

BURUNDI | DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES TO DISPLACEMENT

Context- Displacement Situation

The political and security situation in Burundi has deteriorated since the contested legislative and presidential elections in July 2015 and the inauguration of President Nkurunziza for his third term, leading to a political stalemate between the government and the opposition. Impunity for violations of human rights and increasingly extremist rhetoric have fuelled fear and created distress among the population in Bujumbura and the rest of the country. This crisis has led to more than 400 deaths, displaced more than 30,000 people within Burundi and led to more than 270,000 refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries. The displacement has collectively caused major socio-economic shocks at the community level with the potential to have serious consequences in terms of social cohesion..

Whole sectors of the economy such as commercial and handicraft activities and small and medium businesses have been paralyzed, undermining already fragile livelihoods. Basic community infrastructure is crippled and insecurity has reduced social capital and weakened traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.

The recent 2015 evaluation of the national reintegration strategy highlights unemployment and lack of livelihood alternatives as one of the major reasons for continued instability and displacement. The situation is further exacerbated by the El Niño phenomenon, which is creating serious flooding and landslides in many provinces, causing deaths and the destruction of houses, public infrastructure such as schools, and all-important agricultural plantations on which the population depends for basic survival.



IDP participant in UNDP community recovery project
(Photo: UNDP Burundi)

RESULTS

UNDP Burundi worked closely with national counterparts to support the community-based reintegration of returnees, IDPs and ex-combatants through cash for work and businesses in 2012-2013.

Over 9,000 men and women participated in cash-for-work. Eighty-eight percent of the cash-for-work participants chose to invest their individual savings in joint economic initiatives, secured a sustainable income and became financially self-reliant.



Men at work in UNDP community recovery project
(Photo: UNDP Burundi)

UNDPs Main Thematic Areas of Work

Youth and conflict prevention – UNDP will launch a new project providing livelihoods opportunities to youth affected by the violence to contribute to stability and thereby curb a key driver of internal displacement. The project aims to support an inclusive process of community reconstruction, and skills and capacity development to promote peaceful coexistence, social cohesion and socio-economic development. The three main streams of work are improving community structures to manage conflict and insecurity; the establishment of youth committees to manage community rehabilitation through the creation of short-term employment; and creation of diversified livelihood opportunities. The objective is for youth to become agents of change who promote social cohesion at the community level and combat the cycles of violence and displacement currently characterizing some of the known at-risk areas, especially in Bujumbura.

Durable Solutions and Resilience Mechanisms

UNDP is currently working on the Burundi Durable Solutions Action Plan, which will be guided by the recommendations of the recent evaluation on the 2010-2014 national strategy on reintegration. The Durable Solutions and Resilience Mechanisms working group is also focusing on how to support effective reintegration programmes for returning IDPs and refugees. The working group ensures that there is a link between humanitarian and development solutions.

Early Recovery/Emergency Employment – This sector group is working on emergency employment opportunities for the more than 35,000 youth who are highly vulnerable and at risk of joining armed groups. A joint initiative led by UNFPA, with support from UNDP and UNV, will help youth become involved in the development of their communities and participate in decision-making processes. UNDP will implement the 3x6 approach in urban areas to promote youth engagement in reconstructing damaged socio-economic infrastructure and creating small businesses and social enterprises in sectors demonstrated to have the greatest potential for economic growth and job creation. Plans are in place to expand the approach to provinces with a high concentration of internally displaced populations and refugees.

Humanitarian Partnerships

The Early Recovery and Emergency Employment sector is led by UNDP and is now part of the Burundi Humanitarian Response Plan, with members including international and national NGOs. The Durable Solutions working group is co-led by UNDP and UNHCR, working in partnership with a range of multi-sectoral actors. The upcoming project for youth will be implemented in partnership with NGOs and CSOs, as well as with UNDSS, UNFPA, and UN Volunteers.

UNDP and UNHCR also conducted a Durable Solution workshop that engaged donors, government and civil society. The main objectives of the workshop were to draw recommendations to revise the national strategy of reintegration and to prepare a context-updated action plan that would ensure mid- and long-term approaches to ensure durable solutions to IDPs and returnees at the community level.

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