Accord in August 2000. The Accord was signed without a full cessation of hostilities between the government and the principal rebel movement, the CNDD-FDD, which was concluded only the following November.

The Accord set into motion an electoral process that lasted through August 2005 and provided for the creation of democratic institutions. However, these institutions have run up against a number of challenges that threaten to derail the democratic process. Foremost among them are the impediments and delays that have kept the government and PALIPEHUTU-FNL, the sole remaining rebel group, from reaching a comprehensive peace agreement.

1.2. Methodological Approach

The team charged with analyzing the cumulative effects of peacebuilding efforts in Burundi took part in a two-day preparation and training course. This prepared the team to evaluate peacebuilding initiatives from a practical standpoint as well as to assess their cumulative impacts. A guide on how to conduct interviews was then designed based on the study's evaluative objectives. It was distributed to a select sample of individuals based on their knowledge of the country, their understanding of its interethnic makeup and dynamics, and their involvement at various levels of the Burundian peace process. These included political leaders, people involved in peacebuilding, and representatives of the private sector, civil society, and media. Likewise, representatives of the international community and academic experts who followed the peace process were also targeted. Interviewees were selected in view of constituting a politically and ethnically representative interview sample and, as far as was possible, gender was also taken into account. A total of 29 persons was interviewed.

Since this first round of interviews targeted elites living in the capital of Bujumbura, it was then decided to broaden the scope of the survey beyond the capital and to talk to ordinary citizens. This was designed to identify whether and how people's perspectives diverged or converged as a function of their living standards and education levels. Four focus groups were organized, including two in the province of Gitega, one in the urban center of Gitega with a mixed group, and one in the administrative seat of the rural

commune of Bukirasazi with a group of women. Two other focus groups were organized in Ruyigi province. One in the principal urban center was with a group of demobilized former combatants, and the other in the administrative seat of the commune of Butaganzwa with a group of repatriated refugees.

Group discussions were tape recorded and transcribed. The same was done for individual interviews, which were reconstituted on the basis of handwritten notes. The contents of these interviews have been analyzed and constitute the primary material on which this case study is based. This analysis was supplemented by various secondary sources on the Burundian peace process.

The analysis that follows is essentially based on the ideas, opinions and interpretations of events advanced by the people who were interviewed for this case study, sometimes supplemented by bibliographic sources, which are referenced in the text. Footnotes indicate where survey responses have been cited in unaltered form. However, for reasons of confidentiality, persons to whom responses can be attributed have not been identified by name.

2. THE CAUSES OF THE BURUNDIAN CONFLICT

2.1. A conflict for control of resources

The conflict in Burundi has certain crucial economic dimensions. In a context in which the state is the principal employer and state contracts the principal revenue source for its agents, control of the state is of paramount economic importance. The state determines access to national and state revenues, control over human and natural resources, and how these are employed and distributed.³ Furthermore, conflict has been worsened by actors' perceptions that these resources are extremely limited, so that who ends up controlling them becomes a life or death issue. In such a context, recourse to violence becomes legitimate since sharing these resources would mean a decrease for those in power of the dividends to be derived from them.

In this regard, a study focusing on the country's coffee sector has shown that the political conflict in Burundi is in reality a struggle over control over resources at three levels: i) since the economy is so dependent upon this single crop, the state relies on the resources it derives from coffee not only to maintain its clientelistic base, but also to sustain a system of predation, often by violent means; ii) for simple demographic reasons, farmers who are the targets of state-sanctioned predation are in majority Hutu; and iii) the compensation funds set up by the state ostensibly to stabilize coffee and tea prices never served this purpose, since price fluctuations continued to be passed on to coffee producers.⁴

³ Interviews in Bujumbura, September 2007.

⁴ J.S. Oketch and T. Polzer, "Conflict and Coffee in Burundi," in *Scarcity and Surfeit. The Ecology of Africa's Conflicts*, Ed. J. Lind and K. Sturman. (Pretoria: African Center for Technology Studies and Nairobi: Institute for Security Studies, 1993), pp.51-84.

This economic dimension of the conflict is highlighted by the determination of the inhabitants of specific regions to avail themselves of the resources allocated to the projects being pursued in the areas where they live. Accordingly, external firms that employ foreign rather than local workers have become the targets of local hostility, underscoring the salience of resource competition and depletion as factors of conflict in Burundi.⁵

2.2. Poor governance and the culture of violence

The Burundian conflict is also rooted in the poor governance that has plagued the country since its independence, in particular since the death of Prince Louis Rwagasore,⁶ who was generally seen as a uniting and visionary figure. Poor governance includes an institutional dimension with the system's inability to enforce the law. This encourages criminality within the state, a problem reinforced by the impunity enjoyed by those responsible. This system is perpetuated by coercive, authoritarian regimes that at first were supported either by a single party or by the army, which based their policies on ethnic and regional discrimination and which maintained themselves through violence.

The most significant factor of poor governance in the Burundian conflict is the problem of exclusion, which has entrenched social injustice and consequently fanned frustrations, resentments, and mistrust. Such exclusion is most often based on ethnic, regional, and even clan-based criteria. The accumulation of these injustices, resulting in glaring inequities in the distribution of national wealth, is a fundamental cause of the Burundian conflict. The ensuing social divide, combined with dwindling quantities of resources, fuels violent conflict over the control of resources. These problems are further worsened by the absence of a political vision for the country and a lack of government strategies to increase the nation's wealth.

The other aspect of poor governance that has fed the conflict is the poor management of the successive crises that have afflicted the country, often characterized by arbitrary use of the judiciary as an instrument of repression. Better management of these crises would certainly have made it easier to end the cycle of violence, to analyze their deep-seated causes, and devise strategies for resolving them, thereby speeding the process of reconciliation. Similarly, poor governance can be associated with the absence of leadership and vision, or rather of visionary leadership. Most often, this absence of leadership is characterized by a failure to understand the medium and long-term consequences of certain actions and to act accordingly to prevent them. According to a number of observers, this lack of visionary leadership has served to obscure the country's problems and has facilitated a general denial of certain truths.⁷

⁵ Focus group of repatriated refugees in Butanganzwa, Ruyigi Province, 14 September 2007.

⁶ Louis Rwagasore was the eldest son of Mwambutsa IV Bangiricenge, the penultimate king of Burundi. He founded the Party for Union and Progress (UPRONA) and presided over the country's independence on September 18, 1961. He was assassinated exactly a month later on October 18, 1961, and has since been considered the father of Burundian independence and a national hero.

⁷ Interviews, Bujumbura, September 2007.

Thirdly, poor governance comprises other dimensions that have played into the Burundian conflict. In particular, the conflict has been exacerbated by a deep reservoir of fear that built up over the years, and which became a powerful means of subjugation within the apparatus of repression. Many analysts have noted that Burundian society is characterized by a strong sense of hierarchy and deference to authority on which the state has been able to rely to control its various clienteles and the resources to achieve a better standard of living. In such a context, fear is easily employed as an instrument of control at each level of the social hierarchy: the family, the hillside (*la colline*), the commune, and the nation. This system could not survive without the monopoly of the state over information. At the same time, however, the situation creates an environment conducive to the propagation of rumors, propaganda, and the general manipulation of people through misinformation. Obviously, civic participation under such a system is virtually nil; it breeds a ‘top-down’ authoritarian culture in which the individual is reduced to being a simple subject rather than a full citizen endowed with recognized rights and responsibilities. It is with this historical and cultural context that the recent improvement in access to information with the onset of democratization and greater governmental accountability needs to be analyzed.

Finally, poor governance reflects a regime and political culture that have encouraged the spread of mediocrity on partisan, ethnic and regional bases. It is at this level that, from both an objective and a subjective standpoint, the ethnic dimension has grown to supplant all other factors and been seen as the principal cause of conflict in Burundi. This ethnic dimension has been reinforced by the succession of crises and large-scale crimes—sometimes of a genocidal nature—that have accompanied them. Ethnic divisions, which initially were not a primary cause of conflict, were harnessed and entrenched through exclusionary state policies. In turn, interethnic violence has fanned prejudice and hate, thereby shaping people’s individual and collective perceptions and reinforcing ethnicity as the primary factor underlying the conflict.

2.3. Exclusion and instrumentalization of ethnicity

Exclusionary practices targeting Hutu elites at the level of the state (i.e., in terms of leadership of posts, jobs, schooling, military recruitment, etc.) have brought an ethnic dimension to social injustices. Even if a finer analysis reveals that such exclusion is not only interethnic but also intra-ethnic in nature, it nevertheless underscores the primacy of the ethnic dimension.

After having been relatively muted through the 1960’s, the influence of ethnic conflicts elsewhere in the region has since grown increasingly pronounced. Even if there is a lack of consensus as to the influence of the Rwandan model or ‘anti-model’ on the aggravation, if not the actual genesis, of ethnic conflict in Burundi, a number of observers have posited that it was a determinant factor on the evolving relationship between Hutu and Tutsi elites in the country. In their opinion, the progressive appropriation of exclusive power by the Tutsi elite in Burundi can in part be explained by their fear that they might share the same fate as their counterparts in Rwanda. This fear was reinforced by the actions of Burundian Hutus, who voiced the desire at various historical moments to

exterminate their Tutsi neighbors. In short, according to this reasoning, ethnic conflicts that initially came to the fore in the region in Rwanda have had a significant impact on historical events in Burundi. Such conflicts came to serve as a model for Hutu elites in Burundi who in effect declared, “we are the majority, the country is ours,” while representing an anti-model for the Tutsis, who concluded that “our very survival depends on avoiding what happened in Rwanda.”⁸

The experience of Belgian colonization is often blamed for aggravating ethnic cleavages in Burundi. In particular, the reorganization of the colonial administration in 1926 made official the exclusion of the Hutus, who were considered racially inferior by the colonial power. Whereas in 1929, the distribution of tribal authority continued to draw on the pre-colonial political order that was built around the predominance of princely families and the equitable distribution of administrative posts among Hutu and Tutsis, the years that followed heralded a progressive and definitive marginalization of Hutu chiefs to the benefit of the Ganwa and the Tutsis. This policy was reinforced through discrimination against Hutus in the training of future national leaders, particularly at the Astrida School where the country’s tribal chiefs had formerly been educated.⁹ The ensuing destruction of traditional structures provoked a collapse of people’s cultural references (practices, rituals, etc.), thus destabilizing existing social relationships and equilibria and creating a context favorable to ethnic strife.

Some observers assert that the resulting cultural shock provoked a sort of inability among Burundians to adapt to new values, making it difficult for them to find a new equilibrium between their traditions and the new values that were being imposed on them.¹⁰

3. TURNING POINTS, ACTORS AND FACTORS OF CHANGE

Similarly to other conflicts, the conflict in Burundi has alternated between phases of latent and overt crisis. Given its duration, any analysis of its critical phases must extend back to the 1960s and take stock of the missed opportunities and instances of progress conceived as much in terms of the evolution of people’s perspectives as the advancing of concrete solutions to the conflict.

The general perception that ethnic issues predominate over the conflict’s other causes means that most observers tend to base their assessment of progress and failure on this criterion.¹¹ From this perspective, the open letter drafted by Hutu intellectuals following the Ntega and Marangara massacres in August 1988, as well as the focusing of public debate on the attainment of national unity through the formation of a national unity government headed by a Hutu Prime Minister, were seen by many as significant advances.

⁸ Interview, Bujumbura, September 2007.

⁹ Evariste Ngayimpenda, “Nature du conflit burundais,” in *Rapport National sur le développement humain 2005* (Bujumbura: UNDP et Ministère de la Planification du Développement et de la Reconstruction), pp., 29-51.

¹⁰ Interviews, Bujumbura, September 2007.

¹¹ Most people interviewed extended their analysis back over at least three decades.

Such progress must be considered alongside the opportunities that were missed by successive regimes, including that of Jean-Baptiste Bagaza in 1976. Some observers assert that the latter missed a historic chance to achieve a durable peace because his government, representing the first change of power after the crisis of 1972, had elicited great hopes for national unity. In fact, the tone of his inauguration was one of change, promising the return of refugees, a series of reforms including the suppression of the “ubugererwa,”¹² and the mobilization of youth towards the goals of development and change. However, despite such initiatives, the regime was unable to advance the cause of national unity. On the contrary, it was during this period that discriminatory practices became widespread in the schools, including the infamous “i-u” grading scale.¹³

Upon his assumption of power, Pierre Buyoya appears to have failed to fully appreciate the gravity of the ethnic issue. In the speech in which he outlined his governmental program, he declared that a solution had already been found to this question and that consequently, it was “no longer on the agenda.” This illusion was brutally dispelled by the large-scale interethnic killings that took place in the northern communes of Ntega and Marangara in August 1988.¹⁴

It was against the backdrop of these events, combined with a changed international context marked by the end of the Cold War and French President François Mitterrand’s pro-democracy speech at La Baule, that Burundi embarked on its own process of democratization, holding national elections in 1993 that brought the majority Hutu opposition party to power. Having been poorly prepared for them, the majority of Burundians experienced these elections as a shock. Some regarded them as a kind of liberation that allowed them to express the grievances and resentments they had built up over the decades, as well as an opportunity to turn the slights and vexations they had experienced against their presumed oppressors. The inexperience of the newly elected leadership led it to commit mistakes that were amplified and exploited by the losers who were unwilling to give up power and the advantages that came with it. It was in this increasingly fraught sociopolitical context that President-elect Melchior Ndadaye was assassinated along with a number of his closest collaborators. This bloody coup attempt plunged the country into a new crisis that would be unprecedented in terms of duration, geographic scope, and the loss of life and property it occasioned.

¹²This is a life-long contract of vassalage whereby a landowner grants tenancy to a subject who in exchange is obliged to render services to him.

¹³ This practice was uncovered in certain regions where school principals marked the national high school entrance exams of Tutsi students with an “i” and those of Hutu students with a “u” prior to their being sent to the grading committee.

¹⁴ Hutu peasants attacked their Tutsi neighbors and massacred them. The army immediately intervened to suppress the violence and killed some Hutu peasants while others were forced into exile in neighboring Rwanda. However, contrary to earlier crises, the repression was basically limited to the areas where the killings had occurred, and very early on refugees were allowed to return to their villages and were granted amnesty. It was against the backdrop of these events that Hutu intellectuals sent an open letter to President Buyoya, asking him to open a national debate on the ethnic question and to introduce reforms to end discrimination.

A number of initiatives within the country were undertaken to resolve the crisis. Almost from the beginning, Catholic bishops and other religious leaders, along with the representatives of a number of civil society organizations, attempted to bring the various parties together so as to restore order and assist the victims of violence. In order to cope with the institutional vacuum and humanitarian emergency wrought by the crisis, these entities set up a provisional organism known as the Group of Associations for Peace and Assistance (or GAPS, by its French acronym),¹⁵ which called on all parties to stop fighting and begin a dialogue. Following the restoration of calm, the GAPS facilitated lengthy negotiations among Burundian politicians for the creation of new political institutions for the country.

Subsequently, the United Nations took an active role through the Representative to the Secretary General, Ahmedou Abdallah, in trying to resolve the conflict and, in particular, to install a new president following the death of Cyprien Ntaryamira on April 6, 1994.¹⁶ The latter was replaced by Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, a Hutu who, according to the new institutional provisions agreed upon in the negotiations, was to have a Tutsi Prime Minister belonging to the UPRONA, Anatole Kanyenkiko. However, the latter was deposed by radical elements from his own party who accused him of being too close to the President, and replaced by Antoine Nduwayo. Cohabitation between the latter and President Ntibantunganya broke down almost immediately, sparking yet another crisis that mobilized Burundians along ethno-partisan lines. These developments unfolded in an increasingly noxious atmosphere fueled by a spreading Hutu rebellion, numerous massacres of civilians, and the threat of military intervention by the regional powers under the leadership of Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere. It was in this extremely fraught context that Pierre Buyoya staged his coup d'état on July 25, 1996.

Although the Buyoya coup was relatively well-received by the broader international community, the countries of the Great Lakes region, which had invested themselves in finding a solution to the Burundian crisis—notably through the deployment of a regional military assistance force—felt betrayed by it. Julius Nyerere, named as mediator at the Tunis regional conference in March 1996, considered the coup an act of sabotage against the regional peace initiative. He immediately called for an embargo on Burundi as the “sole viable alternative between doing nothing and a military intervention, an option preferred in some circles but which the [U.N.] Security Council was unwilling to accept. The countries in the region lacked the resources required for an intervention without the assistance of the great powers through a Security Council resolution.”¹⁷

¹⁵ This group, established in the wake of the coup attempt of October 21, 1993, was comprised of the Catholic and Protestant churches as well as certain civil society organizations, including the ITEKA and Sonera Leagues and various employers' associations.

¹⁶ Cyprien Ntaryamira died in the same plane crash as the Rwandan President, Juvénal Habyarimana, in Kigali. He only had been in power for two months, having been inaugurated on February 5, 1994.

¹⁷ Speech of Walter Bugoya, of the Nyerere Foundation, “Workshop on Confidence-building and Linking the Arusha Process to Peace Initiatives in Burundi,” 21-23 juin 1999. Cited in Report No. 13 of ICG Central Africa, “L'Effet Mandela. Evaluation et perspectives du processus de paix burundais,” April 18, 2000.

It was in this context of growing regional engagement that the lengthy Arusha negotiations began, a process that for many is associated with important progress in the peace process in Burundi. For many observers, the start of negotiations between the warring parties marked the first key moment in this process.

3.1. The beginning of negotiations: a crucial stage in the process

Public acceptance of these negotiations, particularly among the followers of the UPRONA, was not easy. When Pierre Buyoya came to power, the majority of his followers expected at least two things: that he prevent the regional military deployment in Burundi envisaged by Nyerere, and that he grant the national army the authority and means to crush the Hutu revolt.¹⁸ Immediately following his accession to power, Pierre Buyoya established a commission charged with steering the public debate. However its mandate was limited to initiating a national “dialogue” rather than beginning negotiations, which was still a taboo in most political circles. Indeed, opposition to the negotiations was fierce. The announced departure of negotiators for Arusha provoked blockading of the roads around the capital and even of the airport. Given such a context, making negotiations acceptable to the average Burundian was a significant turning point.¹⁹

Beyond the internal factors that spurred people to gradually accept negotiations, the regional embargo that was imposed by Burundi’s neighbors was also instrumental in forcing the government to the negotiating table. In the words of one observer, had it not been for the embargo, the government “would have dragged its feet for a long time.”²⁰ We know that in response to the region’s invitation to negotiate, the government set certain preconditions, initially demanding that the rebellion lay down its arms. However, the tightening of sanctions forced the government to modify and eventually, to abandon, these demands. After refusing to negotiate with its adversaries on the grounds that they were guilty of genocide, it then balked at holding negotiations in Arusha because it saw Tanzania as being relatively favorable to the rebellion, and subsequently rejected Julius Nyerere as facilitator on the grounds that he was incapable of acting as a neutral mediator between the parties. Given these difficulties in bringing the Buyoya government to the negotiating table, the start of negotiations without preconditions (apart from those agreed during a preliminary round of mediation) represented a crucial step in resolving the Burundian conflict. It was first and foremost psychologically significant.

3.2. The Arusha Accord: a decisive turning point

Many observers have emphasized the shortcomings of the Arusha Accord, in particular the fact that it is a peace agreement without peace: in other words, without an effective ceasefire, with numerous reservations by the negotiating parties that emptied the

¹⁸ The prevailing opinion among Tutsis was that the army would not be given the means required to do this by the Ntibantunganya government, which was seen to be close to the revolt. One astute observer compared the dilemma of his position to that of cattle herder with two bulls in his herd.

¹⁹ Interview, Bujumbura, August 2007.

²⁰ Interview, Bujumbura, September 2007.

agreement of any substance, and without funding, despite the pressures exercised by representatives of the international community.

However, despite these criticisms, the signing of the Arusha Accord is today widely regarded as a decisive step. This is because, even if the Accord was signed while fighting continued, the fighting could never have been halted, at least between the principal protagonists, without this preliminary political agreement.

It is primarily the psychological impact of the Arusha Accord that has been emphasized by observers. For many, the negotiating process that gave rise to it was akin to a kind of psychological therapy which, through the dialogue it initiated between the various warring factions, served to attenuate the Hutu-Tutsi antagonism. It also marked the first time that the Burundian population had come together to dialogue and search for resolutions to their country's fundamental problems, with the active support of the international community. Thus, the process that led to the Arusha Accord, and the Accord itself, served as a training ground for dialogue, tolerance, and the search for compromise for those who participated. In this sense, the Accord marked a crucial achievement not so much in terms of its content, but for the process it set into motion. As such, it laid the basis for achieving the stages of peacebuilding that followed: negotiating the transition of power, negotiating a ceasefire, drafting a constitution, and initiating the electoral process.

3.3. The transition of power from Pierre Buyoya to Domitien Ndayizeye: a key symbolic step

The Arusha Accord was signed without agreement on who would lead the transition. It had been agreed that the transition of power would take place over 36 months and be divided into two 18-month phases. During the first phase, the country would be led by a Tutsi president, seconded by a Hutu vice-president from FRODEBU, who in turn was to succeed to the presidency during the second phase. After numerous lobbying campaigns pitting the followers of Epitace Bayaganakandi against those of Pierre Buyoya, the consensus settled on appointing the latter as Tutsi President. The vice-presidential candidate presented by the FRODEBU was Domitien Ndayizeye. However, although the Accord was signed on August 28, 2000, the transition of power did not effectively get under way until thirteen months later, in November 2001, because of squabbling within the transitional leadership.

Meanwhile, the civil war intensified during the first phase of the transition and Pierre Buyoya completed his term without having been able to achieve a global ceasefire. Ceasefire agreements were only concluded with minority groups that had split off from the principal insurrectionary movement in the course of the negotiation process. The strategy of negotiating by stages that was pursued by the transitional government was seen by some observers as a strategy conceived by Pierre Buyoya to prolong his term. The principal argument advanced by Buyoya and his supporters was that he could not leave power before a global ceasefire was signed, on the grounds that a Hutu president could not be expected to negotiate impartially with the Hutu-led rebellion. They believed

that a Hutu president would not protect the interests of the Tutsi community sufficiently, and would be incapable of commanding an army whose leadership was in majority Tutsi.

Buyoya's arguments were widely publicized by his supporters to the public as well as certain influential domestic actors in the peace process. However, faced with strong internal and external resistance, Pierre Buyoya was forced to abide by his initial pledge and to cede the seat of President to his designated successor, Domitien Ndayizeye, on May 1, 2003.

Despite his reluctance to leave power, the departure of Pierre Buyoya following the first phase of the transition was of significant symbolic import, not least because it showed that previous engagements needed to be respected. Indeed, it could be argued that this step laid the basis for a culture of respect for commitments and, in a certain sense, regarding them and the law itself as binding.

This handover of power also marked a significant psychological departure because of the widespread fear that in those circumstances Pierre Buyoya and his supporters in the army would not surrender power to a Hutu President. Indeed, this second phase of the transition process rekindled ethnic tensions that had been largely dormant during the first phase.

3.4. The signing of a global ceasefire between the CNDD-FDD and the government: restoring security to most of the country

As we have seen, the Arusha Accord was signed without an agreement on the cessation of hostilities. On this point, one observer remarked that the most important pages of the Accord document were those that had been left blank, i.e. those dealing with a ceasefire and which unfortunately remained unsigned. Accordingly, the most difficult part of the negotiating process was to truly identify the most influential actors. By focusing on the political process rather than the achievement of a ceasefire, Julius Nyerere ended up excluding the military chiefs of the revolt who, over time, took on an increasingly political role. In other words, he underestimated the extent to which the negotiating process transformed the perspectives of the principal actors in the conflict. This political repositioning of the leaders of the rebellion in turn led to a gradual fragmenting of almost all the armed parties and movements involved in the conflict. In the end, it proved necessary to include all the warring factions in the negotiations in order to correct for the biases that resulted from the selective choice of who to bring to the table.

The approach that had been settled upon by the sitting government and ultimately by the external facilitators was to conduct separate negotiations with the various factions of the rebel movement: the PALIPEHUTU-FNL faction led by Alain Mugabarabona and the CNDD-FDD faction led by Jean Bosco Ndayikekurunkiye.²¹ However, these accords had

²¹ The latter had deposed Léonard Nyangoma, the original leader of the CNDD in 1998. In turn, Ndayikekurunkiye was himself replaced at the head of the CNDD by Pierre Nkurunziza in October 2001.

no real impact in terms of restoring security, since the signatories represented minority groups with little influence over the larger groups from whence they derived.

After signing a first accord, which was not respected, an ostensibly global accord was signed between the Burundian Government and the CNDD-FDD in November 2003. Its impact was immediately felt on the ground. The cessation of hostilities on the part of the principal rebel movement brought security to most of the country, with the exception of the rural area of Bujumbura as well as part of the Province of Bubanza, a traditional fiefdom of Agathon Rwasa's PALIPEHUTU-FLN.

The factors that contributed to this breakthrough were the external pressures applied on the government and the CNDD-FDD, as well as improvements in the regional context, which saw a breakthrough in the Congolese negotiation process and the stabilizing influence of elections in Rwanda. Greater pressure was also put on Tanzania to stop supporting the rebellion. Finally, the supplying of the CNDD-FDD through the Democratic Republic of Congo by Sudan from the North and Katanga from the South was investigated and denounced by the United Nations. In this sense, geopolitical factors were crucial in helping to achieve a ceasefire in Burundi.

The other significant factor was the general exhaustion of the warring parties, who had paid a heavy price in casualties and resources due to the protracted nature of the conflict. Given the numerous civilian and military victims the conflict created, many combatants, particularly on the Tutsi side, asked themselves what advantage was to be gained by further prolonging a conflict that had devastated the country and its inhabitants. The combatants themselves were the first to reach this conclusion, since they met on the battlefields where they exchanged words and supplies. This rapprochement among the combatants was significant because it humanized them in each other's eyes, thereby setting the stage for the breakthroughs that followed.²²

The signing of the general ceasefire agreement made it possible for the CNDD-FDD to gain entry to the country's political institutions. Thus, it cleared the way for an electoral process that concluded successfully at the end of 2005.

3.5. Organization of elections and unanimous acceptance of the results

In Burundi, elections have always been more or less experienced as moments of crisis. Following a brutal war that had seriously eroded the country's social fabric, elections were desired by some and dreaded by others. Yet, for everyone, they constituted an indispensable phase of the peace process, making it possible to turn the page on a dark chapter in the country's history by giving Burundi a representative government after twelve years of political transition in which the legitimacy of the state had been continually contested and undermined.

²² According to the International Crisis Group, "in certain regions in which the war has lasted the longest, such as at Makamba, the military and the rebels shared the same living conditions on the ground and developed a certain respect for each other, if not an outright sense of solidarity that led them to sometimes share beer, food, or loot." ICG Central Africa, "Effet Mandela," Report No. 13, p.37.

Most noteworthy of all was the fact that the principal political actors in the country, civil society, and the international community all accepted the results of these elections, which were seen as both free and fair. With this development, Burundi thus completed an exemplary conflict-resolution process: armed conflict, negotiation between the parties, conclusion of a peace accord and organization of free and fair elections, and general acceptance of the results. Accordingly, many observers have not hesitated to uphold the Burundian peace process as a model.

3.6. The actors and factors underlying these changes

A number of actors and factors were responsible for this successful outcome. The role played by international actors must be seen as crucial. Quite quickly, in the period immediately following the outbreak of the crisis, the international community flew to the country's aid and pursued several initiatives that ultimately gave birth to the peace process. These were actively pursued once it became apparent that local political actors were unable to solve the crisis and end the war on their own.

3.6.1. The role of the region and of the international community

As the internal blockages grew increasingly insurmountable, the international community rapidly came to Burundi's aid through an initiative of the Carter Center in collaboration with the Organization for African Unity and its President, Toumani Touré.²³ Summits on the crisis were held in Cairo in November 1995 and in Tunis in March 1996. The latter confirmed the appointment of Julius Nyerere as mediator and underscored the steering role to be played by the regional initiative in the peace process.

Alongside these initiatives, the Community of Sant' Egidio opened preliminary talks in Rome between the Government of Burundi and the CNDD rebel group led by Léonard Nyangoma. Such behind-the-scenes diplomacy made it possible not only to create a space for dialogue among the warring parties and break the taboo on negotiations, but also to establish a schedule for negotiations. And although these early negotiations were aborted because of the hostility of parties who had no interest in seeing them continue, they nevertheless enlisted regional actors who feared losing their influence over the process.

According to a number of observers, Burundi enjoyed a level of international attention that far outstripped its geostrategic importance. In this sense, global efforts to sustain the peace process in Burundi never weakened. They were stronger than in Liberia or Sierra Leone. Thus, when the Arusha Accord was signed, the international community mobilized and sent special representatives (including the African Union, European Union, Switzerland, and Canada), including Bill Clinton, who had heeded the entreaties of Nelson Mandela, to go. The actions of these international actors converged in support

²³ This first summit enlisted the participation of Desmond Tutu. However, after the Tunis summit Julius Nyerere announced that he wished to work on his own, thus excluding the other international principals to the negotiations and placing the stamp of the region on the process.

of the negotiations as all of them sought to gain credit for its success.²⁴ Their presence made it possible for the mediator to ratchet up the pressure on the negotiating parties to accept the accord. At the same time, Nelson Mandela was able to defuse competition among the principal regional actors, who from then on would focus their energies on obtaining a peace accord. Within the country, the pursuit of negotiations prompted initiatives on the part of domestic actors (civil society, churches, NGOs) who favored dialogue and compromise over continued conflict.

3.6.2. The role of the mediators in the process

In order to arrive at a global ceasefire, negotiations were successively led by three mediators: Julius Nyerere, who was followed by Nelson Mandela after his death, who in turn was succeeded by Jacob Zuma, then Vice-President of South Africa and acting representative of President Thabo Mbeki.

The sensitivity of the issues addressed during the negotiations and the long-standing grievances separating the two parties brought them to regard with suspicion any attempt to sway the negotiations or force a compromise. Accordingly, as the process unfolded, all the mediators were accused of bias by one or the other party. From this perspective, it was the great fortune of the peace process that it was overseen by luminaries like Nyerere and Mandela, whose reputations made them unassailable.²⁵ The historical eminence of these two figures put them above any partisan bickering, giving them effectively uncontested authority over the proceedings.²⁶

That being said, a number of negotiators observed that had Julius Nyerere remained the principal facilitator, it would have been difficult to reach a settlement. According to them, Mandela's arrival was instrumental in galvanizing the negotiations and bringing them to a satisfactory close. His charisma, his stature and the widespread international support he enlisted were essential factors in their success, not least because they prevented the various parties from impugning his credibility. Indeed, Mandela's awesome reputation even allowed him to cast aside some of the elementary rules of conflict mediation. Thus, when the parties were unable to reach a compromise on their own, Mandela would impose one upon them. Nelson Mandela masterfully advanced the negotiating process through a combination of promises, threats and pressures on the various actors. For example, at one point, he attacked President Pierre Buyoya and tried to discredit him, and a separate session was required to calm tensions and straighten things out between both leaders. And, as the Arusha process drew to a close, Mandela's presence proved necessary for the Accord to be signed. One anecdote maintains—correctly—that the document that was presented to the negotiators at the signing ceremony was not the one that they had discussed and approved, but had been modified without their knowledge.

²⁴ Interview with a diplomat familiar with the peace process, Bujumbura, September 2007.

²⁵ Interviews, Bujumbura, September 2007.

²⁶ One diplomat stated in one interview, certainly not without cause, that any time you say what Burundians do not wish to hear, they shower you with insults.

Accordingly, it was only under pressure from Mandela—and following the inclusion of a substantial number of reservations—that their signatures were finally obtained.

At the same time, however, the negotiators almost unanimously highlighted the incompetence of the mediators' technical advisors, a few exceptions notwithstanding. Given that this process required a deep knowledge of negotiation methods, the representatives from the Nyerere Foundation who were called upon to advise the parties to the negotiations were roundly criticized for their technical deficiencies in facilitating the negotiations. In some instances, their neutrality was even called into question.

3.6.3. Key factors in the successful conclusion of the process

Alongside external factors and actors such as the international community, the regional peace initiative, and the multiple forms of pressure and mediation that were proposed in order to push the warring parties towards negotiation and compromise, the peace process would certainly not have been successful had it not been for the favorable role played by certain internal factors and actors.

From a domestic standpoint, the population was tired of war, and everyone wished it would end as quickly as possible. This general desire for peace was an essential factor in the success of negotiations, various strata of the population continually expressing their weariness with the conflict at public events and in the media. Most notably, people were exhausted by the constant displacement they suffered from the combat zones, which prevented them from pursuing their livelihoods, the extreme material hardship wrought by the war, its human cost, and more generally, the pall of uncertainty it cast over the future. Accordingly, there was a quasi-universal hope for peace in the country, a sentiment underscored by one observer's metaphor that "the banana tree of peace had been planted in fertile soil."²⁷

Civil society and the media also played a crucial role in the process. They encouraged debate at various times of formerly taboo subjects, resisted attempts to demonize and dehumanize the other, and kept the public informed as to the progress of negotiations and the positions of the various parties. Thus, they were crucial in directing pressure on the negotiators towards reaching a compromise.

From a military standpoint, the relative equality of the forces in the field ultimately favored a negotiated settlement. Thus, despite the persistence of bellicose tendencies within each camp, the realization on the part of the warring parties that neither of them could decisively defeat the other ultimately carried the day. Another factor that facilitated the positive outcome of the negotiations was worsening crime and the growing number of victims from the war, particularly among civilians. Once the warring parties realized the scale of the casualties and the consequences it would have for the country, they came to appreciate that they were continuing to fight for nothing.²⁸

²⁷ Interviews, Bujumbura, September 2007.

²⁸ Interviews, Bujumbura, September 2007.

Finally, in the wake of the Rwandan genocide and the Congolese civil war, regional geopolitical considerations also played a role in spurring negotiations forward. The international community invested considerable in peace efforts in Burundi so as to help stabilize the region. The various pressures placed on the government and the CNDD-FDD to reach an agreement intervened in a favorable regional context. Peace negotiations in the Congo were beginning to bear fruit, while Rwanda was entering a period of relative political stability as it prepared for elections.

Finally, the U.N. presence in the country, in the form of the Operations of the United Nations in Burundi (ONUB), was a dissuasive force that protected the peace process from disruptive domestic elements determined to prolong the conflict. Beyond the political and military pressures it brought to bear in the name of the international community, this U.N. presence provided technical and material support necessary for the success of the process, notably in resupply of the rebels and organizing the elections.

4. SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES AND RISKS OF THE PEACE PROCESS

The organization of elections without major strife and the establishment of representative institutions were a decisive step in advancing the peace process in Burundi. However, the prospective durability of the peace will depend on the manner in which the peace process writ large addresses the various causes at the root of the conflict. Any assessment of this process must perforce evaluate its impact on the causal factors on which it has already had an impact, those which have not yet been addressed, as well as residual causes of the conflict and the risks they pose for peace.

4.1. The causes the process has addressed

Peace efforts up to this point have primarily focused on institutional factors because of their positive psychological effects. Thus, while our analysis revealed significant economic and political causes for the conflict, the primary response has essentially been to address its ethnic component. Nevertheless, such an approach has made it possible to modify the previous status quo, which was characterized by significant ethnic imbalances in the exercise of political and military power, through the establishment of ethnic quotas in the principal state institutions and defense and security forces. From this standpoint, the peace process has reduced the political exclusion and fears of marginalization of the principal ethnic minority. However, in correcting for these ethnic imbalances, the peace process may have created new ones. The process addressed the first level of governance through the organization of a democratic process and the quotas instituted in the government institutions, military and police. This approach has made it possible to achieve only a relative peace, since security has been only partially reestablished due to the government's inability to reach a settlement with the last Hutu rebel groups and recent flare-ups in violence. Still, in this new context, grievances related to the homogeneous ethnic composition of the defense and security corps can no longer be invoked, and tensions associated with those grievances have been defused. Yet the act of defusing these tensions may have caused new ones to come to the fore.

The diminishing salience of ethnic conflict became particularly manifest with the electoral victory of the CNDD-FDD, which served to significantly attenuate ethnic frustration and resentment compared to 1993. Likewise, another factor that has calmed ethnic tensions is the division that has appeared between movements belonging to the same ethnic group, thereby shifting the focus from the ethnic to the political sphere. However, this does not mean that ethnic manipulation is no longer a possibility.

The principle of political alternation by which a Hutu party was able to exercise power marked a significant conceptual shift among ordinary Burundians, as they increasingly judge their leaders on their ability to resolve their problems. Specifically, the people can assess the extent to which it has benefited from the largesse of the state and, when this is not the case, to develop a critical faculty that renders it less susceptible to ethnic manipulation. As the following observation by a local focus group suggests, this danger is well understood even at the grass roots: “You always have political operators who seek to use the people as a means to satisfy their own interests (i.e. filling their bellies) and this cannot be good for peace. This being the case, local associations need to help ordinary people separate the wheat from the chaff. In order to prevent people from acting the same way, say, when they hear something on the radio, it is necessary to cultivate understanding between Hutus and Tutsis and to realize that the real reason why the peace process hasn’t yet moved forward is not because of the divisions between them, but because of people (“*ventristes*” or “*stomachists*”) who seek only to enrich themselves and to buy the latest, most expensive cars.”²⁹

4.2. Challenges and risks to the peace process

At the political level, the most important challenges remain building the rule of law in the broad sense of the word, including promoting democracy, improving governance, and guaranteeing individual rights. However, even if they are successfully achieved, such political reforms will not resolve the conflict on their own unless they are accompanied by policies to advance economic development and thus reduce poverty. As we have seen, poverty is one of the fundamental causes of the conflict, representing a key source of frustration that can be manipulated and harnessed by the political class.

Similarly, as with any other peace process, successfully addressing certain causes of the conflict necessarily causes new ones to emerge which, if they too are not properly dealt with, are liable to rekindle the cycle of violence. Thus, any peace process is perforce a balancing act between defusing the root causes of a conflict and addressing the incidental sources of conflict that take their place once these are resolved.

Beyond the concrete measures it set down to resolve the conflict, the Arusha process has also been widely portrayed as a training ground for inculcating the values of tolerance and compromise. Many observers have attributed the delays, which marred the post-transition period that followed the 2005 elections and brought the CNDD-FDD to power, to the fact that the latter did not participate in the Arusha negotiations. This not only

²⁹ Focus group in Butanganzwa, Ruyigi, September 14, 2007.

deprived it of the experience of negotiation and resulting development of a culture of tolerance, but more importantly, of ownership of the results achieved there; hence CNDD-FDD's lack of enthusiasm in implementing the terms of the Accord. Moreover, as an armed movement, the CNDD-FDD seems to have regarded its electoral success as a military victory that signified the definitive reduction and marginalization of its rivals. The resulting establishment of a "win-lose" rather than "win-win" logic eroded the trust of the other political actors in the democratic process, and progressively hampered the functioning of the country's new political institutions. Such logic was rooted in a tradition of intense and exclusionary political competition that drove the dominant party to exclude all others from power, often by violent means.

In general, then, the principal remaining threats to peace are tied to the failure to promote political and economic governance—i.e. the rejection or weakness of dialogue, the ambition of the ruling party to appropriate the political space all to itself and marginalize the opposition parties, institutional dysfunction—as well as to the inability of post-transitional governments to generate economic benefits for the majority of the population. These threats underscore the relative fragility of the peace process. Heralding a potential deterioration in the political situation, these could even lead to a reversal of the gains achieved so far.

4.2.1. Violations and blockages of the negotiations between the government and the PALIPEHUTU-FNL

From the moment he was inaugurated President, Pierre Nkurunziza has favored the military option in dealing with the PALIPEHUTU-FNL. Behind its public declarations of its intention to negotiate, the CNDD-FDD-dominated government hoped to force the unconditional surrender of this movement. Accordingly, on October 30, 2005, following the expiration of an ultimatum calling for its surrender, President Nkurunziza gave the defense and security forces two months to militarily crush the PALIPEHUTU-FNL and bring the war to an end. He would subsequently declare that the rebel group had been annihilated. In actual fact, despite suffering several military setbacks, the PALIPEHUTU-FNL appears to have retained some of its operational capacity, enabling it even to strike at the capital. At the same time, alongside the resumption of military operations, the government also launched a diplomatic offensive that cast the PALIPEHUTU-FNL as a terrorist movement to be disarmed without condition.³⁰

It was only as a result of substantial domestic and international pressure that the government decided to enter into negotiations with the PALIPEHUTU-FNL in June 2006. Proving particularly difficult, these negotiations finally produced a ceasefire agreement that was signed on September 7, 2007, followed by the introduction three days later of the joint verification and monitoring mechanism (JVFM) to enforce the ceasefire. However, despite this breakthrough, the process failed to produce a global peace agreement. Following a number of violations of the ceasefire, participants in the JVFM

³⁰ For more detail, see ICG, "Burundi: Conclure la paix avec les FNL," Africa Report No. 131, 28 August, 2007.

from the PALIPEHUTU-FNL decided in July 2007 to break their commitment to the ceasefire and return to the bush.

In truth, the difficulty of concluding a definitive peace accord reflected a lack of political will and sincerity on the part of the two protagonists. There is a general impression among interviewees that the negotiations and agreements concluded between the government and the PALIPEHUTU-FNL had been based on dissembling on both sides and that, more importantly, each had continued to pursue a “win-lose” outcome. Thus, despite a lull in the fighting following the signing of the accords, the absence of a definitive agreement ended up fueling a general climate of insecurity characterized by rising criminality and lawlessness. In this context, the upsurge of violent crime not tied to the war, such as armed robberies and settling of old scores, became a growing cause for concern and even threatened to derail the peace process.³¹

In the context of mounting crime and proliferation of arms, as well as the failure to reach a peace agreement two years prior to elections, the government imposed significant curbs on the freedom of expression within the country. At the same time, a potential union between the PALIPEHUTU-FNL and the FRODEBU, the outlines of which were already becoming clear, risked further inflaming tensions and throwing the electoral campaign into violence. In reality, the root of the conflict between the PALIPEHUTU-FNL and the CNDD-FDD can be traced to the electoral competition between them, since both parties claim the historical mantle of defending the “Hutu” cause in order to increase their support among the country’s Hutu majority at the expense of the other.

4.2.2 Poor governance, political instability and institutional dysfunction

The substantial room for maneuver the government enjoyed following its comfortable victory has gradually eroded, to the point that the government has lost, after less than two years in power, its parliamentary majority. This in turn generated blockages within the country’s political institutions due to the lack of dialogue between government and opposition parties and continual infringement of the country’s constitutional arrangements.

Immediately following its electoral victory, the CNDD-FDD quickly took over the three branches of government (executive, legislative, judicial), in effect asserting permanent control over them. The complicity that developed between the different branches of government further compromised their independence, resulting in considerable political dysfunctions and abuses. The multiple financial scandals attributable to the ruling party and its leader,³² combined with its increasing domination of the political, economic and social arenas and growing persecution of actual or presumed political opponents,

³¹ Interviews, Bujumbura, September 2007.

³² Hussein Radjabu, who was formerly President of the CNDD-FDD party, was expelled from the latter at its February 2007 Congress and thrown in jail two months later under the charge of compromising the internal security of the state.

including civil society and media organizations, fueled domestic resistance and external pressure on the government.

Considered as a whole, those facts have led many analysts to deplore the government's current authoritarian excesses: its unwillingness to negotiate with various political interlocutors including the last active rebel group, the PALIPEHUTU-FNL, curbing of the right of freedom of assembly for the other political parties, and the absence of collaboration in policymaking. The governing party placed these impediments on the freedom of action and expression of its political rivals as part of the ongoing electoral campaign it has waged since first winning the 2005 elections.³³ The prohibition of political party meetings other than the governing party's aimed to shut down competition, and represents a grave danger for political pluralism in Burundi, auguring a tense and violent electoral campaign.

Poor governance, and corruption in particular, represents a grave risk to the peace process. Corruption goes hand in hand with a general erosion of morality in the management of public affairs. Its spread can lead international donors, as increasingly appears to be the case in Burundi, to withhold the funding on which Burundi depends for over half of the national budget. Thus, it represents a serious handicap to restarting economic growth and threatens to increase poverty and social frustration.³⁴ Thus, though corruption was not an original cause of the conflict, it could quickly become so in a situation where resources are limited, because it worsens the poverty that is a cause of the conflict.³⁵

4.2.3. Delays and blockages in the implementation of political reforms

Delays and blockages in implementing the reform program stipulated at Arusha pose an increasingly serious risk for maintaining peace in Burundi.

Reform of the judiciary is long overdue in a society that has suffered for so long from the problem of impunity, and where the latter is seen as one of the fundamental causes of the recurrent outbreak of violence. After such a protracted and deadly conflict as Burundi has experienced, characterized by an inexorable cycle of bloodshed and revenge, a transitional justice system that balances the imperatives of truth and reconciliation and effective justice is long overdue. The negotiations pursued between the Burundian Government and the United Nations on this score have suffered considerable delays caused, according to most observers, by stalling by the government. One of the main obstacles has been the general amnesty proposed by the ruling party for the perpetrators of the most egregious crimes, including genocide, war crimes, and crimes against

³³ Interviews, Bujumbura, 2007

³⁴ For over a year now, a wave of strikes has gripped different state sectors including education, health and justice. On October 29, 2007, the Trade Union Confederation of Burundi issued a call for an illimited general strike because of the failure of the government to accord the 34% pay rise promised by the President to state employees in July 2007.

humanity.³⁶ Even if an agreement was ultimately reached on this point, considerable differences continued to subsist on how to reconcile the imperative of truth and reconciliation on the one hand with that of punishing the perpetrators on the other. Since the differences between the parties on these issues fall along ethnic lines, they have the potential to reignite ethnic conflict if a satisfactory solution is not found soon.

The impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of most of the crimes committed since 1993 is frequently evoked by refugees and displaced persons—all of them Tutsi—as a major obstacle to their returning to their *collines* of origin. This is seen as a provocation by many of their former Hutu neighbors, who feel that security has been restored in the *collines*. “We think that there are reasons, perhaps they are influenced by others, because they come during the day to work their plots but they still refuse to return and remain for good. This is worrisome. Why do they not come back?”³⁷ By extension, as another interviewee pointed out, some local civil servants are less than happy about the return of internally displaced to their communities. On the other hand, “the displaced never want to come back because a general climate of wariness and suspicion continues to exist there. The truth and reconciliation process has broken down and is resisted by civil servants. There isn’t enough commitment to seeing it succeed.”³⁸

The slowness or blocking of judicial reforms and the introduction of transitional mechanisms of justice serve only to entrench outstanding grievances between Burundi’s ethnic communities, increasing the potential for renewed strife and violence between them. In order to defuse this potential for violence, it will be necessary to address the conflict’s fundamental causes, specifically by ensuring justice for the victims while managing past grievances so as to avoid a repeat of the crimes previously committed.³⁹

Reform of the defense and security forces is the other sensitive area. Despite substantial advances towards the integration of Hutus in the National Defense Forces, these reforms remain far from complete. Likewise, the professionalization of these bodies remains unfinished. However, the situation is different in the army and police. While the army continues to be based on pre-war structures and personnel, the police is a creation of the peace process which, perhaps as a function of its recent pedigree, is experiencing considerable growing pains. Policemen are regularly accused of committing abuses and of frequently being involved in crimes, thefts and rapes throughout the country. And observers believe that the notorious lack of discipline that characterizes the various police units will not abate given the insufficient training provided to officers.⁴⁰ Finally, the

³⁶ CNDD-FDD party memorandum on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Tribunal for Burundi, May 5, 2007.

³⁷ Focus group of returnees in Butanganzwa, in Ruyigi province, September 2007. All of these returnees were Hutus.

³⁸ Observations of an interviewee who gave as examples the communes of Bugendana et Giheta in Gitega province.

³⁹ Interviews, Bujumbura, September 2007.

⁴⁰ Interviews, Bujumbura, September 2007. In particular, these reservations concern police units composed of former members of the various armed groups. Inadequate training thus not only hampered the professionalization of these units, but also left intact the culture of violence and impunity inculcated in their members by years of fighting in the bush.

transformation of the defense and security forces into loyal defenders of the democratic state has run into difficulties. Indeed, the growing preponderance of generals from the CNDD-FDD in policymaking caused one observer to remark that they would soon “rule the roost” in Burundi.⁴¹

Concerns have also been raised over violations of the guidelines set down at Arusha regarding the ethnic composition of the security forces in the wake of the demobilization process.⁴² These violations have led to serious ethnic imbalances within the police force, where the quotas stipulated by the Accord have clearly not been respected. Naturally, this has caused consternation among underrepresented ethnic groups, who fear for their safety at the hands of the police.

The processes of demobilization and disarmament also present certain risks to the attainment of a sustainable peace. In general, demobilization has taken place without incident. Some financial assistance is given to each ex-combatant based on his rank in order to facilitate his or her economic and social reintegration. However, this assistance is generally insufficient to get these ex-combatants back on their feet and ensure their economic sufficiency once they lay down their arms. Consequently, following their demobilization, even fifty year-old former officers find themselves without work. Thus, in the present context in which reconstruction has stalled, the majority of ex-combatants, whether former officers or rank-and-file soldiers, have no viable prospects for employment. This could make ex-combatants increasingly frustrated and bitter, and susceptible to being remobilized to take up arms, posing a threat to peace.

The proliferation of arms already represents a considerable source of insecurity within the country. In 2006 alone, the ITEKA League recorded 528 deaths from firearms, 196 of them attributable to small-caliber rifles and 72 to grenades.⁴³ In September 2005, President Pierre Nkurunziza made his first call for the population to surrender its firearms. On April 14, 2006, he declared that the population had until the following May 5 to register its guns. After that, any person caught in possession of an undeclared firearm would be subject to prosecution. The results of this campaign have been mediocre at best. Only a few weapons out of an estimated total of 100,000 have been turned in. More broadly, the absence of a comprehensive and enforceable disarmament strategy to follow up on this initiative casts doubt on the government’s actual commitment to disarmament.⁴⁴ Other disarmament initiatives have been launched by civil society groups, but were in some cases met with the hostility of some political leaders, who made it clear to the leaders of these initiatives that disarmament remained the strict prerogative of the government. Given the government’s contradictory positions on this issue, it seems clear that the arms sector is an object of political and even financial speculation. Indeed,

⁴¹ Interviews, Bujumbura, August 2007. The ICG report states that the new President primarily consults military leaders whose support was paramount in securing the removal of former CNDD-FDD President Hussein Radjabu in February 2007.

⁴² One official estimated the percentage of officers made up of Tutsis at 30%. In his opinion, this imbalance was the principal factor behind recent instances of ethnically motivated police abuse.

⁴³ Summary report of the ITEKA League, 2006.

⁴⁴ Interviews, Bujumbura, September 2007.

some of the people interviewed went so far as to suggest that the CNDD-FDD maintained arms caches in certain parts of the country.

4.2.4. Sub-regional geopolitics

Developments in the Great Lakes subregion have had a strong influence on the domestic situation in Burundi. This was notably underscored by the Regional Initiative, both in its authorization of sanctions against the country following the July 1996 Buyoya coup and its supervision of the negotiations.

However, these influences could also be negative. The resumption of war in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo is a potentially serious threat to the peace process in Burundi. This new round of conflict in the DRC has encouraged the circulation of arms, and provides a favorable context for criminal gangs whose operations extend into neighboring countries. Similarly, the 2008 Rwandan elections could also cause political instability in Burundi, particularly given the ongoing threat posed by the Rwandan militias, which continue to operate in the DRC.⁴⁵ Hunted by government troops both in Rwanda and the Congo, it is not inconceivable that these militias might stage attacks against the Rwandan Government from Burundi. Likewise, it is possible that in the absence of a final accord between the Burundian Government and the PALIPEHUTU-FNL, the latter might attempt to cement strategic alliances with the militias, potentially heralding a dangerous escalation of both the Rwandan and Burundian conflicts across the region.

Finally, other challenges have been repeatedly brought up by survey participants. The most important of these are disputes over land, particularly following the return of Burundian refugees from Tanzania. Most of the latter, in particular those who fled in 1972, have sought to reclaim properties that have since been taken over by others.

The fragmentation of landed property into ever smaller parcels, and the general disrepair of these parcels, has led to a marked increase in conflict, violence, and even killing within families. This situation has led Maurice King to describe the Burundian people as demographically trapped,⁴⁶ and it has been shown that this kind of context can lead peasants to join insurrectionary groups. The problem of land ownership is aggravated by the return of refugees, who expect to work the land they have left in order to survive. If their repatriation is not well planned, it is likely to have a destabilizing impact the country. In this context, the large-scale return of Burundian refugees following the Tanzanian Government's announcement that they had to leave its territory before the end

⁴⁵ The agreement which was signed on November 11, 2007, in Nairobi (Kenya) between the governments of Rwanda and of the Democratic Republic of Congo specifically calls for forcibly disarming the armed Hutu elements operating in the eastern DRC. As part of the agreement, Rwanda was to close its borders during these operations.

⁴⁶ According to King, a population is demographically trapped when: i) it exceeds the capacity of its ecosystem to sustain it ; ii) it can no longer obtain goods from other ecosystems, with the exception of food aid, and iii) this population is unable to immigrate in order to improve its standard of living. See King, "Rwanda. Malthus and Medicus Mundi", *Medicus Mundi Bulletin*, No. 54 (1994), pp. 11-19.

of 2007 poses a significant risk of disorder.⁴⁷ There are indications that the majority of refugees bear grievances against their homeland. If they are not well-received, the reactivation of these grievances could well result in their radicalization. Thus, the land-related conflicts that are likely to arise following their return could become serious causes of conflict in their own right.⁴⁸

5. PEACE PROGRAMS AND THEIR POTENTIAL CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Peace programs do not necessarily include just those with explicit peacebuilding objectives, but should be more globally understood to be programs that contribute to peace in all its dimensions. However, in order for them to have a positive impact, it is necessary that such programs concretely improve people's lives and, concomitantly, address one or several of the factors fueling the conflict. These programs could concentrate on such issues as education, land and resource distribution, justice, and poverty-reduction, etc.

Alongside government programs, other peace programs have been independently launched by various local or international organizations, often following their assessment of people's needs on the ground. However, such independent initiatives generally suffer from a lack of coordination and collaboration among their authors, a few exceptions notwithstanding.

5.1. The Transformation of civil society and its impact on people's perspectives

The most noteworthy aspect of the Burundian peace process raised by the majority of researchers and analysts, as well as most of the people interviewed for this study, is the quantitative and qualitative strengthening of civil society and the central role it has played in the search for and consolidation of peace. Around 60% of the people interviewed mentioned the positive role played by civil society and media organizations at various stages and levels of the peace process.

Civil society is understood here to mean the sum total of citizens who belong to voluntary organizations that are financially and politically independent from the state. Including organizations that seek to promote the common good and stimulate greater citizen involvement in national affairs, civil society operates in areas as diverse as economic and social development, politics, human rights, the environment, culture, sport and research.⁴⁹ It includes urban civil society organizations (CSOs) and grassroots community organizations (COs). The organizations referred to here are for the most part

⁴⁷ On November 3, 2007, the Burundian Minister for National Solidarity, Repatriation, National Reconstruction, and Human Rights, Mrs. Immaculée Nabayo, announced on the radio that the Tanzanian government had decided to delay the forcible return of all Burundian refugees to the end of June 2008 at the latest.

⁴⁸ Interviews, Bujumbura, August 2007.

⁴⁹ See Christophe Sebudandi and Gérard Nduwayo, *Programme et stratégies d'appui à la société civile burundaise* (New York: UNDP, 2002.)

domestic associations and groups—particularly CSOs—distinguishable from international non-governmental organizations (INGOs).

According to the classification system created by the Ministry of Interior, civil society organizations can be broken down into seventeen areas of activity: religious and confessional; AIDS treatment; human rights; assistance to at-risk youth (especially orphans and indigent children); women's rights; environmental protection; corruption and governance; community-based development; support to the poor and vulnerable; teaching; scientific research; agriculture, livestock, fishing and apiculture; culture; sports and leisure; press and media; sectoral interests, and mutual aid and social solidarity. This classification system is based on the typology devised by Sebudandi and Nduwayo, who identified 14 categories of organizations operating in Burundian civil society.⁵⁰

Barring a few exceptions, most civil society organizations in Burundi were born during the political crisis and civil war with the aim of confronting challenges presented by the latter.⁵¹ Extremely rudimentary at first and riven by ethnic cleavages that plagued the society as a whole, Burundian civil society grew increasingly plural and diverse, transcending its initial weakness to play a primary role in driving the society's development. According to one observer affiliated with the peace process, "When we started our work, we did not think that we would find members of civil society because all the people we met were essentially an extension of the Tutsi-led government."⁵² Indeed, at the beginning of the peace process, there were only a very limited number of civil society organizations in the modern sense of the term.⁵³

This gradual expansion in the size and diversity of the associative sector has been largely sustained by the civil society-building programs pursued by a number of NGOs within the country. These programs notably concerned the role and functions of civil society, its identity, its modes of action, and the democratic management of its member organizations.⁵⁴ Such programs ended up having multiplier effects, which in turn accelerated the transformation of the Burundian associative sector into a modern civil society.

Fundamentally, the rapid development of civil society seems to be tied to the progressive weakening of the state as a result of the crisis, and its resulting "inability to fulfill its most basic functions."⁵⁵ This created enormous needs and expectations, which translated in turn into new spheres of activity for civil society organizations.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ In 1993, there were only around 30 licensed independent associations in the country. By October 2007, there were around 3000, a one-hundred fold increase. This means that on average, 210 organizations were licensed each year during this period.

⁵² Interviews, Bujumbura, September 2007.

⁵³ One analyst of the situation in Burundi remarked that at this time, only the ITEKA League truly met this criterion. Interviews, Bujumbura, September 2007.

⁵⁴ In particular, such programs were pursued by the following organizations: Search for Common Ground; AFRICARE; the Canadian Center for International Studies and Cooperation (CISC); CARE International; Alert International, etc.

⁵⁵ René Otaeyk, Institut d'études politiques de Bordeaux, 1995

International NGOs also played an important role in encouraging pluralism within the media and in the public arena, often by supporting the establishment of new media organizations, in particular radio production studios and stations. This, for example, was the case with Studio IJAMBO, which was created in March 1995 by Search for Common Ground (SFCG). Its purpose was to address two related problems plaguing the Burundian media landscape: the proliferation of hate-driven media organizations on the one hand, and the absence of credible information sources to counter them, on the other. The following year, Studio Tabane was created in Bruxelles by the Burundian diaspora with the active support of European NGOs, in particular ICCO and NOVIB. The association's name—Tabane means “living together”—enshrined its guiding principle: it would produce programs that sought to promote the peaceful coexistence of all Burundians.⁵⁶

The difficulties faced by these studios to get their programs aired on the national radio in turn fueled the demand for independent radio stations whose editorial stance was not controlled by the state. In response to this demand, around ten independent radio stations were established over the course of a decade with the support of international NGOs. The most important were Bonesha FM (formerly Radio Umwizero), founded in 1996; Radio Publique Africaine (RPA), established in 2001; and Radio Isanganiro, founded in 2002 with the help of the SFCG. These three stations ploughed the way for the upsurge of independent radio stations that would follow.

Almost immediately, radio stations assumed a crucial role in keeping the population informed and supporting the democratic transition in Burundi. They distinguished themselves by organizing public debates on key political issues and challenges, fostering a media climate favorable to negotiations and dialogue, supporting reconciliation initiatives, and promoting good governance in interaction with civil society. At the same time, the stations' ongoing vigilance helped limit state abuses through denunciations.⁵⁷ The debates organized between various political figures and parties generated a palpable shift in people's outlooks and attitudes, thereby facilitating a change in their individual and collective behavior. From this standpoint, greater access to information has had a significant impact by enhancing freedom of expression, the fundamental prerequisite for achieving a durable peace. By acting as conduits for new information, these stations helped compensate for the biases and gaps in coverage attributable to the state-controlled media, while increasing people's mutual respect for one another's opinions.

Civil society and media organizations were constantly operating in concert with one another. The former served as a source of information or pressure upon the state, which the media in turn acts to transmit and amplify. These complementary roles were reinforced over the course of the peace process and proved especially critical at key junctures in the political transition, the negotiation and electoral phases, and beyond.

As a result of their sheer diversity, civil society organizations have become involved in a great many areas and activities. These cover a broad spectrum, including initiatives

⁵⁶ Charline Burton, “Débat autour du concept de journalisme de paix,” Brussels, Université Libre de Bruxelles, February 2006.

⁵⁷ Interviews, Bujumbura, August 2007.

promoting rapprochement between the principal ethnic groups, peaceful coexistence, conflict resolution, denunciation of abuses and promotion of the equal rights of citizens under the law, civic education, and dissemination of the signed agreements and other legal texts such as drafts of constitutions and electoral laws. As a pressure group, civil society organizations engaged in advocacy on a number of subjects in relation to different societal actors, and constantly played a role of watchdog vis-à-vis the country's political actors. In this sense, through their growing voice, CSOs played a crucial part in restoring political stability to Burundi and helping to demystify the causes of the civil war.⁵⁸

5.1.1. Summary of the role of civil society and media organizations in the electoral process

As an illustration, we might highlight the crucial role played by civil society and media organizations during the campaign preceding the 2005 elections. Initially, civil society and media put active pressure on the relevant actors to come up with proposals for an electoral law so as to bring the political transition to an end. In order to ensure that the proposals were known to voters before being adopted, they organized informational meetings in which these proposals were outlined and discussed. Similarly, a network was created to advocate for legislation to both the public and the political class. It was this network that first set up a media synergy program to keep the population informed.⁵⁹

During this pre-electoral phase, civil society and media organizations established a Citizens' Civic and Electoral Education Program (or PECEC, according to its French acronym). Through this program, they devised a training course for prospective trainers in all the provinces of the country, touching on various issues pertaining to democracy, the rights and duties of citizens, the electoral law, and security.

With the support of PECEC's different partners, a training course was specifically created for observers on electoral procedures and practices. Civil society organizations were also involved in getting political actors to agree to a code of conduct committing them to maintain certain attitudes and behaviors, notably on respect for the law, for electoral procedures, and for each other. This code of conduct was elaborated and signed by all the political parties.

Civil society and media organizations also paid considerable attention to voter registration, documenting and denouncing any irregularities that might have led to contestation of electoral outcomes on the part of the losers. As a result, most of the irregularities that subsequently occurred were duly corrected.

During the final phase of this process, civil society and media organizations played an active role as electoral observers. In all, four rounds of direct voting were planned: a

⁵⁸ Interviews, Bujumbura, August 2007.

⁵⁹ This initiative was conceived in order to hold a national debate on the merits of the communal law by means of multiconferencing between mobile broadcasting studios which were set up throughout the country. All the radio stations agreed to simultaneously broadcast the debate so it could be heard by the population at large.

popular referendum, followed by communal, hillside, and parliamentary elections. (Presidential and senatorial elections were to be held by indirect—i.e. parliamentary—vote.) Civil society put in place several entities to oversee the elections, the most important of which was the Civil Society Coalition for the Monitoring of Elections (COSOME), created for a limited period of eight months over which these elections were held.⁶⁰ Composed of sixteen civil society, confessional, and media organizations, COSOME's primary objective was to harness the energies of Burundian civil society to contribute to the peaceful and transparent holding of elections throughout the country.⁶¹

Accordingly, COSOME deployed 640 observers for the constitutional referendum, monitoring the voting in 20% of the country's polling stations, and 1100 observers during the communal and parliamentary elections. In addition, it deployed 17 provincial coordinators, who in turn were supervised by eight national coordinators and supported by eight switchboard operators receiving local reports by phone. This information was complemented by radio broadcasts and reports from observers on the ground.

These observers were responsible for monitoring the election campaign, the functioning of voting stations and voting booths, the smoothness of voting procedures, the behavior of various actors (polling workers, voters, civil servants, members of the security forces, etc.), and vote counting. The observers also took stock of the reactions of the political parties to the election results.

5.1.2. The media synergy: The specific role of the media in the electoral process

Ten private radio stations with national coverage, two independent radio stations and one public television station decided to combine their material and human resources to provide national coverage of the elections, identify any irregularities that might have occurred, and report the results on a continuous basis. They performed this work brilliantly, covering the vote everywhere in the country through a strategy of shared or cross-referenced reporting. The quality of the reporting guaranteed the transparency of the elections, thereby facilitating acceptance of the result by all parties.

In short, the joint involvement of the civil society and media in the electoral process made it possible to hold peaceful elections, ensure the legitimacy of the result, and hence reduce the risk of electoral disputes.

The role of civil society and the media was raised in all the interviews as having been fundamental to the country's political progress. They contributed to changing people's attitudes at all levels, individually and collectively, at the grass roots as well as among the

⁶⁰ Most notably, it comprised on the Burundian consumers' association, the ITEKA human rights league, the Observatory on Governmental Action, the Burundi Workers' Association and NGO Collective, the Conference of Churches of Burundi, the National Council of Churches, the Islamic Community, and the 'Maison de la Presse' (House of the Press).

⁶¹ Other objectives included promoting civic education, observing the elections, and denouncing electoral irregularities.

elites. Thus, they served to reduce violence and abuses, improve governance, lessen prejudices and increase tolerance, and generally install a culture of peace in the country. In this regard, the activities of the “Study Group on Transitional Justice” network, the only coordination mechanism currently active amongst CSOs and INGOs, needs to be highlighted. Formed in 2005, it has a mission to contribute to the development of transitional judicial mechanisms necessary to resolve the longstanding grievances that remain the principal obstacle to reconciliation among the Burundian people.

5.1.3. The role of women’s organizations in the peace process

From the start, networks of women’s organizations organized to take an active role in the peace process, with a focus on advocacy to the mediators of the Regional Peace Initiative. A women’s delegation even traveled to Kampala to meet Ugandan President Museveni, who was presiding over the regional initiative. Women’s groups spontaneously formed in order to lobby for peace, organizing themselves into the Burundi NGO and Women’s Association Collective (CAFOB in its French acronym) and the Dushirehamwe Association.

Women’s organizations asked and were allowed to participate in the Arusha negotiations, where they were notably represented by the CAFOB collective. Similarly, they sought to obtain greater women’s participation in the country’s political institutions. As a result of their efforts, the Arusha Accord and the subsequent national constitution stipulated that no less than 30% of governmental posts and parliamentary offices (i.e. National Assembly and Senate seats) be occupied by women. During the electoral campaign, this network of women’s groups organized a campaign encouraging women to vote and run for elected office.

Several women’s organizations such as the Women’s Peace Center, CAFOB, and the Dushirehamwe Association also offered training courses on conflict resolution for women in rural areas, facilitated the creation of mutual aid and conflict-resolution networks, as well as female-run production cooperatives. These groups made it possible to build bridges between different categories of women, notably by creating exchanges between internally displaced (Tutsi) women, women who had remained on the hillsides (Hutu), and refugee women (Hutu).

5.2. Peacebuilding programs: The promotion of dialogue and of community reconciliation

A number of NGOs and Burundian civil society organizations heavily invested themselves in the promotion of dialogue. To this end, numerous seminars on conflict resolution, democracy, governance, and human rights were organized at various levels. As one former woman refugee remarked regarding the impact of these programs, “For those who were repatriated before the others, things were very different. Suspicion was at a high, and they were at daggers drawn with those who remained in the country. When we got here, we found associations that promoted reconciliation among returning

refugees, the internally displaced, and those who'd remained on the hillsides. Bit by bit, people came together and confidence was restored thanks to the ongoing dialogue between them. As people talked about the bad things that had happened to them, trust began to grow between them."⁶²

The first organizations to become involved in peacebuilding were the international NGOs specializing in this area. Among others, these included AFRICARE, International Alert, ACORD, and Search for Common Ground. These organizations had established offices in Burundi or launched programs there as early as 1995. Other NGOs that were already present in the country, such as Catholic Relief Services and Christian Aid, tailored their activities toward incorporating a greater peacebuilding focus.

The major international organizations whose mandate included peace promotion also intervened in Burundi. The office of the Organization of African Unity charged with preventing, managing and resolving conflict was the first institution to send a delegation to the country with the express goal of restoring the peace: the Observation Mission in Burundi (French acronym MIOB.) For its part, the United Nations sent a special representative to Bujumbura with a mandate to facilitate the rebuilding of representative institutions and the reestablishment of peace. Finally, in 1994, UNESCO established the UNESCO House for Peace.

However, these initiatives required local partners to implement their peace and reconciliation programs. This encouraged the creation of new civil society organizations. In this way, local groups came to carry out these organizations' mandates while depending on their support. No doubt, a certain number of them were created for self-interested reasons, but these quickly disappeared. In most cases, it was a growing awareness of the need to restore peace that drove a number of Burundians to form new associations promoting dialogue and reconciliation. A good example is the JAMAA, an association that pursued the difficult task of bringing together young Hutus and Tutsis in Bujumbura after the city had been torn apart by ethnic violence. Another example is the APDH, an organization set up to promote human rights, peace, and reconciliation. Similarly, a number of previously existing organizations reoriented their mandates toward peacebuilding. For example, the Kamenge Youth Center tried, without much success in the beginning of the crisis, to serve as a meeting and mediation center for youth from the northern areas of Bujumbura. Most of these early initiatives attempted to start a dialogue between the Hutu and Tutsi communities or elites, whose exclusionary and ethnocentric discourses continued to fuel confrontation. In a country in which war had led people to shut themselves physically and mentally into ethnic ghettos, the most urgent priority was to build bridges between these divided communities. This at least was the objective shared by international NGOs such as Search for Common Ground, through the radio programs produced by Studio IJAMBO, or of the Women's Peace Center project.⁶³

⁶² Focus group of returnees in Butanganzwa, Ruyigi Province, September 14, 2007.

⁶³ Founded in 1996, the Women's Peace Center targeted women's leaders and advocates at the grassroots in order to bring communities together, notably through radio broadcasts such as the "Mukenyezi" (The Woman) program produced by the Studio IJAMBO. Other programs produced by this studio were directed

1996 also saw a series of local initiatives financed and encouraged by NGOs and international organizations. Among these was the creation of Radio UMWIZERO, which later became Radio BONESHA, a station exclusively featuring programs on peace, reconciliation, and the defense of human rights. The same year, a number of women's associations such as the Dushirehamwe Association, MIPAREC, and ASEJEGI were established, all dedicated to advancing peace and reconciliation. In addition, with the guidance of international NGOs, several local associations began to pursue activities in the relatively new field of conflict management and resolution. At the same time, international pressure intensified to bring the Burundian Government and the different rebel groups to the negotiating table.

The improvement of the security situation after the Buyoya coup in July 1996 put a stop to the assassination of Hutu elites in Bujumbura, and the free movement of people was restored in the capital. This not only facilitated the exchange of ideas within civil society groups, but the exchanges and associations, reflecting an ongoing trend in certain neighborhoods of the capital, gradually assumed a new face as they began—tentatively at first—to enlist both Hutus and Tutsis within their ranks. And beyond promoting interaction between the members of rival ethnic groups, local and international associations began to focus their efforts specifically on conflict resolution awareness and training.

The principal field of activity was by far the promotion of peace, dialogue and reconciliation through exchange programs, community meetings, and training courses. As official negotiations with the rebels became increasingly likely, the government initiated an internal debate on a number of publicly controversial issues such as the nature and causes of the conflict, the sharing of power, the question of justice, etc. Barely involved to this point in peacebuilding, civil society organizations became increasingly involved in this debate and produced a number of novel initiatives to help bring the conflict to an end. Unfortunately, many of these groups were driven by narrow political objectives and hidden agendas, to the point that, according to some observers, civil society had grown as polarized as the political class, with certain notable exceptions such as the ITEKA human rights league. Such local initiatives still are having a negligible impact, while international NGOs have been the primary actors in terms of peacebuilding initiatives in the country.

The launch of the Arusha process in June 1998 created a new dynamic. Strongly opposed by a segment of society that objected to any dialogue whatever with “genocidal groups,” this process nevertheless created broader support in the population. This popular support led a number of groups to refocus their activities on promoting peace. Studio IJAMBO dedicated a large part of its programs to covering the Arusha process. The United Nations Office in Burundi, UNOB, led a number of awareness-raising activities through the

at the internally displaced, refugees and demobilized ex-combatants in order to prepare people to live peacefully together. One such program was named “Amasanganzira” (The Crossroads). Others dealt with conflicts over land (“Icibare cacu,” which means “Our Heritage”) and good governance (“Kumugaragararo,” or “Out in the open.”)

intermediary of local NGOs. Likewise, the Episcopal Justice and Peace Commission (CEJP) of the Catholic Church developed training and sensitization programs that aimed to build a culture of tolerance, justice, dialogue and acceptance of the other.

In turn, the signing of the Arusha Accord gave rise to a number of initiatives that sought to promote understanding and debate among the population at large. The CEJP, ITEKA League, SFCG, Observatory of Governmental Action (OAG), Radio BONESHA FM all developed programs in this vein. From an institutional standpoint, the ministry created at the start of negotiations to oversee the peace process was transformed into a Ministry of Peace and National Reconciliation. The RCN (Citizen's Network) NGO was also established as a result of the Arusha Accord, whose implementation remained problematic given the continued fighting.

The beginning of the new millennium marked another important turning point in the promotion of peace in the country. In the first place, a number of organizations heretofore confined to Bujumbura extended their activities to a large part of the country, broadening their networks to further this goal. The peacebuilding work of certain local associations improved. They became better organized, basing their programs on strategic plans that involved an analysis of local conditions and contexts. In particular, the purpose of these sessions was to force these groups to reflect on the character and development of the Burundian conflict, and thus tailor their activities to its current circumstances. Similarly, new broadcasting organizations emerged that would play a key role in promoting peace efforts and lend greater prominence to local organizations whose activities often reached only a limited audience. Not only did these new independent radio stations offer a space for dialogue between the various ethnic communities and a panoply of peace organizations, but they also developed their own programs to this end. As such, these stations played a leading advocacy role for a peaceful resolution of the conflict by insisting on the promotion of dialogue and reconciliation. In this regard, RPA (African Public Radio), established in 2001, and Radio ISANGANIRO, launched the following year, deserve special mention. Beyond training programs and capacity-building and advocacy functions that most of these associations developed, a number also conducted research and produced in-depth studies on the conflict. The International Crisis Group, International Alert, the OAG, the League of the Rights of Man of the Great Lakes Region (LDGL) and, a little later, the Center of Conflict Alert and Prevention (CENAP), supported the peace process with thoughtful reflection on what was at stake and on the potential sources of conflict, while continuously advocating for dialogue and peaceful resolution of the conflict. New international NGOs such as Global Rights provided information and training on the politics and mechanisms of transitional justice to help organize Burundian civil society organizations into political advocacy networks. The return of certain rebel leaders in 2001-2002 following the constitution of the transitional government brought some organizations to develop training programs on negotiation techniques and conflict management that targeted not only political leaders, but also grassroots organizations, youth, women and local community leaders. Such programs were developed both by local NGOs, such as the Dushirehamwe Association and MIPAREC, and by international ones such as ACORD, SFCG's Women's Peace Center, and World Vision.

With the entry of the CNDD-FDD in the transitional government, an end to armed conflict in the majority of the country, and the scheduling of national elections, NGOs refocused their programs increasingly on improving governance and addressing issues of transitional justice. Among international organizations, this was notably the case of SFCG, International Alert, PADCO, DAI, Catholic Relief Service (CRS) and Global Rights. At the local level, the Circle of Initiatives for a Common Vision (CIVIC), the OAG, the ITEKA League, the Forum for Reinforcing the Capacities of Civil Society (FORSC), and various community radio stations can be mentioned. One of the most significant results of grassroots collaboration in the area of political advocacy was the Burundian Government's unconditional ratification, without reservation, of the Rome Treaty, which established the International Criminal Court.

Following the formation of the new government after the 2005 parliamentary elections, NGOs and civil society groups shifted their attention from promoting dialogue and reconciliation to the issues of governance, human rights, transitional justice, and peaceful conflict resolution. Alongside these various initiatives, numerous organizations advocated for reopening negotiations with the PALIPEHUTU-FNL rebel group in view of reaching a comprehensive settlement to the conflict. Thus, in 2006, under pressure from these local associations and independent radio stations, the government agreed to a new round of negotiations with the latter, which ultimately led to a ceasefire. The ITEKA League, CIVIC, the CENAP and the OAG played a particularly active lobbying role, and it should come as no surprise that these groups are currently spearheading efforts to resolve the impasse created by the rebels' withdrawal from the joint verification and monitoring mechanism (JVFM) and for an inclusive dialogue. Similarly, the formation of a new government in conformity with the new Constitution is the result of joint pressure from international partners and local associations working to promote peace. The significant influence of these organizations—the media in particular—in advancing the peace process has brought many observers to claim that they represent the surest hope for averting new conflict and consolidating democracy.

5.3. Programs targeting key actors and parallel negotiations

The ethnic balkanization of Burundi's political elite brought certain organizations to create alternative spaces for political dialogue and reconciliation. The Company of Apostles of Peace (CAP), for example, provided an informal setting in which both Hutu and Tutsi political and military leaders could meet in order to exchange information and learn about foreign experiences in conflict resolution in an informal, unofficial setting. The brainchild of International Alert, this group organized foreign trips for Burundian leaders so they could familiarize themselves with the peacebuilding experiences of other countries, such as the new South Africa and Mozambique.

It was with this goal in mind that the Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP) was created in 2003 in order to provide training on communication techniques, conflict resolution, and participatory decision-making as means of improving political leadership. This organization made it possible for its participants, chosen on an inclusive basis

among the political and military elite, to deepen their interaction and strengthen mutual trust. Such training had a particularly positive effect in reinforcing cohesion among officers of the National Defense Forces who participated in the program.

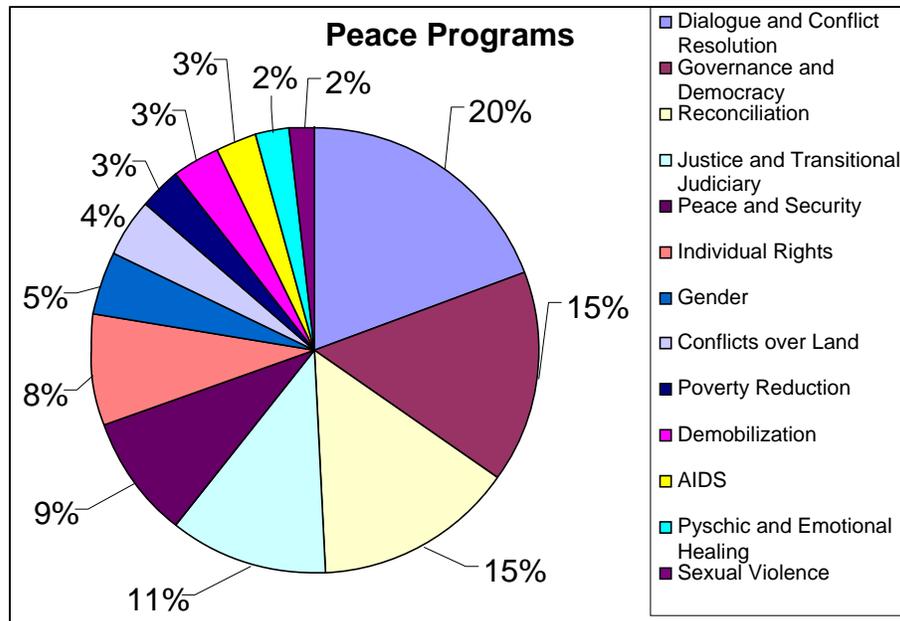
Since the start of the crisis in 1993, a number of initiatives have sought to bring the principal protagonists together and to construct an inclusive dialogue between them. In 1996 the Independent Center for Research and Initiatives for Dialogue, a Swiss NGO led by a Burundian, organized in Geneva one of the very first meetings in which representatives of the principal rebel groups, the political elite, and civil society sat down to discuss the theme of reconciliation. Similar initiatives to open dialogue and build trust among the warring parties were pursued in 1996 and 1997 under the auspices of the Community of San't Egidio. These initiatives made it possible for the government to start the first serious, and secret, negotiations with the CNDD, led at the time by Léonard Nyangoma.

In turn, during the Arusha negotiations, the Nyerere Foundation, charged with overseeing the implementation of the peace process, was sometimes supported—and in competition with—various international peacebuilding initiatives such as that launched by the South African Jan Van Eck in 1997. The latter organized a workshop in Kenya that sought to build trust among the political and military elites (UPRONA-FRODEBU) who had agreed to come together to lead the country, a formula that was first tested during the Buyoya dictatorship. In addition, this workshop sought to encourage the development of a dialogue among the various political, military and rebel actors and to analyze the various obstacles standing in the way of peace. Subsequently, in 2002, Van Eck organized an internal consultation under the auspices of the Institute of Security Studies involving 50 delegates from the PALIPEHUTU-FNL in Kigoma (Tanzania) to debate its prospective participation in negotiations.

Finally, since 2003, the Swiss NGO Initiative and Change has tried to build trust between representatives from the rebels, civil society, and the various political parties by organizing a series of meetings between them, the last of which took place in Caux in May 2007. However, these parallel initiatives irritated the South African facilitation team to the point where this NGO was forced to pursue its dialogue initiatives in a more discrete fashion.

5.4. Summary of Sample Responses

The analysis of peacebuilding programs is based on a sample of 49 organizations, 25 of which are civil society groups and 24 international NGOs based in Burundi or working on Burundi.



A total of 133 programs initiated by the organizations are included in the sample. These were distributed according to the following themes, in descending order of frequency:

- i) Dialogue and conflict management and resolution;
- ii) Promotion of governance and democracy;
- iii) Community- or elite-based reconciliation;
- iv) Promotion of justice and transitional judicial mechanisms;
- v) Peacebuilding and strengthening of security;
- vi) Promotion and defense of human rights;
- vii) Gender-based approaches to politics;
- viii) Management and resolution of land-based conflicts;
- ix) The fight against poverty and HIV/AIDS;
- x) The fight against torture;
- xi) The fight against sexual violence;
- xii) Environmental conservation and restoration;
- xiii) Trauma healing;
- xiv) Disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants.

Taken as a whole, these programs, though implemented at different times and with different objectives, significantly advanced the Burundian peace process by helping to affect important transformations at several levels: socio-political change and changes in individual behavior both within the general population and among key political figures. A chart encapsulating these various types of changes is rendered below:⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Diagram: "Reflecting on Peace Practice," www.cdainc.com.

		More People	Key People
Individual Change	Psychic/Emotional Healing Perceptions Attitudes Knowledge	27	8
	Behavior Individual Relationships	23	6
Socio-political Change	Group Behaviors Public Opinion Social Norms	23	11
	Institutional Change	22	13
	Structural Changes	9	4

Based on this diagram and the synthesis it offers of the intervention sample, one can observe that the impact of the majority of interventions was on the evolution of attitudes, mentalities and behaviors. The main targets of these programs were essentially civil society and the population in general, but also certain segments of the population, such as the youth, because of their voluntary or coerced participation in the conflict, as well as women, due to their roles in production and potential influence over the process of reconciliation. A direct relationship exists between the impact of such programs on large numbers of people and their effects on key figures in the country. The maturation of civil society and the evolution and transformation of the perspectives, attitudes and behaviors of certain strata of the population had a definite influence on key people through lobbying, pressure and advocacy activities. Such activities pushed these key figures to advance the peace process. This development was visible at all levels, notably with the acceptance of negotiations by the public and politicians on all sides of the conflict, the progress of negotiations and pressures exercised by different groups of the population on the negotiators, and with respect to sensitive issues such as the ethnic integration of the army and the incorporation of rebel combatants into the security and defense forces.

Some programs specifically targeted key political actors. Most notably, these included training programs focusing on certain themes such as negotiations and leadership, as well as initiatives to reconcile formerly ethnically divided elites, foreign study trips to learn about other countries' experiences, and meetings organized between the warring parties to persuade their members to accept and advance the peace process. Equally important were the negotiating sessions themselves, including those conducted in parallel to the official negotiations pursued in Arusha and South Africa. Finally, some programs were

specifically conceived for the combatants themselves, beginning with the officers and then gradually extending to rank and file troops.

It is important to note that such independent initiatives, taken without the prior consultation or consensus of their leaders, had cumulative effects that set the stage for the decisive turning points in the Burundian peace process.

6. CONCLUSION

The majority of the people surveyed for this study agreed on the fact that ethnic divisions were not the primary cause of the conflict in Burundi. However, although they were initially a potent source of mobilization and vehicle for elites to capture or preserve power, ethnic cleavages became increasingly central in the perception of the actors and ended up subsuming the other causes of the conflict. This perceptual shift followed a succession of outbreaks of ethnic violence and killing, entrenching deep-seated grievances which governments going back at least four decades have been unable to defuse. On this score, the analysis of the elites appear to differ somewhat from that of average, uneducated people. The latter remain convinced that ethnic divisions are the principal cause of the conflict in Burundi.

At another level, however, the experience of the last few years has brought most observers, regardless of background, to converge around the idea that the conflict is over control of the country's limited resources, and the social and economic marginalization that has been occasioned by it. In particular, the conflict has been aggravated by the problem of poverty, and the general realization that resources are limited. Similarly, poor governance, political and judicial impunity, and the unequal distribution of resources have also contributed to the conflict.

It appears that among these various causes the peace process has primarily addressed the institutional dimension by establishing ethnic quotas within different state institutions. Accordingly, the peace process has made it possible to correct for a number of institutional imbalances as well as create a favorable psychological environment for implementing other reforms. However, many challenges remain. Foremost among them are the issues of disarmament; demobilization; dealing with the past through appropriate mechanisms of truth and justice; concluding a peace agreement with the last remaining rebel group; restarting economic growth and diminishing poverty; improving governance; and revaluing citizenship. If these challenges are not met in time, they could become grave threats to the peace process, which remains fragile and reversible.

The Burundian peace process has progressed due to a combination of factors and the support of several key internal and external actors. The international community, through the Regional Initiative and its successive mediators, has played a defining role in securing the different ceasefire and peace agreements. In turn, the unfolding of the process in stages, as well as the mediators' inability to identify the true actors in the conflict, has served to substantially draw it out.

According to many analysts, Burundi has benefited from disproportionate international attention relative to its limited economic and strategic importance. Many programs have been launched in the aim of promoting dialogue, creating conditions favorable to restoring trust among Burundians, and building the chances for peace. Generally, these programs were launched without any consultation among their initiators, a few rare exceptions notwithstanding. Initially, they were mainly pursued by international NGOs and, in a second phase, in closer collaboration with local actors.

These multiple initiatives have unfolded at various levels, at the grassroots in order to promote dialogue and reconciliation between the warring ethnic communities, as well as among the elite, in the aim of promoting dialogue, tolerance, and the willingness to negotiate. The promotion of shared spaces of expression and communication seems to be the point of convergence of all these programs. They also encouraged the emergence of robust civil society and media sectors, which served as springboards for publicizing and implementing the initiatives of international NGOs, and then pursued their own peacebuilding functions. Their role was key in supporting the transition, in preparing the disposition of the various parties for talks, and in the negotiations themselves, as well as in the electoral processes, and especially in transforming people's outlooks at every level.

This maturation of the Burundian civil society and media, and the freedom of expression and debate they opened up, constitutes the most valuable achievements of a peace process that first began more than a decade ago.

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Annex 1: Map of Burundi



Source: www.lonelyplanet.com