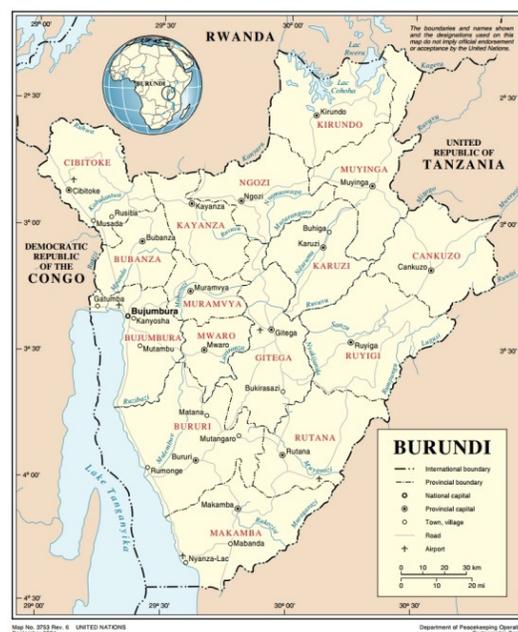# CONFLICT ANALYSIS SUMMARY

BURUNDI

Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy in Conflict-Affected Contexts Programme

This report summarizes findings from two studies undertaken as part of the UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) programme, funded by the Government of the Netherlands. The UNICEF Burundi Country Office has integrated conflict analysis into its research strategy, and the purpose of these initial studies is to examine (a) the inter-generational transmission of violence and the connection between the macro- and microdynamics of violence, and (b) the effects of conflict and violence on children and adolescents. The report includes recommendations from the research, covering ways to support peacebuilding and education programming in Burundi in order to help consolidate peace and avoid relapse into violent conflict.

The PBEA programme, 2012-2016, seeks to build peaceful societies by strengthening the role of education in peacebuilding and integrating peacebuilding within the education system.

Methodology

The studies conducted for the conflict analysis had distinct methodologies. One reviewed existing research concerning the country's political economy, conflict cycles and children's exposure to violence, using both classic and life-cycle approaches to conflict analysis. The other study was based on informant interviews, including more than 200 local stakeholders as well as international experts. The researcher spoke with individuals in the rural areas of Gitega Province, primarily in the Bugendana commune, and in Makamba Province; interviews were also conducted in the capital city of Bujumbura, including in the neighbourhood of Bwiza, which was a centre of civil war violence and where violence continues to the present. Interviews were also held with government representatives at the *colline* (subdivision), commune, provincial and national levels, and from United Nations agencies, and national and international non-governmental organizations.

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Context

Burundi is facing severe underdevelopment and has experienced cyclical violence at multiple levels of society. Outbreaks of communal violence date back to the struggle for independence in the 1960s. The 1972 revolt by ethnic Hutu rebels from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, followed by a violent response from the predominantly Tutsi Government, was a drastic event in the country's history – an estimated 300,000 Burundians were killed and 300,000 became refugees. Ethnically driven conflict flared on and off for decades, until in 1993, following a contentious election campaign, the first Hutu President was elected. Three months later, the army staged a coup, killing the President and igniting civil war. More than 300,000 civilians were killed in the war and 1.2 million were displaced.

These crises have had enduring impacts on the population, including persistent fear of attack, social fragmentation, indiscriminate violence, and ongoing struggles for political power and access to resources. Incidents of violent conflict persist, though the boundaries between communal and ethnic conflict and criminal activity are increasingly blurred.

Burundi's insecure environment is compounded by chronic poverty and low levels of development. The majority of the population resides in rural areas and is dependent on subsistence agriculture. Many children and adolescents are malnourished. Population pressures on land, declining soil fertility, and limited opportunities for non-agricultural employment contribute to 'low horizons' for Burundi's youth.

Despite this dire picture, the 2000 and 2003 peace accords ushered in a political structure that prioritized greater ethnic balance and gender representation in government, which has contributed to a greater openness. This current period of stability, following relatively peaceful elections in 2005 and 2010, provides an opportunity to develop the resilience needed to prevent relapses into violent conflict. In the approach of the 2015 elections, however, there were disquieting signs, such as the political mobilization of youth wings, restrictions on opposition groups, and constitutional revisions that roll back previous power-sharing gains.

Key conflict drivers at the national level

The conflict analyses identified the following factors in Burundi's current situation, many of which can be traced to the long history of violence, as key drivers of conflict. Where relevant, links between conflict drivers and education and learning have been identified.

SECURITY AND JUSTICE

- **Youth political wings:** Youth have long played a central role in Burundi's history of conflict. Frustrated by high unemployment, lack of opportunity, and perceptions of injustice, inequality and corruption, youth are vulnerable to political manipulation and mobilization, seeing it as a primary opportunity for making a successful life for themselves. The ruling party youth wing, Imbonerakure, is particularly known for participation in political violence and intimidation, but other political party youth wings have also been mobilized in the past.

- **Regional and national security concerns:** Ongoing war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries in the Great Lakes Region, and the threat of armed rebel groups that have been exiled from Burundi but still operate in neighbouring countries, has meant that the conditions for a recurrence of civil war have never fully abated. The politicization of refugee groups and the challenges in repatriating refugees due to insufficient resources, such as land for farming, continue to be priority issues to be addressed in peacebuilding agendas.

- **Unresolved issues of abuse/violence:** Due to the lack of truth, justice and reconciliation in the country following the civil war, many crimes have not been redressed and perpetrators have gone unpunished. Ongoing impunity for past atrocities contributes to current fears and tensions and prevents healing for citizens.

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

- **Political corruption and exclusion:** Discriminatory governance systems, including within the military, judiciary and education systems, are still dominated by ethnic and regional groups that employ violence and patrimonialism to gain power and control. Politics is seen as one of the few ways to access resources and improve livelihoods. The political culture has repeatedly favoured repression and violence over negotiation to consolidate and legitimize power. There is a strong perception of state weakness among adults and youth, who believe that the government is unable to help most citizens.

- **Inequitable access to education:** The discriminatory education system privileged certain groups until the war (Baganwa and Tutsi, and later the Tutsi from the south), and continues to be a source of grievance and tension. Although efforts to enforce universal, free primary education could redress inequities, the Government's implementation of this policy has not improved education quality or abolished fees for uniforms, learning materials and school construction – and access to education remains inequitable. Furthermore, secondary school and vocational training are not free, and the pressure on young people to find a 'sponsor' to pay for their school fees increases their vulnerability to violence.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Enduring poverty:** The majority of Burundians live in extreme poverty. Chronic hunger dominates daily life, with many people eating only once a day or once every two days. At the school level, malnutrition impacts the ability of children and youth to learn. Expectations for children to contribute to the household income through work or domestic chores impedes school attendance. Many youth drop out and migrate to cities in search of work. The demands of survival have also diminished parents' ability to support their children or to have the time to provide them with guidance. While most Burundians believe that education is the key to improving their livelihood, the irrelevance of education to the job market and increasing demands for pay in order to be hired are contributing to feelings of disenfranchisement, particularly among youth.

SOCIAL ISSUES

- **Ethnic divisions:** The deeply rooted violence, competition for power and resources, and animosity between Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups continues to be a source of fear, distrust, violence and political struggle at all levels. Fear of extermination by ethnic adversaries has led to pre-emptive attacks in the name of self-defence. The ethnic character of conflict is rooted in struggles for state power and access to resources, including education.

- **Youth alienation:** The population of Burundi is exceptionally young, and there are huge barriers preventing youth from transitioning into adulthood, signified through the acquisition of land, a house or marriage. Opportunities for advancement or improved livelihoods are limited, due to a lack of off-farm employment, declining soil fertility, land scarcity, and limited access to secondary education and vocational training. Young people are increasingly vulnerable to risk-taking behaviours such as drug and alcohol use, transactional sex, crime and dangerous employment, as well as acts of physical and sexual violence. Adolescent girls and orphans are particularly vulnerable. Political parties have relied on youth wings to intimidate opposition members and to carry out violence, including the destruction of property, physical abuse and murder. This political role for youth has been normalized, perpetuating an overall culture of fear and contributing to a negative perception of young people as disruptive and violent.

- **Social norms related to violence:** Since the civil war, a culture of violence has spread at multiple levels of society to encompass gender-based violence, violence against children, and political and communal violence. In Burundi's patriarchal society, physical and sexual violence against girls and women is an expected occurrence in homes, schools and communities. Girls who become pregnant outside of marriage due to rape or prostitution are considered to be shameful and left with few options for themselves or their children. Children are subjected to physical, psychological and sexual violence on a regular basis. Corporal punishment at home and in school is used to control children and is considered to be normal. Violence is also used to resolve disputes within families, between neighbours and within communities. The extent and nature of community-driven violence to resolve disputes is what distinguishes Burundi from other recent civil war and post-war contexts in Africa.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- **Land:** One of the most significant conflict drivers in Burundi is land scarcity. Land is the most valued resource in the country, with 90 per cent of the population subsisting on agricultural production. Decreasingly fertile land, an increase in land disputes compounded by returning refugees, internal population movements, and division of minimal land holdings through inheritance are aggravating factors. Consequences of land scarcity include conflict, violence, illegal migration, and the extreme disadvantaging of children and women. Land scarcity and depletion also exacerbates poverty, which prevents both boys and girls from attending school because they cannot afford the fees and because they need to work to generate income for the family. Because land is the primary resource, its distribution is also a matter of justice and security.

The role of education in peacebuilding

Conflict and violence in Burundi has had a number of impacts on the education system. The killing of educated civilians during the wars contributed to a lack of experienced and educated people in government and the civil service. Displacement of civilians resulted in the disruption of education for many children and youth. Because the normalization of violence within the school and home obstructs children's cognitive, emotional, psychosocial and moral development, they in turn are more likely to perpetuate violence in their own lives and in the lives of their families when they become adults.

The introduction of free primary education seeks to redress inequities in access to education, and most primary-school-age children are enrolled due to parents' strong belief in the value of education, or coercion by local officials. However, the high costs associated with schooling are unaffordable for many families, who must choose between school and food, resulting in a significant number of dropouts. For those students who persist, the quality of education is poor, with teachers expected to teach languages and subjects in which they have no training. This is a particular concern for returning refugees who attended school in other countries and learned other languages. Rampant sexual violence and the growing phenomenon of adolescent, unmarried mothers excludes girls from schools and the opportunity to secure a future for themselves and their children.

Despite the overwhelming obstacles, there are several factors that are cause for hope. These include Burundians' persistent belief in school as a way to improve their lives, as well as the opportunity to use education and vocational training as a peace dividend and a development strategy. There appears to be a significant population of young people who are optimistic and hopeful about their future and are working hard to improve their situation, which may make them more resilient against violence and the lure of armed conflict. While many cultural norms remain rigid, the censure against young people who have fallen outside traditionally accepted roles, or who have failed to achieve adulthood in the traditional definition, seems to be lessening. Women's representation in local administration has deterred violence and discrimination, and created greater freedom of movement, livelihood and educational opportunities for girls.

Peacebuilding entry points in education and learning

Political and policy responses

- **Actively demonstrate and promote inclusion:** Expand work with at-risk youth, particularly in urban areas, and advocate for increased inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups such as unmarried mothers, orphans, refugee returnees and ethnic Batwa. Avoid geographical favouritism, and provide public information via radio on inclusion activities and rationale for focusing on particular locations and groups.

- **Improve education quality**: Improve teachers' training, especially in the languages they may be required to teach. Develop peace and human rights education courses that include education on sexual violence and the rights of orphans. Invest in high-quality monitoring and evaluation of programmes for youth. Explore ways to reduce the costs of schooling, and address the use of government coercion, intimidation and threats that are used to enforce primary school attendance.

Structural reforms

- **Improve child protection:** Establish child protection systems at multiple levels of the country. Train law enforcement to better recognize and protect vulnerable children and youth. Create a hotline for reporting rape, violent crimes, and crimes against youth and orphans. Make issues related to sexual violence and rape of female students by teachers a major protection issue. Ensure children of unmarried mothers are registered at birth to enable them to access education and health services.

- **Vocational training:** Create non-formal education programmes to support basic and technical skills education for youth to enable them to obtain employment or pursue entrepreneurship, particularly in the non-formal sector.

- **Address hunger and malnutrition:** Provide child nutrition supplements, school notebooks, soap and other basic commodities to areas of Burundi where child hunger and malnutrition are the worst to counteract the pervasive and debilitating impacts on learning and survival.

- **Strengthen evidence building and collaboration:** Undertake systematic research and evidence-based reporting on incidences and impact of violence on children and youth. Reduce fragmentation of resources and duplication of efforts through improved collaboration between the Government, United Nations agencies, universities and non-governmental organizations.

Individual and interpersonal changes

- **Facilitate community dialogue on social challenges:** Disseminate information in all national languages and develop radio programmes that facilitate community dialogue to address social challenges, including youth issues, such as legal marriage, becoming an adult, appropriate discipline, sexual violence, employment and support for marginalized groups.

- **Address sexual violence:** Research and develop a public awareness campaign to educate citizens and reduce incidences of sexual violence. Train law enforcement representatives and provide appropriate support for survivors of rape, sexual violence and sexual coercion.