
Search for Common Ground – Burundi Key Findings from the Project Evaluation of “Supporting National Reconciliation in Burundi” 2006-2008

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) has been working in Burundi since 1995. In recent years, SFCG Burundi’s primary objective has been to improve the participation of all citizens in the democratic process and in reconciliation focusing on three issues:

- Reintegration of marginalized groups: citizens returning to Burundi; ex-combatants; women; youth; and war victims
- Good governance through increased participation in local decision making
- Transitional justice, especially supporting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

EVALUATION SCOPE

Hervé Kouandé (Kobadev Consulting), an independent consultant, was hired to conduct the evaluation, which took place from late May to August 2009; the final report was made and approved in late September 2009.

The evaluation covered the program in Burundi as a whole over the period from 2006 to 2008, during which three projects were implemented:

- “Promoting Freedom of Expression in Burundi ,” funded by the European Commission
- "Supporting National Reconciliation in Burundi,” funded by USAID
- "Promoting Democratic Governance in Burundi,” funded by the Belgian Technical Cooperation

This document presents the key points of the “Supporting National Reconciliation,” project.

KEY FINDINGS

The project involved four broad types of activities: the training of local populations (members of associations, marginalized groups) on the themes of reconciliation and transitional justice; radio programming in the form of roundtables on topics related to the role of the National Land Commission and other Goods (CNTB), transitional justice, development of community projects, and peaceful conflict resolution; simplifying of the resolution of land conflicts in collaboration with the CNTB; and community interventions in the form of days of solidarity and friendly competition.

The project had a significant impact on the public understanding of the need for dialogue and promotion of non- violence in the resolution of community conflicts. In that capacity, the project helped improve the population’s skills and capacities and their participation in national reconciliation through round tables and Solidarity Days. In addition, there has been an important effect on the resolution of land conflicts between residents and those returning from abroad. The establishment of committees of dialogue in

conflicts areas and increased public awareness on issues related to truth, justice and reconciliation through radio programming, roundtables, and solidarity days have both contributed positively to conflict resolution.

SFCG's activities have been highly appreciated for resolving conflicts where the CNTB encountered difficulties, notably Kibago, in the province of Makamba.

3,627 land disputes in all were settled by the CNTB and local authorities with the support of SFCG in the 17 provinces of Burundi.

The project has had the following effects:

a) Results related to the objective of informing the public about transitional justice and reconciliation:

- 79% of respondents [members of the general population, marginalized people, roundtable participants] think they have more opportunities to have their voices heard compared to the situation before it began (2 years ago);
- 78% of people believe that programs about reconciliation take into account their realities and concerns;

b) Results related to the objective of strengthening the capacities of local populations in conflict management, reconciliation, and participation in community decision-making :



SFCG leads community collaborators in a conflict resolution training in Bujumbura

- 73% of people think that the radio broadcasts on reconciliation have created a lasting reconciliation among parties in the conflict when compared to the situation 2 years ago;

- 88% of people say they are better prepared to take a leadership role in reconciliation and settlement of conflicts compared to the situation two years ago;

c) Results related to the objective of creating opportunities for participation in the dialogue on truth, justice and reconciliation, and supporting the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

- 4% of respondents believe that conflicts are “always” peacefully resolved and 44% believe they are “often,” peacefully resolved, compared to 42% who believe peaceful conflict resolution is “rarely” the case and the 10% for whom conflict is “never” resolved peacefully, compared to the situation 2 years ago

- 53% of respondents believe that decisions taken to resolve conflicts in their communities are at least “fair” compared to the situation 2 years ago.

In terms of ownership, it should be noted that people and groups who have been exposed to the project have acquired skills and knowledge important to the peaceful resolution of conflicts, whether they are land disputes or other conflicts in the community. In this sense, the project ownership by beneficiaries is virtually guaranteed.

Even though trainings, roundtables and other radio programs have brought key stakeholders who were involved in dialogue and conflict management together, true reconciliation and responsible management of conflicts will require further work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to note that the majority of the recommendations suggested in the report involve SFCG's entire country program. General recommendations are summarized in a report focused on results of the program as a whole.

There are some recommendations that apply specifically to the activities for the reconciliation project. In the future SFCG should consider:

- Financing talk shows because they seem more rewarding for participants (suggestion from participants)
- Conducting local programming in the provinces (suggestion from participants)
- Providing incentives (e.g. transportation stipends, snacks, or a per diem) for the project participants, especially marginalized groups and people living in rural communities, to facilitate their active participation in community activities and monitoring and evaluation carried out under projects
- Providing practice case studies during training (suggestion from participants)
- Adapting the approach and content of training and other activities to the level of education and socio-cultural characteristics of participants (e.g. members of associations and clubs, rural populations).

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The results related to Reconciliation have been obtained by surveying a sample of the general population, including marginalized groups, as part of an evaluation of all three projects. A total of 384 persons were interviewed. Respondents in each municipality were selected randomly. A stratified sampling was used to select 4 provinces (of 17) based on a demographic assessment. 14 communes (secondary units of governance) in these 4 provinces were selected in the same way. The results of this survey have a margin of error of 10%.

Participants in round tables, chosen from a sample of 212, were also surveyed. These results carried a margin of error of 13%. The evaluation methodology also included a scoring system for each indicator to assess the program's impact.

Outside of the analysis of results based on statistics obtained, the report proposes a multifaceted analysis of the project based on its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The project goal was to support the inclusion and participation of all parts of Burundian society, particularly marginalized groups, in national, post-crisis reconciliation. Specifically the project aimed to:

- Inform and educate the public on issues related to truth, justice and reconciliation.

- Strengthen the capacity of local people - including youth, women, refugees and other marginalized groups – in the responsible management of conflicts, reconciliation and participation in community decision-making.
- Create opportunities for participation in dialogue on truth, justice and reconciliation, and prepare the ground for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Under the purview of this project, the main activities undertaken during the period of implementation were: 42 training sessions including 37 on the peaceful resolution of conflicts and 5 on conflict transformation; days of solidarity (5 total), roundtables and facilitation of the resolution of land disputes.

This document has summarized the results or quoted directly from the project's final evaluation. The report is available at: www.sfcg.org/sfcg/evaluations/evaluations.html