

Rapport Evaluatif du projet

‘Accompagnement de la mise en place et du fonctionnement de la Commission Vérité et Réconciliation au Burundi’

De l'ONG Search For Common Ground

MAIN FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the impact of the project 'Support to the establishment and operation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Burundi' (*‘Accompagnement de la mise en place et du fonctionnement de la Commission Vérité et Réconciliation’*)

The key findings of this research will hopefully help the next steps in the design and implementation of SFCG's activities and its partners' sensitization and dialogue initiatives. The results of this research will also contribute to SFCG Burundi's efforts to improve the quality of its programming.

BACKGROUND

Search for Common Ground's (SFCG) mission is to transform how people deal with conflict - away from adversarial approaches and toward cooperative solutions. We design and implement multifaceted programmes that aim to resolve conflict and prevent violence in Africa, the Aegean, the Balkans, the Middle East, former Soviet Union and South East Asia.

Burundi has been working in Burundi since 1995.

For two years, SFCG has been working on the process of Transitional Justice to help Burundians reconcile with their past and positively turn to the future. The general goal is to *promote participation and engagement of all Burundians in the reconciliation process*. To achieve this, SFCG works towards this goal, while operating within the framework of the following objectives:

- Inform and educate the public on issues related to truth, justice and reconciliation ;
- Create opportunities for all Burundians to participate in the dialogue on truth, justice, reconciliation and the creation of a truth and reconciliation Commission and a special Penal tribunal;
- Facilitate and promote local mechanisms of reconciliation and mutual trust.

SFCG used radio programming and community outreach activities to inform and educate the public and to strengthen local capacities. Information and Education aspects of SFCG's work in this project are primarily carried out through weekly magazines and live radio programming. SFCG's work in the promotion of dialogue is primarily implemented through decentralized round tables and live panels. These mechanisms include and encourage the participation of various stakeholders and actors including party leaders, representatives of the civil society and the government, the local administration and the population in general.

STUDY CONSTRAINTS

This study is supposed to assess the impact of the above mentioned project and possibly make recommendations.

A comparison pre/post project is almost impossible because there are no elements of comparison such as a baseline study. It is thus difficult to isolate the impact of the project from other external factors, and this should be taken into account. Moreover, the project has not yet reached its end and some of the scheduled activities have not been implemented yet.

These remarks that must be taken into account when analysis the conclusions that have been drawn in this report.

METHODOLOGY

The first step was the reconstruction of the logic of the project through document analysis and thanks to the support of SFCG Burundi staff.

In order to assess the impact of the project the study uses different techniques and tools in order to constitute a solid base of quantitative and qualitative data. Those tools included: a survey, some focus groups, and interviews with several key figures from civil society, political parties, local authorities and staff members of SFCG Burundi.

3 *provinces* and 6 *communes* were selected to meet several criteria of representativeness.

This study focused on four analytical criteria:

- Relevance
- Efficiency
- Impact
- Sustainability

For each of these criteria some key questions were formulated in order to assess the impact of the project, check its weaknesses and highlight its value-added.

MAIN FINDINGS

- The radio is by far the primary means of communication and the most valuable to achieve vulnerable groups.
- The project meets some real needs of the population, especially the lack of information on transitional justice issues and on transitional justice mechanisms that are supposed to be implemented in Burundi. The population has shown dissatisfaction over the manner in which this information was processed and this lack of information has been encountered at different levels, including among members of major political forces and members of the state apparatus.
- The study shows the existence of several problems of communication between population and policymakers. The survey underlined a high rate of dissatisfaction and that was confirmed by interviews and focus groups which also highlighted the impact of political propaganda on this issue.
- The study found out that the activities founded by the project play a considerable role, particularly in achieving objective 1. Radio Isanganiro, SFCG's main partner in this project, appears to be a fundamental element in the media scene regarding transitional justice

issues. This role has been particularly important in the coverage of National Consultations where Isanganiro has been the primary source of information.

- The study revealed that SFCG's radio partners are having some problems in reaching some of the regions surveyed. Radio Isanganiro has not covered 2 of the 6 *communes* visited (Makamba and Nyanza-Lac) for more than one year and it reaches a third badly (Marangara). This is particularly unfortunate for the strategic importance of these zones.
- The study suggests that SFCG's activities have had an impact on the population by promoting messages that support reconciliation and mutual understanding between different components of the Burundian society. This was noted in the survey as well as during various interviews.
- In some regions (in particular, in the *communes* of Makamba and Nyanza-Lac) people put forward the solution of local disputes (such as land conflicts with returnees) as a *sinequanon* before any other intervention in favor of justice and reconciliation.
- Assessing the results achieved for the third objective has been impossible because of the lack of coherence between it and the activities promoted.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

On target 1

The population is still not well-informed on transitional justice mechanisms. A more serious issue appears to be the lack of information about National Consultations on Transitional Justice that are currently taking place in Burundi.

This could negatively influence the legitimization of this process (the only existing mechanism of transitional justice in Burundi at the moment) and it could have negative repercussions on the steps that should follow (TRC and the Tribunal). This is especially true when members of political parties are almost as poorly informed as the rest of the population, especially on the Consultations. Next year there will be elections in Burundi and the next steps (on transitional justice) are strongly dependent on political will.

However, it is important to emphasize SFCG's role. The organization has often been quoted as almost the only one who works continuously on the subject (I am referring to the media) and findings from the survey show Isanganiro's (the main SFCG partner) crucial role in spreading information and covering the consultation process.

On target 2

Communication between political authorities and the population is also poor. The round tables and panels organized by SFCG seem to be important in promoting such a dialogue and, again, SFCG radio emissions are often quoted as being the ones that best promote this dialogue. However, the SFCG staff itself has denounced the difficulty of inviting authorities (particularly deputies and members of the Government) and there is still a lot of work to do.

On target 3

As it has already been mentioned the activities promoted by the project do not seem to respond to the need to "facilitate and promote local mechanisms of reconciliation and mutual trust". Those activities have been implemented in other projects where such mechanisms were promoted by working directly with local communities. In the project that has been evaluated the activities worked at a different level.

On the impact

One of the main results that emerge from the study is SFCG's role in "promoting dialogue between different elements/groups of society. The report has particularly appreciated the "sharing of

experiences” through which a lot of people declared having been able to think not only in terms of their personal experience (and, by such, thinking only as members of a particular group) but develop a larger vision of the past “crises”.

The way in which SFCG is composed (ethnic and gender equilibrium, all Burundians) is a factor that positively influenced the capability of the organization to communicate effectively and should not be under-estimated.

RECOMMADATIONS

Among the recommendations put forward, and specifically those regarding the ongoing project :

- Improve the logical framework. The logical framework represents the foundation of the project and it is important that it consistently reflects the work of the organization. This could, especially, improve the ability of SFCG Burundi to demonstrate the results of its activities.
 - Insuring consistency between: Global Approach/Theory of Change → Specific Objectives → Activities → Monitoring Indicators (as has already been underlined);
 - The linkage between the project and its specific targets, and the general goals of SFCG to promote peace should not be taken for granted. By rendering it explicit SFCG will be able to a) facilitate the sharing of ideas with people outside SFCG Burundi, b) facilitate dialogue within the organization, particularly between designers and implementers of the activities to better monitor its implementation and ensure consistency, c) Better justify its work with donors and other external actors.
 - The third target should be reviewed. It might be advisable to replace it by adding a greater emphasis on promoting dialogue between different components of society and encouraging the sharing of experiences. However, because this third target appears to be important as it has been formulated, it is advisable to develop activities directly related to it.
- Improve monitoring of the project. The constitution of a solid corpus which brings together documents relating to the projects and their monitoring (it is not the case now) would improve the ability of SFCG Burundi to show its results through increased accessibility of these documents and information.
 - It might be useful to put together documents of all the activities on transitional justice in a separate file (by doubling some documents from their original files, separated by projects and donors).
 - For a forthcoming impact evaluation it is recommended to work on all the activities dealing with the same subject (in this case on transitional justice). It is very difficult (and not very practical) to try to separate the results obtained with two different projects but having some similar activities and targets.
 - The choice of the indicators is important. A greater attention should be paid to developing indicators which are coherent and easy to monitor.
 - A better planning of the monitoring and evaluation strategy should be included in the designing phase of the project.
- A special effort should be made to include members of different political factions. This will a) increase the appropriation of the process, starting from National Consultations, by these political forces b) promote a dialogue on the subject framed in a controlled space, which is particularly important as the electoral campaigns have unofficially started.
 - The remaining panels (4) could be a valuable opportunity for this;
 - To counter the reluctance of politicians to share information with other members of their parties it is recommended to differentiate guests, intra and inter-parties;

- Including some trainings should be taken into account, especially considering SFCG expertise in this field;
- Improve radio emissions spatial coverage and National Consultations media attention:
 - Investing in the spatial coverage of radio partners;
 - Promote, wherever possible, other partnerships;
 - Regarding more specifically National Consultation coverage, although aware of the existing difficulties, a better synergies between Burundian radio stations could be envisaged.
- Clarify SFCG strategy in front of the lack of political will to really invest into transitional justice mechanisms is advisable.
 - Look for a closer collaboration with UN could be important;
 - Focusing on politicians, promoting trainings for example, could help achieving this goal;
- SFCG Burundi staff could try to figure out alternative ways to meet the challenges encountered, during the last months of the ongoing project and/or after its end.
 - Given the proximity of 2010 elections it is advisable to focus more on the risk of political manipulation of transitional justice issues;
 - Promoting exchanges between local authorities and the population about transitional justice. It is advisable not to limit this action on sensitizing local authorities but to follow directly these exchanges. This to control that the information passes correctly and that it would not be too much influenced by political belongings.
 - A different idea could be to work on commemorative celebrations. These opportunities can be a source of division and evoke negative feelings but they can also promote positive effects if well framed.