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## **SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND BURUNDI** **2008-2011 STRATEGY**

### **I. CONTEXT**

Burundi today bears the scars of fifty years of post independence conflict. The country suffers from poor infrastructure, weak governance, and periodic outbreaks of violence. Long periods of instability led to the displacement of large parts of the population over the years. At the outbreak of the most recent period of intense violence in 1993, close to 218,000 Burundians fled to Tanzania. These refugees have now begun to return and the UNHCR estimates that 90,000 Burundians will be repatriated through 2008. However, refugee return brings with it its own challenges, not least tensions between returnees and those who stayed over land and property rights.

While instability persists, a peace process has been in place since an agreement signed in 2000 in Arusha. In 2005, key benchmarks were met with the organisation of national, regional, and local elections that ushered in the current government.

The elections gave Burundians the opportunity to voice their demands and hopes for national development and officials have responded. In the past few years some notable advances have taken place, including:

- The reconciliation of different groups in the country to consolidate peace
- The repatriation and reintegration of refugees, displaced persons, demobilised military, and ex-combatants
- The initiation of a culture of good governance at all government levels and
- The use of sustainable development methods in the fight against extreme poverty

Towards this last point, in September 2006 the Burundian government created a Poverty Reduction Strategy (known as CSLP for the French acronym) for use at 2007 round table talks between government officials and international donors. The CSLP sought to mobilise donor support for various social, political, and economic reforms, ensuring coordination and alignment between various efforts. Unfortunately, the CSLP document did not become available to the general population nor was it used within the scope of development projects around the country until very recently, greatly limiting its effectiveness.

Elections are scheduled to take place in 2010; although, the exact date of elections is still to be determined. Nevertheless, some clear obstacles to successful elections exist: The Electoral Commission has not yet been fully established, negotiations between the FNL and government are ongoing and in their early stages, and the Arusha Accords disarmament process is behind schedule.

At the same time reconciliation efforts have slowed and become increasingly difficult. The government has not yet established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and there have been problems with the reintegration of displaced, repatriated, and demobilised citizens. The country still has a large number of armed militias, financial issues exist, and high incidents of rape persist. With the massive repatriation resulting from the sudden closure of a Burundi refugee camp in Tanzania the current process is coming

under significant pressure.

It is in this context of upcoming elections and stalling reconciliation that Search for Common Ground has developed its strategy for the next three years. In alignment with the CSLP as the Burundian Government's strategy for peace and development, SFCG seeks to accompany Burundi in its process of transformation into a just and united society.

## II. STRATEGY 2008 – 2011

SFCG actively consulted and collaborated with its partners in Burundi and internationally to develop a clear future vision for Burundi:

Target groups :

- Local elected officials
- Association leaders
- Repatriates
- Displaced persons
- Residents
- Demobilised & ex-combattants
- Political decision-makers
- Batwas representatives
- Women
- Youth

**In 2015, Burundi is the model of a just and fair society. One founded in inclusive, effective, and responsible participation of all in decision-making institutions and processes.**

A three-priority approach for the next stage in the realisation of this vision was crafted for the 2008-2011 period. These priorities are the issues of **reintegration, good governance, and transitional justice.**

## III. THE APPROACHES OF SFCG

### 1° THE REGIONAL APPROACH

The SFCG Burundi programme is an integral part of the organisation's larger regional focus. In February 2007, SFCG drafted a regional strategic framework for Great Lakes countries and Angola. As part of the framework, SFCG identified four factors igniting conflict within and between countries in the greater Great Lakes region:

- Resource management,
- Human welfare and displacement,
- Freedom of information and expression, and
- Identity.

In accordance with the SFCG mission, each individual country programme within the regional structure develops and implements its own unique set of goals, objectives and priorities. A regional strategy allows for the fostering of stronger inter-programme relationships, opportunities for cross-border collaboration, sharing of ideas and lessons learned, as well as the most effective use of regional resources.

"Conflicts within the Great Lakes region are double sided: while maintaining a distinct local or national root, conflicts are agitated by the effects of regional instability. A regional approach is necessary for the analysis and management of such complex conflicts."

*"A Strategic Analysis of Conflict for the Great Lakes region" Swedish Agency for International Development, March 2004*

[http://www.sida.se/?d=118&a=3140&language=en\\_US](http://www.sida.se/?d=118&a=3140&language=en_US)

### 2° THE GENDER APPROACH

The inclusion of women and the female perspective is essential for the success of SFCG Burundi programming. Women comprise 52% of the country's total population, and, as such, any efforts at transforming the way in which conflict is handled in Burundi must incorporate the active participation of women. The consequences of conflict and violence are not the same for women and men. Women must influence the male decision makers in order to guarantee the consideration of female interests in peace processes.

### **3° THE YOUTH APPROACH**

Conflict management and violence reduction in Burundi cannot be realised without directly engaging Burundian youth. In the past, young people have fallen victim to the manipulation of political actors abusing the political process for their own interests or the interests of a small few. As a result, some youth have played an unknowing role in undermining Burundian government and civil society. Youth now need to collaborate with other citizens in dedicating their energy, talent, and unique perspective and experience to the important processes of reconciliation, reconstruction and development.



### **4° THE PARTNERSHIP APPROACH – INSTITUTIONALISATION – SKILLS TRANSFER**

Partnership is a vital element of SFCG Burundi's strategic plan. An examination of past successes clearly shows that money budgeted for local partners and projects have the biggest measurable impact of all the programming elements. SFCG objectives in all of its programmes are aimed at reinforcing local program-building and management capacity through skills transference and the institutionalisation of peacebuilding principles.

Studio Ijambo, a largely local initiative, has evolved since its inception into a regional training centre, organising workshops, and hosting community radio personnel from around the region for training internships. It is a centrepiece of skill sharing and capacity building at the local level.

The overall objective of this approach is to ensure the mission, vision, and techniques of SFCG will continue and increase their impact.

## **IV. TOOLS**

The tools used are complementary and diverse:

- Media tools: advertisements, sketches, shows, soap operas, competitions, & listening clubs
- Community tools: workshops, round tables and exchanges, participatory theatre, solidarity events, cultural days, concerts, & community projects
- Monitoring & evaluation