

Burundi Update

Search for Common Ground

Situation Update

In early September, Alice Nzomukunda, Burundi's second vice-president and a leading member of the ruling CNDD-FDD party, resigned, accusing the current government of both corruption and violations of human rights. Her comments come on the heels of several troubling events that have left many criticizing the current state of human rights in the country and led UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to express deep concern. In August, the Burundi intelligence service arrested a group of politicians and soldiers, including former President Domitien Ndayizeye of the FRODEBU party and his former deputy Alphonse Marie Kadege of UPRONA, and reportedly tortured them, on allegations of planning a coup d'état. The government has yet to present any proof of such a plot. That same month, reports emerged of the summary extrajudicial execution of several individuals in police custody. The events have further divided the government and media, leaving many to speculate on the future of freedom of expression in the country. Still, there is positive news to report. After a long period of negotiation, the government signed a cease-fire agreement with the PALIPEHUTU-FNL, Burundi's last remaining active rebel group. However, it is important to note that many of the recent abuses committed have not involved the armed struggle with the FNL. While the signing of the cease-fire improves the country's overall security situation, it is human rights that are in the greatest danger in Burundi.

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Fostering Youth Participation in Democratic Development

SFCG continued its strategy to promote youth participation in Burundian society by organising a discussion forum in July for 86 youth from Bujumbura's northern suburbs to meet with parliamentarians and the Minister of Youth, Sports, and Culture to discuss the government's planned programme for youth empowerment and inclusion. Those present addressed the concerns and challenges of youth across the country, including joblessness, lack of financing for youth associations, and the need for community youth centers to be strengthened and supported. The parliamentarians in attendance vowed to report back to the government on the matters discussed, including the youth's concerns. The youth, Minister, and parliamentarians agreed to set up provincial offices in several key communes to enable the youth to easily meet with their representative deputies. SFCG organised a follow-up meeting later in the month to assess progress and establish a permanent communication platform between community youth leaders and their representatives in parliament. Youth community members and deputies present launched a joint committee as the first step in this process. The committee will meet monthly with parliamentarians to ensure continued collaboration and youth inclusion in Burundi's democratic development.

2006 Strategic Planning: SFCG Validates and Retools Its Strategy in Burundi

Between May and August, SFCG organised a series of strategic planning and reflective workshops among all 35 staff members in order to develop and validate a programme-wide logical framework. The process will help ensure synergy, collaboration, and a common goal for all programme activities within the changing country context. Through group work, facilitated discussion, and cooperative brainstorming, the staff defined four principle themes on which to base their activities: transitional justice, governance, the reintegration of marginalized groups, and conflict over land issues. SFCG is now working to validate the framework with partners and key stakeholders, and with their input, will finalize the framework in November.

SFCG-Burundi Brings Its Soap Opera Experience to Bear in Cote d'Ivoire

SFCG's Radio Drama Coordinator, Melchiade Ngendabanyikwa, spent four weeks from May to June in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, helping SFCG's Talking Drum Studio staff there to develop and launch a radio soap opera, using football as a tool to promote social cohesion and national identity. The programme took advantage of the Ivorian national team's (the Elephants) qualification for the 2006 World Cup to address the country's division and ongoing civil conflict (more information available at www.sfcg.org/programmes/cote/cote_cdisoap.html). Melchiade brought his extensive experience in radio drama at Studio Ijambo (where studio teams have been producing soap operas since 1995) to the project, helping SFCG's Abidjan Team to produce all 26 episodes of the series. Melchiade then returned to Studio Ijambo in July to help prepare for the launch of SFCG's newest soap opera focused on the issue of good governance in the context of Burundi's young democracy. The programme will begin airing in early October.

Media Training Empowers War-affected Youth

In collaboration with UNICEF, SFCG trained five secondary school students in July and August as part of a larger project on empowering war-affected youth to engage in Burundian society. The participants' internships at Studio Ijambo focused on training in Common Ground Journalism techniques, program development, and the technical aspects of radio production, including sound mixing and editing. The three young men and two young women spent their internships at SFCG's Studio Ijambo preparing individual reports on a theme of their choosing, as well as cooperatively developing a 25 minute radio magazine focused on the lives and interests of former child soldiers in Burundi.



Youth journalists preparing a radio magazine on former child soldiers.

VOT and Partners Support Victims of Torture and Sexual Violence

The Victims of Torture Project (VOT) continues to work with partner organisations (APRODH, Ligue ITEKA, THARS and TPO) to identify and assist victims of torture and sexual violence in Burundi. In recent months, while the number of victims of sexual violence has steadily decreased, the number of torture victims has fluctuated with an increase during the month of July. VOT reports that civilians remain the most numerous perpetrators of sexual violence, while soldiers and police are the largest groups responsible for acts of torture. In June, July, and August, VOT and its partners organised over 100 sensitization activities and provided medical, psychological and legal assistance to victims through counseling, advocacy, transportation and accommodation, legal advice, and financial assistance to implement income generation projects.

Working Group Encourages Cooperation, Collaboration on Transitional Justice

In August, the Working Group on Transitional Justice, which SFCG founded in May in partnership with Radio Isanganiro, got a big boost with the addition of 10 new members, including the National Council of Churches and the UN Office for Human Rights in Burundi. Others include Global Rights, Ligue ITEKA, ACCORD, and International Alert. The now 15-member strong group first adopted its charter in late May, aiming to coordinate members' activities and provide a platform for open dialogue and exchange on issues of transitional justice. The group's objectives are four-fold:

- ◆ Share information and ideas on the application of transitional justice mechanisms, as well as the continuing evolution of the official process;
- ◆ Share experiences in order to facilitate collaboration and the coordination of activities;
- ◆ Develop and facilitate the adoption of strategies that promote greater participation in the transitional justice process; and
- ◆ Encourage balanced and varied expertise on transitional justice.

SFCG in Burundi is grateful for the support of these donors:



SFCG IN THE GREAT LAKES: CROSS-BORDER INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE REGIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Youth Leaders of Today, Regional Leaders of Tomorrow

In collaboration with SFCG-DRC, SFCG-Burundi sponsored the Inter-University and Youth Forum for Peace in the Great Lakes in May in Bujumbura. Youth and University leaders from Burundi, DRC, and Rwanda came together to carry out a strategic planning to ensure the continuation of the Forum. During the ambitious programme, participants adopted the Forum's guiding rules, a founding charter, as well as elected a governing committee. Recognizing the sensitivity of the elections context in Congo, the newly elected Forum leadership organised a two-day workshop with students in Bukavu and Goma, DRC in July aimed at highlighting conflicts related to elections and the need for responsible leadership among the student communities. Léon Baroani of SFCG-DRC's



Newly elected officers of the Great Lakes Inter-University Forum at the strategic planning in May

Bukavu office supported the events by assisting and facilitating the training sessions on conflict transformation. The forum has existed since 2004, but this meeting represented the first effort to solidify the event as a permanent structure. Future plans for the forum include joint community projects and expanding beyond university students to involve Youth Associations throughout the Great Lakes. The Forum represents a significant step forward as SFCG develops a youth strategy in the Great Lakes region.

Coming Soon! Live Regional Youth Radio Programme

SFCG-Burundi's producer Desire Niyondiko has been seconded to SFCG-DRC for six months to help launch a live radio programme focused on how youth in the Great Lakes view and manage conflict. The programme will be simulcast via web streaming and FM rediffusion on four radio stations in Burundi, DRC, and Rwanda: Radio Maendeleo (Bukavu), Radio Isanganiro (Bujumbura), Contact FM (Kigali), and Radio Salus (Butare), a first for the region. The programme, *Couleurs Grand Lacs* (Colors of the Great Lakes), will involve round tables, jingles, spot messages, sketches, music, and other media tools, targeting audiences between 15 and 30 years old across the region. The first programme is scheduled to launch in early October and will be hosted at Contact FM in Kigali. Subsequent programmes will be hosted at Radio Isanganiro, Radio Maendeleo and Contact FM on a rotating basis. The project is coordinated by SFCG-DRC and funded by USAID-Rwanda.



Between June and August 2006, SFCG produced 120 radio programmes, totaling roughly 120 hours of broadcast programming. The main highlights include a soap opera focused on the DRR (demobilisation, reintegration, and rehabilitation) process and governance, a weekly programme addressing land conflict, and a live, interactive series broadcast on Radio Isanganiro addressing youth concerns on current issues. Recent programmes have focused on the alleged coup plot, negotiations with the FNL, women in the army, and challenges surrounding the establishment of a National Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Listen to SFCG/Studio Ijambo programmes at www.studioijambo.org. Listen to the programmes live at www.radioisanganiro.org.

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