



FINAL EVALUATION

Support Women Leaders of Today and Tomorrow to Advance Peace in Burundi

OCTOBER 2020

Executive Summary (English)

The project *"Support Women Leaders of Today and Tomorrow to Advance Peace in Burundi"* was initiated by Search-Burundi to strengthen existing women leaders, foster the emergence of new leaders among women of all ages, and work to collaborate with their male peers in designing and implementing community initiatives aimed at promoting peace and reconciliation in Burundi.

Implemented over a period of 22 months from February 1, 2018 to December 11, 2019, the project aimed to "promote the role of women in peacebuilding and conflict transformation at the community level" and increase the "participation of young people in civic and social life." It was implemented in the provinces of Bujumbura Mairie, Bujumbura Rural, Buzanza, Kirundo, Makamba, Cibitoke, and Kayanza, and the partners in this project were Dushirehamwe, Association of Repatriated Women of Burundi (AFRABU), Association for the Promotion of Burundian Girls (APFB), Network of Youth in Action Organizations (REJA), Collective for the Promotion of Youth Associations (CPAJ), Association of Women Journalists of Burundi (AFJO), Jimbere Magazine, and the Iwacu newspaper. The implementation of the project has been completed and Search-Burundi commissioned this final evaluation to assess the achievements of the project.

Objectives of the Evaluation

At the start of the project, Search for Common Ground conducted a baseline study to analyze the local sociopolitical context before the planned community interventions took place. The objectives of this final evaluation study are as follows:

Objective 1. Assess possible contextual changes related to the drivers, actors and risk factors for peace in the target areas and analyze the improvement of opportunities for women and young leaders in peacebuilding as a consequence of the interventions of the project;

Objective 2. Evaluate the degree to which the overall objective was met and how it compares to the expected results of the project in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. This includes an analysis of the change achieved through the comparison of the baseline project indicators and the final indicators;

Objective 3. Evaluate how the risks identified by the baseline study were managed in order to ensure that the project respected the principle of "do no harm" and ensured a conflict sensitive approach;

Objective 4. Identify lessons to be learned from the implementation of project activities so that they can be utilised in other similar projects that are being or will be implemented by Search for Common Ground and its partners.

Methodology

The evaluation was carried out in the seven provinces where the project was implemented and is based on the collection and analysis of secondary and primary data. Primary data consisted of both quantitative and qualitative data. Conventional data collection tools such as in-depth interviews with key informants (KII), questionnaires and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were used.

The literature review was based on documents provided by Search-Burundi including the logical framework, the activity and narrative reports presented by implementing partners and the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the evaluation. These documents have been consulted in order to better contextualize the expected results of the project.

In the collection of quantitative data, a sample of 271 people (121 men and 150 women) over the age of 18 was drawn from the eight (8) localities covered by the study. The sample size was selected in collaboration with the Search-Burundi team and sought to maximize the human resources and logistical capacities allocated to the study. The quantitative data was collected using the software Kobocollect, which allowed the international consultant to extract data on a daily basis and perform quality control.

The qualitative data collection was carried out through group discussions and individual interviews. Each FGD had between 8 and 10 participants and consisted of the following predetermined groups:

- Young women leaders aged 18 to 30
- Adult women leaders over 30
- Adult men over 30

Focus groups with the participation of women were facilitated by women and a total of 197 people participated in the group discussions. For the individual interviews, a total of 21 were conducted with implementing partners, community leaders and administrative authorities.

Analysis of the Study's Results

The following analysis of the study's results was carried out on the basis of the criteria of the study as contained in the ToR of the evaluation.

1.) Relevance of the Project

In the context of women's participation in conflict resolution and community development, the baseline study had already shown that although women traditionally played an important role in conflict resolution at the household and community levels, they were not considered capable of contributing to societal conflict resolution.

With regard to the relevance of the project's implementation framework, community members participated in the selection of civic activities to be undertaken for the training of future leaders. These activities have been approved by the local administrative authorities, which assures the relevance of these activities which were chosen by the members of the communities based on their priorities. The peace initiatives that were subsequently led by women and youth were initiated by the mobilized communities and local authorities. Quantitative data shows that 86.8% of respondents found that the project undertook initiatives that are relevant to their communities

2.) Effectiveness

During the baseline study, only 50.6% of female respondents and 38.6% of male respondents answered that women should participate in conflict resolution at the community level. However, when asked whether the role of women in conflict resolution should be strengthened, a majority of both women (78.3%) and men (62.2%) felt women's role should be strengthened.

The quantitative data from this study also showed that in the communities targeted by the project, female leadership is more accepted in community development and conflict resolution by those who believe that

women have played an important role in initiatives for the promotion of peace in the last 18 months (65.45% of women and 62.15% of men).

Quantitative data from the evaluation showed that respondents' perceptions of the role women should play in the community improved significantly among both women and men with 82.2% of women and 71.2% men who feel that women should play a *"fairly important"* or *"very important"* role in the community.

The qualitative data collected also confirmed that Search played an important role in changing the behavior of beneficiaries by strengthening their conflict management and prevention capacities.

The baseline study demonstrated that women's dependence on their husbands and traditional values contributed to reducing women's self-confidence to the point of believing that they had no important role to play in their communities. Conversely, the final evaluation shows relatively high levels of self-confidence both for women (71%) and men (87%) in targeted areas who said they were either *"very confident"* or *"confident"* to be community leaders, which can be interpreted as first indication for the empowerment of women leaders.

The baseline study report does not provide an indication of the percentage of women who play a role in their communities to allow comparison with the findings of the final evaluation. However, among the respondents of the quantitative survey, 48% of women and 54% of men report playing a role in consolidating peace in their communities.

The quantitative data from the present study showed that in communities where the project was implemented, 71% of women and 62% of men say they participated in initiatives undertaken by women. The survey also indicated that 53% of women and 57% of men who participated in the project have collaborated with other actors in their peacebuilding efforts. Additionally, 62% of women and 53% of men cited women as actors who actively contribute to peace.

Among the respondents who listen to the project's partner radio stations, 72.15% of women and 68.35% of men report that these radio stations highlight the voices of women leaders. When comparing this to respondents who have heard of Search's programs, the rates are slightly higher with 73.75% of women and 75.85% of men who say they regularly listen to the radio and who say they have heard of the radio programs by Search.

Efficiency

Throughout the implementation of the project's activities, several changes were proposed as a result of discussion between the project team and community leaders. Most significantly, it was suggested that the rehabilitation and construction of social infrastructure (e.g. bridges, public schools, housing for low-income people) should also be included in Search's programming. These activities were identified as key priorities by the women and young leaders within the framework of the project because they were seen as practical ways to strengthen peace and social cohesion between and within communities.

The project management was executed as planned, with Search managing the 60% and the partners 40% of the budget allocated to the project. Search took on a coordinating role and supported partners by facilitating strategic and operational planning, tool design, activity implementation, and project monitoring and evaluation. One of the challenges encountered was related to the pace of partner reporting, which sometimes influenced the date on which partner funds were disbursed under contractual terms between Search and partners. However, this did not cause any delays regarding project implementation.

Sustainability

At the level of collines, the beneficiaries were trained in small groups made up of new leaders and a mentor who accompanied them during the resolution of social conflicts. These groups continued their work and perpetuated the activities that had been implemented within the project's framework. The project has enabled women leaders of today and tomorrow to increase their effectiveness and their credibility as actors in the peacebuilding process at the community level as they are actively involved in conflict resolution and prevention in their communities. These new skills and strengthened capacities are already making impacts in the communities and will continue to be appreciated moving forward.

However, the construction and repair of social infrastructure such as bridges and schools were cited by participants in the various group discussions as being the most sustainable achievements, notably because of their visibility in the community. The maintenance of infrastructures will connect various communities, thereby strengthening social cohesion. Another contribution to the sustainability of the project's actions is the approach that has been adopted for the maintenance of the infrastructure that has been created. Different communities are organizing themselves with the aim to plan and coordinate the maintenance of said infrastructure for the consolidation of peace in these areas. This creates an opportunity for individuals to collaborate in civic activities for peace.

Lessons Learned

1. The design of the peace initiatives comprising social activities involving the communities and the project participants was highly valued by participants since such initiatives bring together a diverse group of people and constitute frameworks for dialogue between conflicting parties. As a result, conflicts are identified, analyzed and hence transformed with the participation of all. There is a need for financial resources in order for the communities to be able to continue organizing peace initiatives, which is essential for creating long-lasting peaceful relationships between different groups. Initiatives aimed at the economic empowerment of the new generation of women leaders (who have participated in coaching sessions with adult women) would cement their role as essential builders of peace by giving them freedom to define and undertake peace initiatives independently without having to seek funding.
2. Through the project, journalists with no particular knowledge of the peacebuilding field were involved in a wide range of activities (training of trainers, training of beneficiaries, coaching meetings, round tables, carrying out peace initiatives). This enabled these journalists to acquire knowledge and familiarize themselves with the environment and the field. In addition, in their professional lives, they are often called upon to act as mediators. Even after the project, they continue to develop programs related to the project themes.
3. The local population and the different parts of the project have taken ownership of the project's results and will carry them forward to ensure that previous conflicts do not return and that new challenges can be overcome. Some of the women leaders are now organising thematic sessions on conflict resolution and are actively contributing to conflict transformation at the community level.

Recommendations

Based on the results from the implementation, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Before project development, it would be best to visit target communities and identify with key actors the local priorities that should be integrated into implementation. If not, during the

baseline study, questions that relate to the priorities of the communities should be included in the search criteria in order to be able to make the necessary adjustments to the budget before the start of the implementation of the project. This would help to avoid adjustments needing to be made during the implementation and avoid unnecessary inefficiencies.

2. Partners suggested that peace initiatives should be defined clearly in the project design phase rather than developed along the way. However, the viewpoint of Search is that a certain flexibility is needed: Peace initiatives need to be developed and specified during the project's implementation phase to account for the often fast-changing dynamics on the ground.
3. A platform for leaders (women and young people) has been set up but it needs to be supported so that it can be recognized and work in close collaboration with the administration. This institution of women and youth leaders works in close collaboration with the CDFCs.
4. The project should be extended to better consolidate the achievements and enable the platform of women leaders to be fully autonomous in conflict resolution.
5. If the project were to be extended, those involved in its implementation should place much more emphasis on sensitizing men, young people and women to better develop positive masculinity and complementarity between men and women for community development. For the process to be effective, it will then be necessary to reach all layers of the population (men, women and young people. If men are not sensitized, they become obstacles for women and young leaders who want to prevent and peacefully resolve conflicts.
6. Strengthening capacities of women- and youth-led groups on the creation and management of micro-enterprises to empower themselves and cover the costs necessary for their operation. Empowerment will enable women to undertake initiatives that will boost participation in the consolidation of peace without depending on men.