

Burundi: Conflict Scan

Conflict Scan Report 3

February 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Research Findings	3
Program Recommendations	14
Appendix 1: ToR.....	16
Appendix 2: Methodology	24
Appendix 3: Tools	26
Appendix 4: Map of Intervention Provinces.....	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
Appendix 5:Additional Survey Results	Erreur ! Signet non défini.

Executive Summary

This document is a report on the research findings from the second Burundi quarterly Conflict Scan conducted by Search for Common Ground (SFCG) as a component of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) funded *Impore Iwacu* project. Building on the approach used by SFCG programming around the world, the Conflict Scan uses a fast and lightweight methodology consisting of a survey of 420 people and Focus Group discussions with 157 key informants across 7 intervention provinces.¹

Top Findings

The top four findings were as follows:

1. **Feelings of safety have increased significantly across all provinces. 79% of people report feeling safe when they go about their daily activities, compared to only 59% in November 2015.** Those who feel that security will improve have risen from 30% to 48%, and those who believe it will worsen have dropped from 41% to 22%.
2. **Overall, the perception that youth attract problems, particularly due to their involvement in political parties, has dropped from 51% to 33%.** Additionally, those reporting high levels of trust in youth have increased in every province.
3. **While the positive perception of ethnic relationships remains high, it has dropped from 78% in November, to now 70%.** However, perceptions seem to be stabilizing again after the past few months, as those who report that ethnic relationships are worsening have significantly dropped from 31% to 14%.
4. **Survey results show that community members feel that they have more opportunities to participate in both peacebuilding and in constructive dialogue in their communities than they did in November.** Those who report having opportunities to help build peace have increased from 47% to 58%, and reports of opportunities to participate in constructive dialogue have increased from 27% to 47%.

Evolutions since the November 2015 Conflict Scan (CS2)²

Land conflicts remain the most significant source of violent conflict (29%), at the aggregate level, for the seven provinces that were covered by the scan. Land conflicts included both conflicts over land boundaries, and conflicts over land ownership. Conflicts over land were reported as having decreased since CS2, except for in Kirundo and Makamba. Both of these provinces are the most commonly impacted by refugee influxes and high numbers of returnees.

Bubanza and Bujumbura Mairie now both show the most significant source of violent conflict stem from domestic disputes due to increased financial pressure on households due to declining economic conditions. Domestic disputes in Bubanza have risen from 27% at CS2 to 47% with community members viewing this as the most significant source of violent conflict, and representing the highest levels of reported domestic disputes covered by this research. In Bujumbura Mairie, domestic disputes have risen from 10% at CS2 to 23% also making it the highest source of violent conflict. Uniquely, Rumonge now shows that theft—most

¹ This research has been initiated and supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to inform the mainstreaming of peacebuilding and conflict-sensitivity in UNICEF programs and those of other actors. UNICEF would like to thank the Government of the Netherlands for its generous support. The views expressed in this study are those of Search for Common Ground and are not necessarily shared by UNICEF, the UN or the Government of the Netherlands.

² CS2 is the [second Conflict Scan](#) which was produced in December 2015.

commonly related to the theft of palms³-- as the most significant source of violent conflict having increased from 5% to 27%.

Perceived levels of discrimination based on ethnicity (2%), religion (3%), and gender (4%), all remain low, showing little change since CS1 and CS2. However, **Political discrimination (now at 6%)** in particular has dropped significantly since CS2 (14%) and has returned to levels lower than CS1 (10%); this was supported in focus group discussions.

Community trust continues to improve from 52% at CS1 to 57% at CS2 to now 66% at CS3. Similarly, **levels of optimism for future security has also risen** from 13% at CS1 believing the situation will improve over a three months period, to 30% at CS2 and now 48%.

Programming Recommendations for all Peacebuilding Actors in Burundi:

Recommendations echo those in the previous CS2 report⁴, as many remain relevant to the current context. In particular, the importance of *transparency* and *reduction of bias* in the selection of participants for jobs and projects is paramount in today's economic climate. While there have been improvements in the perception of youth, and land conflicts have decreased, it remains important to address these issues if and when the current refugees return, as this may further affect conflict dynamics. CS3 highlights the continued need for: income generating activities attention to economic issues to improve resilience to violence, monitoring of divisive speech to assure continued unity, and support to land management to avoid potential crises.

Socio-economic Considerations: Addressing fragility through program interventions

- Intra-familial and domestic conflicts have the potential to be shaped heavily by women. Women should be encouraged to participate in decision-making around household issues, particularly in the use non-violent mechanisms for conflict resolution.
- The international community should carefully consider how interventions and sanctions affect community cohesion and economic stability. Decisions should be paired with essential humanitarian support to avoid exacerbation of conditions that may escalate violence and a return low cohesion levels.

Refugee Dynamics: Easing tensions around migration and reintegration of returnees

- There is a continued lack of trust between members still outside of the community (and those connected to them) and those who have stayed. While returnees bring cause for optimism in communities overall, there should be a clear plan for supporting reintegration of returnees and encouraging trust between these groups. This is particularly true for Rwandan and Burundian relationships, which need to continue to be monitored.
- Address perceptions of national dynamics through responsible media reporting and community based dialogues and mediations.
 - As private radios begin to re-open it will be important to *continue monitoring divisive speech* to assure continued unity, and continue to maintain and support positive inter-ethnic relationships. In this vein, it is essential to encourage quality and diversity of reporting institutions and access to information.

³ Palm trees are an abundant resource in Rumonge province, and are used in the production of oils and soaps. Palms are considered a very valuable crop, which provide frequent and abundant harvests.

⁴ The full CS2 report can be located here: (Add link after it is published online), or CS2 report recommendations can be found in annex 5

Research Findings

Introduction

This report will first look at the current conflict context, including the top sources of violent conflict, community perceptions related to security, and optimism about the future. Then the report will discuss current levels of social cohesion and resiliency. This includes discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity, religion, and political affiliation as well as trust at the community level. Opportunities for improving peacebuilding will be identified, and finally recommendations for improving peacebuilding programs in Burundi will be made.

Methodology

This document is a report on the research findings from the third Burundi quarterly Conflict Scan conducted for the *Impore Iwacu* SFCG – UNICEF project. Building on the approach used by SFCG programming around the world, the Conflict Scan used a fast and lightweight methodology with the aim of improving Conflict Sensitivity and Do No Harm principles for Search for Common Ground (SFCG), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and partner program interventions in Burundi. The conflict scans are intended to be conducted every 3 months with the aim of improving understanding of conflict contexts and evolutions over time in target areas. By improving understanding, the approach is designed to increase conflict sensitivity and to monitor and improve the use of Do No Harm principles in program interventions. The majority of the data was collected in February and March of 2016⁵.

Geographically, the scan covers 7 provinces in Burundi (See Appendix 4⁶), which were purposefully sampled to correspond with key PBEA program intervention areas. The Conflict Scan used a survey and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to collect feedback from 577 participants over a three-week period. As shown in Table 1, one commune was purposefully sampled per province.

Table 1: Geographical Sample

Province	Commune Selected
Bujumbura Mairie	Kamenge
Bujumbura Rural	Isare
Bubanza	Mpanda
Cibitoke	Rugombo
Kirundo	Busoni
Makamba	Nyanza-Lac
Rumonge	Rumonge

143⁷ respondents participated in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) which were made up of two groups of a maximum of 12 people per province; ‘youth’: ages 15-28, and ‘influencers’: parents, teachers, and community leaders. 420 Burundians were also randomly surveyed; 60 people in each of the 7 provinces⁸. Additional information on the methodology and the tools used can be found in the appendices. The

research approach framed conflict as any dispute, violent or non-violent, between two or more parties.

⁵ In Cibitoke province, the FGDs which provided qualitative support for the survey data in Cibitoke Province were not held until April 2016 due to logistical challenges.

⁶ All appendices can be found in the separate pdf file ‘Burundi_CS2 Report Appendices’

⁷ In total 168 were originally selected and invited to participate in the Focus Group discussion; 12 people per FGD.

⁸ This survey sample size is representative at the aggregate level, but does not claim to be representative at the provincial level.

Part 1: Context and Recent Developments

Conflict Drivers: The deteriorating economic situation presents a challenge to peace

In each province survey participants were asked to indicate the primary cause of violent conflict impacting the community. Land conflicts remain the most significant source of violent conflict (29%), at the aggregate level, for the provinces that were covered by the scan.⁹ Conflicts over land were reported as having decreased since CS2, except for in Kirundo and Makamba. Both of these provinces are the most commonly impacted by refugee influxes and high numbers of returnees. In Makamba reported land conflicts as the primary cause of violent conflict increased from 30% to 37%, and in Kirundo from 37% to 45%, in both cases the majority of land conflicts were disputes over ownership rather than land boundaries. Land related conflicts were the most significant source of violence for the provinces of Bujumbura Rural, Cibitoke, Kirundo, and Makamba. Unlike in CS2 land conflicts were no longer the most significant source of conflict for Bubanza, or Rumonge.

Bubanza and Bujumbura Mairie now both show the most significant source of violent conflict as stemming from domestic disputes. Domestic disputes in Bubanza have risen from 27% at CS2 to 47% viewing this as the most significant source of violent conflict, and the highest levels of reported domestic disputes covered by this research. Bujumbura Mairie. Uniquely, Rumonge now shows that theft—most commonly related to the theft of palms-- is the most significant source of violent conflict having increased from 5% to 27%.

“There are people who are in power that use their power to take land that belongs to others. When he sees that your land is very fertile, he can come and take it because he knows that he is powerful, and that you wont take him to court.”— Youth Participant, Cibitoke Province

The growing frequency of violence stemming from domestic disputes in Bubanza was explained as originating from an increase in tension between couples and households related to arguments over money due to increasing poverty. In particular, recent increases in staple food prices were seen as the most significant factor. Additionally, reports cite increases in fees being placed on farmers as contributing to the rising poverty. When a farmer harvests rice from their land, for example, 500BIF must be paid to government officials for each sack of rice harvested—this new policy in particular is perceived as a form of corruption, as farmers claim that they do not receive receipts for these payments. Youth in Bubanza noted that they believe the Impore Iwacu project has had a large impact on reducing violence related to land conflicts in the community, and this could also help explain the shift from land conflict as the primary source of violence to domestic disputes.

This was similar to the explanation for the rise in domestic disputes in Bujumbura Mairie, in which participants explained that the frequency has not changed, but that domestic disputes are becoming more violent because of the additional stress caused by rising poverty. Participants also explained that domestic issues, sometimes related to polygamy or adultery, are often actually disputes based on financial security and ensuring enough money and food for the family. These can be related to land conflicts that stem from a man taking a second wife or having children with another woman, who then also claim to have rights to the same parcel of land. Conflicts like this typically follow the death of the male head of household. In many cases, the children do not ever have an opportunity to meet or form bonds that could support them in

“Burundi is receiving more sanctions from other countries which increases poverty, and increases unemployment. So, we are going back to a period of war because people are unhappy.”

- Participant, Cibitoke

⁹ Land conflicts included both conflicts over land boundaries, and conflicts over land ownership.

finding nonviolent solutions to their disputes. For this reason, many domestic disputes are actually inter-family conflicts over land about financial prosperity and survival.

Rumonge has recently suffered from an increase in reports of theft. Community members believe that this is also a direct result of the recent increase in the prices of staple foods – citing that beans recently increased from 800BIF to 1500BIF. Coupled with the increased unemployment, especially among youth, participants cited an increase in cases of crops being stolen, as well as household burglaries. Participants believe that as poverty and hunger increase, people become more desperate and are more likely to steal in order to survive.

Those who perceived violent conflict as originating from disputes over power and politics have significantly decreased since the last scan; at the aggregate level power and political conflicts have dropped as a primary source of violence from 12% to 5%. Most significantly Bubanza dropped from 13% of conflicts originating from disputes over power and politics to only 3%, and in Bujumbura Mairie they dropped from 33% to 15%.

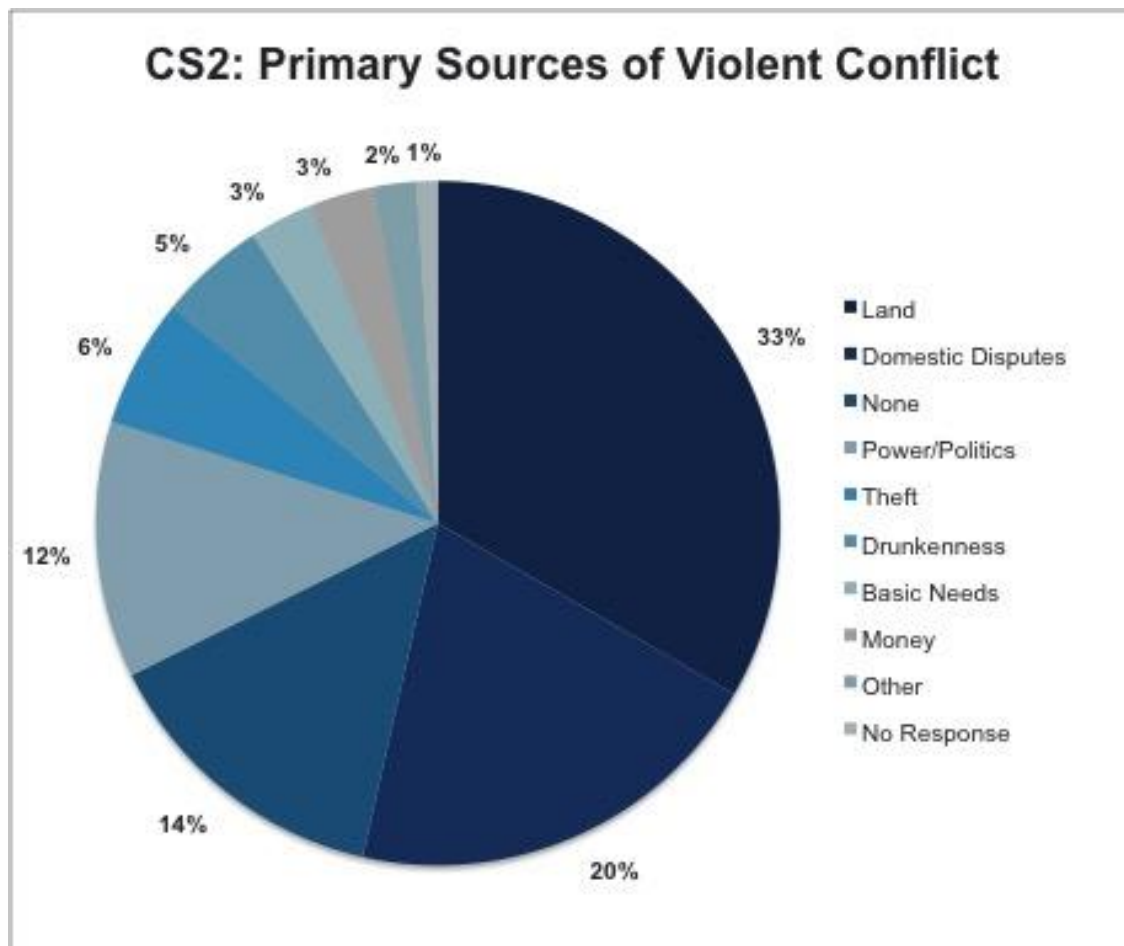
Increases in drunkenness as a source of violent conflict were often perceived as being related to rising poverty for two primary reasons. First, participants believed that as unemployment increases, people have more free time to drink, and they may also increase their drinking as their stressed caused by insecurity increases. Second, the increase in poverty has resulted in an increase in production and popularity of *Umudiringi*, traditional home brewed beers, and *Kanyaga* locally brewed hard alcohol that are unregulated, illegal, and also much stronger and much less expensive than manufactured beers or alcohols. Participants cited rumors of rising corruption by government officials and police taking bribes in exchange for looking the other way on the sales of such alcohols. A glass of *Umuduringi* or *Kanyaga* can be purchased for as low as 200-500 BIF, whereas a manufactured beer costs between 1200-1800BIF.

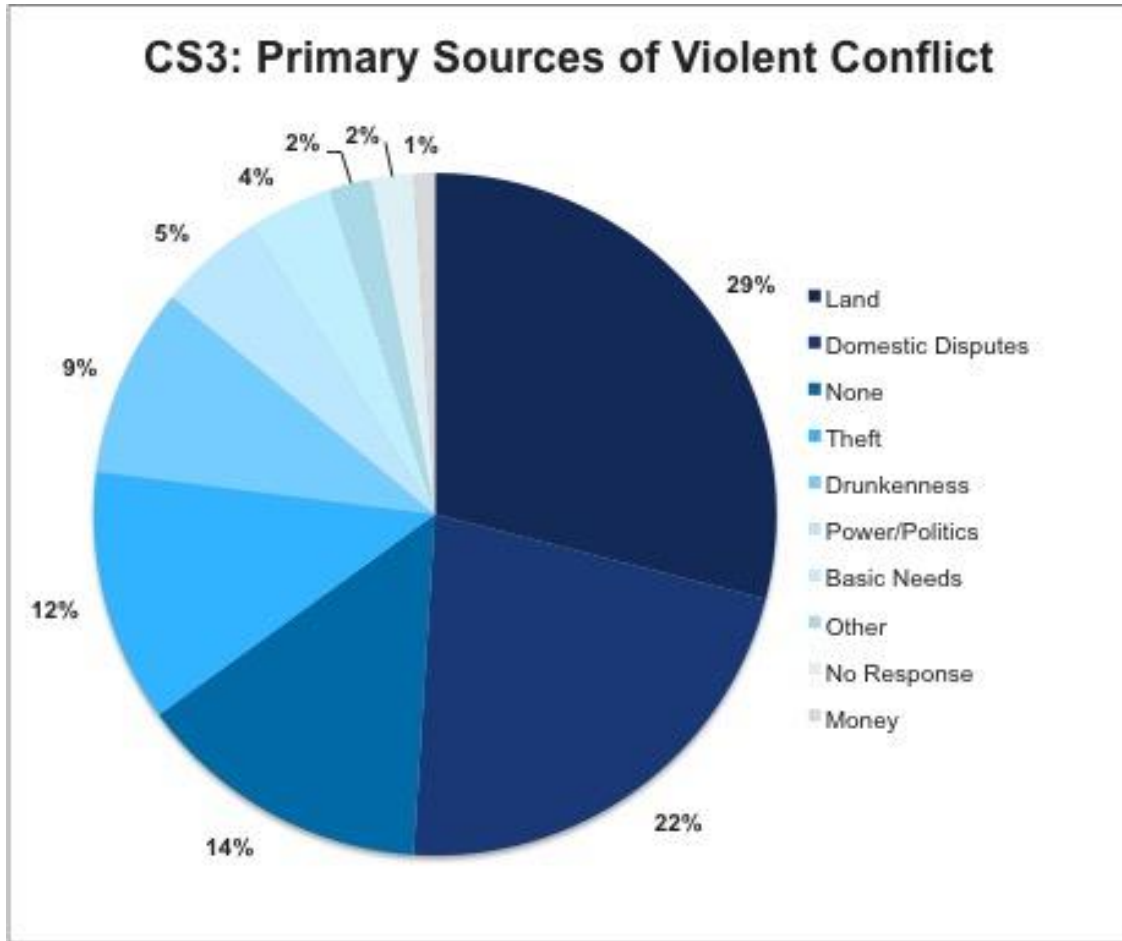
In general, despite improvements around violent conflict related to power and politics, there remains a climate of fear and lack of trust between people of opposing political affiliations. However, in general participants felt that the more time passes since elections, the more the political situation tends to stabilize. While this climate remains, in many cases participants felt their ability to speak freely about political differences is slowly increasing, and there is less violence related to political disputes. Additionally, in several cases participants mentioned that political groups are mixing more in security patrols and community works, which is improving trust and social cohesion.

“Before there were conflicts based on politics, and misunderstandings between people of different political parties. But today, those conflicts have decreased. Local authorities have tried to help change that so that people can understand security in the same way.”

-Participant, Bujumbura Rural Province

Chart 1: Trends in Primary Sources of Violent Conflict





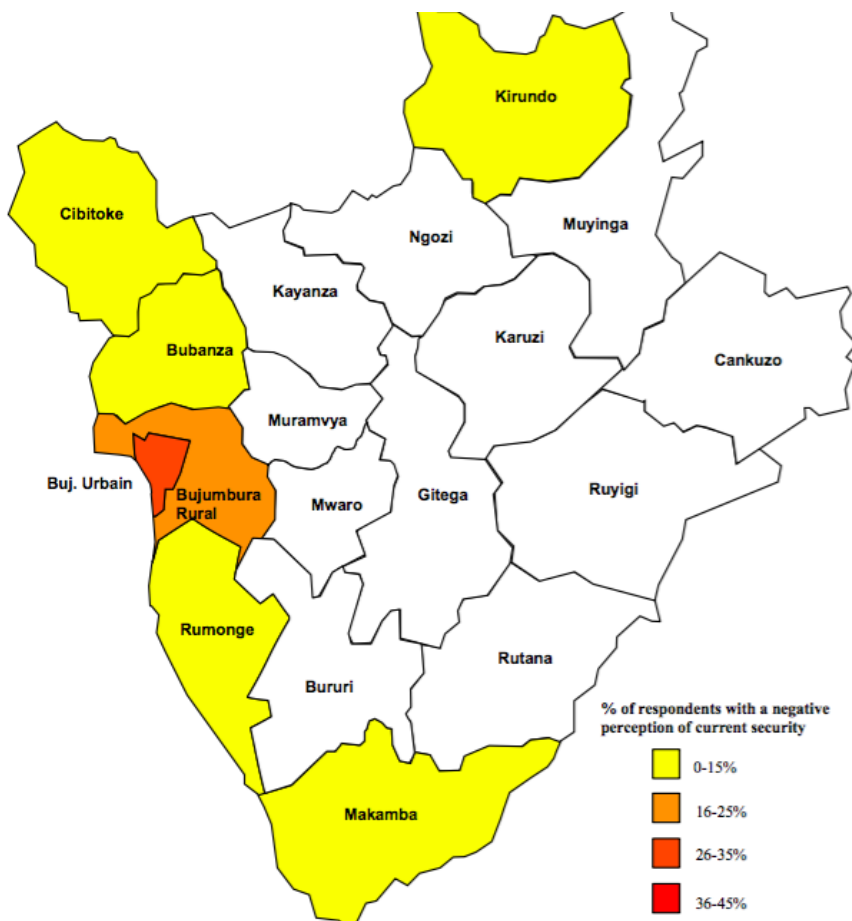
In CS2 types of land conflicts and domestic disputes are discussed extensively, as they are often closely linked. Intra-family land conflicts can be reported as domestic disputes because they stay within the family and are often related to land conflicts due to their great financial importance to families and disagreements over their management. However, domestic disputes also extend to other disagreements over the management of household funds or food. These are most often between husbands and wives, however disputes also occur between parents and children, and between siblings. Disputes between siblings are most often tied to inheritance disputes over land or other property.

In some new cases since CS2, land conflicts caused by someone selling a parcel of land to more than one person at the same time were reported. In general, participants agreed that community members are most likely to turn to violence when there is inequality and an imbalance of power. The injustice they feel when seeing cases of corruption and impunity makes them feel desperate and pushes them towards violence as a solution.

Frustration with the court system remains common. In one example, a participant explained that in the three to four months the case may take in court, the amount of money that would be lost by not being able to use the disputed land to farm rice during that period would cost so much that it would seem economically beneficial to use violence instead, in order to end the

dispute quickly. Another participant cited that if someone went to court to fight over 100,000BIF in property loss, they would pay 80,000BIF to the court, making the process too expensive.

Map 1: Provinces by Perceived Level of Insecurity



Security

The survey found that 79% of respondents perceive their current security as 'Safe' or 'Very Safe' as compared to 59% at CS2, and 70% from CS1 in February 2015. Currently, only 14% report their current security as 'Not Very Safe' or 'Not Safe At All', as compared to 29% from CS2, and 20% from CS1. People seemed to feel that the situation was stabilizing, people are adjusting to the results of the elections at all levels, and when relevant, accepting political defeat. Additionally, people reported higher levels of skepticism towards rumors, as so many rumors in previous months turned out to be false. Community members mostly felt that

less rumors were being circulated, or that at least, people were more prone to investigate them before responding out of fear. In general, participants reported feeling freer to travel and

move around their communities. Participants recognized that in general people are also adjusting to a new idea of relative security.

Participants explained that security dialogue meetings, and increased discussions about peace in associations and church groups are helping people to feel more secure. Generally, participants still did not feel secure after dark, particularly after 8pm. Reductions of the use of violence by political youth groups were also widely reported. In some cases, such as in Bubanza, participants felt that political leaders must have provided council to the youth in order to help them to adjust their behavior; this was seen as having

"Security has improved a lot. The further we are from the elections, the more people trust each other."

-Youth Participant, Bujumbura Rural

positively improved security.

Security Optimism

Perceptions of security remain high overall, and levels of optimism for future security have significantly improved, rising to 48% from 30% at CS2 and 13% from CS1. When participants were asked if they thought the security situation would 'improve', 'stay the same'¹⁰, or 'worsen' over the next 3 months, there is also a marked decrease of survey respondents who said that it would worsen (22%) as compared to CS2 (41%), and CS1 (50%). It is also interesting

"About 5 families I know have fled in the last two weeks, but we don't know if it's caused by hunger or other financial issues. They don't have land. There are some people who they think if they leave as refugees they will be resettled in Europe or somewhere else where they will have better economic security." – Participant, Makamba Province

to note that those who chose not to respond to the question related to security optimism decreased from 10% at CS2 to 6% at CS3.

Respondents who believe that security will decline

continue to explain that their fears are enhanced by news heard on the radio and television about violence and killings in neighboring areas. In one case a participant commented that when they hear reports of military generals being killed in Bujumbura, it makes them feel that if it is possible to kill generals then it must be very easy to kill simple people. However, in terms of scale, participants mostly felt that the rate of killings decreased since CS2, and that this positively impacted their assessments of the security situation. Many also still noted that their religious beliefs and hopes for the future impacted their responses related to optimism about future security. Additionally, increased efforts by local authorities to hold security meetings and dialogues contributed to confidence about the future.

"The way people interpret rumors today is different. Before they were very afraid when they heard rumors. Now they try their best to investigate to make sure it's true first." –Participant, Cibitoke Province

In several provinces, participants reported that when they saw refugees return it positively impacted the community's confidence and increased trust. Participants believed that many people who fled had access to information from people working in the government, so if they felt confident to return, they must have information that security is going to improve. Ongoing talks about the political situation with the international community, and visits by high-ranking foreign officials, also

¹⁰ 48% of respondents said security would either improve or stay the same.

contribute to many participants feeling more confident about how security will evolve the future. Participants felt most optimistic about the talks when they believed that the government had agreed to also engage in discussions with key opposition groups outside of the country. In some cases, participants felt that the discussion about sending foreign peacekeeping troops into the country made them less optimistic, as it served as an indicator that there were expectations of greater troubles to come in the future.

Part 2: Social Cohesion & Resilience

Discrimination

Respondents were also asked if they had personally been discriminated against over the last 3 months due to their religion, ethnicity, gender, or political affiliation. In general, religion (3%), ethnicity (2%), and gender (4%) all continue to be perceived as very insignificant sources of discrimination, with no significant changes.

Of the four categories assessed for discrimination by the scan, discrimination due to political affiliation was the only category that showed a significant change. Previously, discrimination based on political affiliation was the highest, at 14%, and was reportedly increasing. However, this report finds that discrimination based on political affiliation has significantly dropped since November 2015, and is now reported to have impacted only 6% of respondents over the last three months. This is even lower than in February 2015-- pre-electoral violence-- when discrimination based on political affiliation was reported at 10%.

Discrimination due to political affiliation was most commonly reported as lack of equal consideration for job opportunities (especially for teaching positions), promotions, other developmental and material opportunities, and especially for attaining positions of leadership.

"If they hear you have a Rwandese accent, you can be thrown in jail or even killed ... Burundi is no longer on good terms with Rwanda, so that's why they are being discriminated. It has pushed them to be fearful, so anytime you see a Rwandese they are afraid. So they don't speak so you won't hear their accent."

-Participant, Bujumbura Mairie

Origin of the person continues to be cited as a reason for discrimination, though there are low levels. For example, when someone is from a different province they may face disadvantages when trying to access job opportunities and promotions, or be met with suspicion or targeted searches, as compared to someone who is a native to that province. In particular

discrimination towards Rwandans caused by recent political tension between the two nations is reportedly increasing. The previously reported cases of youth singing threatening songs intended to intimidate people based on their ethnicity or political affiliations and activities have stopped. However, these groups have reportedly redirected their energy to threatening Rwandans along the border in Kirundo Province. The poor are also perceived as being discriminated against when it comes to access to the justice system.

Trust

Community Trust

Surveys found that social cohesion, as measured through perceptions of trust is improving. 66% of those surveyed agreed that people in their neighborhood/commune trust each other, compared to 57% at CS2, and 48% from CS1.¹¹ However, since CS2 level of trust dropped in Bujumbura Mairie from 57% to 52% and in Makamba from 78% to 65%. Trust has improved the most significantly in Bubanza, where it rose from 47% to 73%.¹²

"After Ban-Ki Moon's visit he said all political prisoners should be released. So people from other parties they felt happy that the President accepted that. So it helps the trust to increase." – Participant, Rumonge Province

Participants in Makamba felt that recent reports of grenade attacks taking place in the country side, and killings taking place outside of Bujumbura is a major contributor to the declining trust among the community. Additionally, there was a perception that continuing arrests and accusations being made towards those from opposition groups is fueling suspicion and distrust among community members. In Makamba, people continue to be afraid to report cases of corruption or of violence being carried out by youth parties, due to fear of retaliatory actions.

Participants also often reported that distrust of members of the community who have friends or family who fled the recent political violence is common. Some members of the community report being suspicious that community members with family or friends outside may be privy to important information related to security or planned attacks; meanwhile, those who have connections to people who have fled fear they will be targets of retaliation. This causes a lack of trust between these two groups.

In Rumonge in particular, participants cited proactive efforts by local community leaders to encourage people to meet regularly and to improve relationships at the household level as positively contributing to growing trust. The meetings are also perceived as helping to reduce the impact of rumors related to security on the community.

Interestingly, in Bujumbura Rural, actions by the newly elected local administration to keep secretaries and assistants who had served in the previous administration were seen as positively improving relationships in the community. This gave people the sense that there was less discrimination based on political affiliation, and thus helped to improve trust.

In particular, recent efforts to encourage people from all political parties to attend weekly community works events have had a positive impact on improved relationships. This will be discussed in more detail in the Opportunities for Peace section, below.

"The youth were thinking they would face the same things happening in Bujumbura, and since the war never started, now there is hope and that has improved trust." – Participant, Bubanza Province

Perceptions of Youth

The perception that youth attract problems, particularly due to their involvement in political parties, has dropped from 51% to 33%. Additionally, those reporting high

¹¹ This survey question was reframed more positively than in CS1, which could account for some of the change in findings.

¹² Focus group participants' understandings of trust and lack of trust are in Annex 6.

levels of trust in youth have increased in every Province. However, 50% of people still report low levels of trust in youth, though this represents an improvement from 59% in November.

Overall, the perception is that youth have changed their behavior significantly in the past few months. Primarily, protests have decreased; therefore youth are seen as less active in demonstrating and less likely to participate in violence.

Cibitoke is the only province reporting an increased distrust in youth, rising from 53% reporting low trust in November to now 60%. Participants from Cibitoke associate the negative perceptions of youth with robbery due to high levels of unemployment. It was also noted that when answering this question, people tended to think about youth globally, rather than just at

"People have a negative image towards youth because of unemployment. When you are unemployed they are more likely to cause troubles in the community."

—Participant, Cibitoke Province

the community level. Respondents were also considering reports of youth throwing grenades and being involved in violence in the capital city when discussing the role of youth in violence. This was the case in other provinces as well, in which participants

associated youth in the capital as those involved in violence and with access to weapons.

In Bubanza, trainings led by local associations and NGOs were cited as having improved the image of youth in the community. Additionally, actions taken by local authorities to hold even political party leaders accountable for crimes, was seen as setting a positive example in the community, and demonstrating that impunity would not be tolerated. As a result violence among youth is believed to have gone down. Additionally, because protests have died down, participants in Bubanza noted that it was improving the perception of youth that they are no longer traveling to the capital to participate in protests and other political activities.

In Makamba and Bubanza there were still isolated reports of members of political youth parties arresting and beating people; however, participants noted that cases of this kind have grown less frequent.

Participants in the capital also felt that youth contribute to community security, as they often participate in patrols, and that these patrols are more commonly made up of members of mixed political parties, also contributing to improving relationships between the groups. Specific community recommendations to improve perceptions of youth are in Annex [xxx].

Ethnic Relationships

Overall, ethnic relationships are perceived to be overwhelmingly positive, with 70% responding that relationships between ethnicities are currently positive, and only 29% indicating that relationships are currently negative. However, this finding is surprising as it represents a decline in the quality of inter-ethnic relationships since CS2, with those reporting positive relationships decreasing from 78% to 70%, and those reporting negative relationships increasing from 22% to 29% at the aggregate level.¹³ Nevertheless, respondents

"I think what is changing is what we hear on radios. The way they say that 'Tutsis' are being killed. We hear this on the radio and this is causing fear."

—Participant, Makamba Province

¹³ The most notable declines in positive perceptions of ethnic relationships were in Kirundo (from 80% to 52%), Bujumbura Rural (82% to 75%), Makamba (88% to 78%) and Bubanza (72% to 67%).

actually perceive that ethnic relationships have remained stable in recent months (74% reporting 'no change'), 14% of respondents indicated that relationships have been worsening over the last 3 months, a significant decrease from 31% at CS2.¹⁴

The decline in positive perceptions of ethnic relationships seems to contradict other responses on ethnic relationships in addition to other indicators, such as trust and social cohesion. The vast majority of participants said there are not significant conflicts based on ethnicity, ethnicity is not commonly a consideration when making decisions about someone, and they feel safe and comfortable discussing their ethnicity with others.

This contradictory data may be explained by the difference in community-level or inter-personal perceptions and national-level perceptions of ethnic relationships. Many respondents reported that ethnic issues have not changed dramatically at the community level, but that the issue of ethnicity is being used to serve political agendas and flame existing political conflicts.

"This is not because of bad things happening in the community, but because of things they hear on the radio that people say the relationship are 'poor'" –
Participant, Bubanza Province

Participants continue to attribute to distrust and suspicion between people of different ethnicities to reports and political speeches being heard on the radio, suggesting a mismatch between personal experiences in communities and perceptions of ethnic relations outside their

communities. The data does not suggest that ethnically-based incidents are not happening in these communities, but rather that the majority of people have little connection or personal experience with these incidents; thus general understandings of ethnic relationships are based on what community members have heard about through outside sources (radio and media, but also through discussions with others in their communities). In Bujumbura Mairie participants reported that lack of trust between ethnicities continues to be based on the perception that predominantly Tutsi neighborhoods were the main sites for political protests, causing fear in other neighborhoods.

In certain cases, participants felt that perceptions of discrimination or poor treatment based on ethnicity may actually be based on geography. For example, if a Hutu were to travel to a primarily Tutsi community in which he is not well known, he may be stopped, questioned, or even arrested. Participants felt that this was due more to increased suspicion of non-locals and concerns about security than due to ethnicity, even if it appears to be the case.

Respondents suggested many ways for relationships between ethnicities to be further strengthened. They emphasized dialogue and meetings in collaboration with authorities that focus on themes of honesty and forgiveness; increased attendance at school, where ethnicities learn to live peacefully together; promotion of tolerance and forgiveness by local religious leaders; efforts to bring back people who fled as refugees during the recent violence, and support for their reintegration into communities, etc. The role of local government authorities was also emphasized, ensuring that ethnicities are not considered when hiring for jobs. In particular, participants emphasized a need to reduce discussions and speeches based on ethnicity on radios and on social media.

¹²Those who reported ethnic relationships worsened over the past few months were significantly lower in every single province. Kirundo and Bujumbura Mairie have the highest levels of people reporting that ethnic relationships continue to worsen (25%).

Opportunities for Peacebuilding

Education Services

69% of people felt positively that the education system prepares youth to handle disputes either 'well' or 'very well' without resorting to violence. This represents an increase since CS2, when confidence in the education system dipped down to 56%; however, current findings bring confidence in the education system back up to similar levels as those reported pre-elections, at which time 67% responded favorably. Participants frequently cited the Civics course offered in grade 7 and 8 as the best opportunity for students to learn about how to live together peacefully. However, the class continues to be critiqued by both students and teachers as being too short and infrequent to make a lasting impact on students' capacities to resolve disputes without violence. No significant changes to the education system were reported in any of the provinces since CS2.

Existing Opportunities for Peace Building & Dialogue

Opportunities to participate in peacebuilding and constructive dialogue around conflicts impacting the community have increased since November. Those who report having opportunities to help build peace have increased from 47% to 58%, and those who report having opportunities to participate in constructive dialogue have increased from 27% to 47%. Of those who said they did not have this opportunity, 96% said they would like more opportunities to contribute to local peace building.

"Before people were wearing political party t-shirts, but ever since they made the request not to wear the t-shirts there is a change. Now everyone can participate... if you don't go you have to pay 5000BIF. Anytime you want a paper signed, you have to show your copy book with your attendance."
— Participant, Bubanza Province

In general, community members noted that people feel more engaged in peacebuilding in their communities because local administrations have made concentrated efforts to establish security committees that include youth, women, men, and mixed ethnic groups. Additionally, community members noted that groups that had previously existed, such as religious groups, and associations had stepped up their efforts by becoming more active in discussions related to security and peace. Many community members were previously too occupied with elections and then with declining security to participate in meetings such as these in previous months. However, as people have adjusted to the situation and returned to their old habits, participation has increased again.

Possibly most significantly, communities largely reported that weekly community works events had changed quite dramatically in recent months. A recent ban on wearing politically affiliated t-shirts to community works events has opened up community works to be more inclusive and has improved attendance from people of all political parties. During elections, community works were heavily seen as being associated with only the ruling party, and people from other parties reported feeling afraid to attend.

Many local authorities have recently put into place new methods to enforce attendance at community work. In some cases, community members have their attendance recorded by local administrators in notebooks.

"We chat with people of different ethnic and political groups during the community works. A local authority also gives a speech about peace."
—Participant, Cibitoke Province

Participants felt that if they did not have good attendance, they could potentially be excluded from opportunities, or denied support when handling bureaucratic matters in the future. In other cases, participants believed they would have to pay a fine or face similar consequences if they did not attend. In general, participants felt that the increase of people from different political groups and ethnicities participating in community works was a good thing, and it has been positively contributing to improving trust and social cohesion.

In several cases, inter-Burundian dialogues were also cited as providing opportunities to participate in dialogue on local conflicts. However, some participants expressed a desire for more efforts to be made to reach those who live in more remote areas and who may not be aware, or may not have the money to pay for transport to the dialogues often taking place in city centers. Others noted concerns that the inter-Burundian dialogues do not truly provide a space for participants to express themselves in a way that promotes constructive debate and meaningful change.

"Improve development projects and the financial situations so that they [youth] will have less opportunities to be manipulated and less involved in politics. When you are hungry it is easy to get angry."
– Participant, Bujumbura Mairie

Program Recommendations

Recommendations echo those in the previous CS2 report, as many remain relevant to the current context. The key themes remain: improving 'Do No Harm', supporting resilience to vulnerable groups, increasing focus on conflict sensitive communication, supporting conflict sensitive school curriculum, improving confidence in judicial and land decisions, and improving social cohesion.

In order to continue to support improved community cohesion and reconciliation, ***it is critical to continue to engage community members in the process of peacebuilding and opportunities to engage in constructive dialogue*** about community conflicts and to address underlying fears and tensions. In this vein, ***local authorities should be recognized for putting into place recent policies that have helped to build trust and repair communities***. These ***local authorities should be supported in their efforts to continue to push for improved social cohesion***, and collaborative efforts should be pursued in order to encourage more similar initiatives.

In general, the CS3 findings demonstrate that significant and very positive progress has been made within the intervention zones since CS2. In particular, these improvements can be noted in improved levels of social cohesion, discrimination, security, and trust. An increase in opportunities for community members to participate in peace building and dialogue in their communities has also had a widely positive effect. However, as the economic environment continues to shift, the progress that has been made coming out of the electoral period will be challenged by increased financial insecurity and poverty.

Socio-economic Considerations: Addressing fragility through program interventions

As the economic situation continues to decline it becomes critical to *support resilience to violence*. CS3 highlights the continued need for ***income generating activities for the unemployed***. Existing associations represent excellent opportunities for collaboration with

local communities, in particular due because **existing associations are important leaders and peace builders in the community**.

In addition, the rising rates of domestic disputes warrant **increased efforts to support communal mediation capacities, and income-generating activities aiming to relieve increased pressure on couples** caused by the worsening economic situation. Intra-familial and domestic conflicts have the potential to be shaped heavily by women. Women should be encouraged to participate in decision-making around household issues, particularly in the use non-violent mechanisms for conflict resolution.

In particular, the importance of **transparency and reduction of bias** in the selection of participants for jobs and projects is even paramount in today's economic climate. While there have been improvements in the perception of youth, and land conflicts have decreased, it remains important to continue to work to address these issues. This is critical for all actors in keeping with the principles of Do No Harm.

The international community should carefully consider how interventions and sanctions affect community cohesion and economic stability. Decisions should be paired with essential humanitarian support to avoid reigniting violence and low cohesion levels.

Regional Dynamics: Easing tensions around migration and reintegration of returnees

As the situation continues to stabilize it will be important to **encourage and support the return of political refugees to their homes**. Throughout this process it will be important to closely **monitor the management of land and protection of returnees**, as well as to **support positive reintegration and trust building** between community members. Currently, there is also an opportunity to **support relationships between current community members who have friends or family who have fled, and others within the community**. These, two groups currently suffer from high tensions and distrust of one another in many areas. There should be a clear plan for supporting reintegration of returnees and encouraging trust between these groups. This is particularly true for Rwandan and Burundian relationships, which need to continue to be monitored.

Transparency, and increased information on processes related to **supporting land management and increasing confidence in the justice system will also be critical** to preventing potential crises. Land conflicts should continue to be monitored closely, particularly in the provinces of Kirundo and Makamba; investigations of abuses of power and theft of land should be conducted throughout the country.

As private radios begin to re-open it will be important to **continue monitoring divisive speech** to assure continued unity, and **continue to maintain and support positive inter-ethnic relationships**. In this vein, it is essential to **encourage quality and diversity of reporting institutions and access to information**. Evolutions in ethnic relationships should continue to be monitored closely, and policies should be put into place to mitigate damage caused by dangerous speech. Interventions should focus on the way national dynamics are perceived in relation to those at the communal level, and the role responsible media reporting can play in shaping these perceptions and fears.