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United Nations Development Programme

## DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE:  
LESSONS LEARNED IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

## COUNTRY REPORT FOR BURUNDI

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>ABELO</b>	Association Burundaise des Elus Locaux (Burundian Association of Communal Councilors)	<b>CERFOPAX-Chaire</b>	Centre de Recherche et de Formation pour la Paix
<b>ABR</b>	Association Burundaise des Radios-diffuseurs (Burundian Association of Broadcasters)	<b>CFI</b>	Canal France International
<b>ACCORD</b>	The African Center for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes	<b>CNDD-FDD</b>	National Council for the Defence of Democracy–Forces for the Defence of Democracy
<b>ADC-Ikibiri</b>	Democratic Alliance for Change	<b>COSOME</b>	Coalition de la Société Civile pour le Monitoring Electoral
<b>AFEPABU</b>	Association des Femmes Parlementaires du Burundi	<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>AFJB</b>	Association des Femmes Juristes du Burundi	<b>DDR</b>	disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
<b>AFJO</b>	Association of Women Journalists	<b>DPA</b>	Department of Political Affairs
<b>AFSC</b>	American Friends Service Committee	<b>DPKO</b>	Department for Peacekeeping Operations
<b>AWEPA</b>	Association of Europeans Parliamentarians for Africa	<b>EAD</b>	Electoral Assistance Division (DPA)
<b>BINUB</b>	United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi	<b>EISA</b>	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa
<b>BNUB</b>	United Nations Office in Burundi	<b>EMB</b>	Electoral Management Body
<b>BRIDGE</b>	Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections	<b>EVER</b>	Elections Violence Education and Resolution
<b>CAFOB</b>	le Collectif des Associations et ONGs Feminines du Burundi	<b>FRODEBU</b>	Front for Democracy in Burundi
<b>CECI</b>	Independent Communal Election Commission	<b>GPECS</b>	Global Programme on Electoral Cycle Support
<b>CEJP</b>	Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace	<b>ICGLR</b>	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
<b>CENI</b>	National Independent Electoral Commission	<b>IFES</b>	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
<b>CEPI</b>	Independent Provincial Electoral Commission	<b>IPU</b>	Inter-Parliamentary Union
		<b>MDPHG</b>	Ministre des Droits de la Personne Humaine et du Genre

## LIST OF ACRONYMS (CONT'D)

<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding	<b>RFI</b>	Radio France International
<b>MSD</b>	Movement for Solidarity and Democracy	<b>SFCG</b>	Search for Common Ground
<b>NDI</b>	National Democratic Institute	<b>SOFEBA</b>	Solidarité Femmes Parlamentaires
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization	<b>SPPDF</b>	Synergie des Partenaires pour la Promotion des Droits des Femmes (Synergy Partners for the Promotion of Women's Rights)
<b>NIC</b>	National identification cards	<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>ONUB</b>	United Nations Operation in Burundi	<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>PACAM</b>	Plan d'Action Commun d'Appui aux Médias	<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
<b>PACE</b>	Projet d'Appui au Cycle Electoral du Burundi	<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>PALIPEHUTU-FNL</b>	Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People-National Forces of Liberation	<b>UNIFEM</b>	United Nations Development Fund for Women (now: UN Women)
<b>PBF</b>	Peacebuilding Fund	<b>UPRONA</b>	Union pour le Progrès National
<b>RFEL</b>	Réseau des femmes élues locales		

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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Burundian women have been at the heart of positive political change in their country. Since the era of the 17-year-long civil war that shook the country, they have been mobilizing for peace locally, nationally and regionally. Their voices have been heard in the peace agreements, laws and national constitution that are redefining post-war Burundi. Their presence is increasingly being felt in parliament and in elected positions at the local levels, in state institutions and in government ministries.

Assistance by international and regional organizations has provided support to this remarkable movement at many points along the way. This case study<sup>1</sup> traces the progress in women's political participation in Burundi and identifies key instances of international assistance, particularly from UNDP, which contributed to current successes within electoral processes. The main focus is on electoral support provided in advance of the 2010 elections by international organizations, and especially by UNDP.

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<sup>1</sup> This case study has been prepared by Gabrielle Bardall, Kristin Haffert, Imelda Nzirorera and Julie Ballington. Special thanks to Awa Diouf, who was the UNDP senior Gender Advisor in the period under review. Thanks also to the staff in the UNDP Country Office, and Isabelle De Ruyt and Nadege Domjé (DPA Electoral Assistance Division) for their contributions. Photographs are thanks to Gabrielle Bardall ©2010.





## 2. BACKGROUND OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN BURUNDI

### 2.1. Burundian Political Context and Institutional Overview

At its emergence from the colonial period, Burundi held a comparative advantage over many decolonizing African states. The small central African nation possessed several of the basic elements for national unity,<sup>2</sup> including a well-defined political and geographic entity established during colonial rule and a shared socio-cultural and linguistic heritage.<sup>3</sup> Yet the instability that set in following independence in 1962 has plagued the country for decades. The rise and fall of six governments between 1962-1966, four successful coups d'états (1965, 1976, 1987 and 1996), the assassination of the first democratically elected president in 1993 and his successor in 1994, and recurrent bouts of ethnic violence in 1972 (estimated

200,000 victims) and 1988 (estimated 20,000 victims), and the civil war between 1993-2000 (estimated 200,000 dead, 350,000 refugees, 1,300,000+ internally displaced)<sup>4</sup> profoundly shook the foundations of Burundian society and frustrated efforts to have a popularly elected government.<sup>5</sup>

Following the short-lived introduction of multi-party democracy in 1993, the seeds of democratic transition were sown in 1998 when Tutsi President Buyoya agreed on a transitional constitution with the Hutu-led parliament, launching the Arusha process that culminated with the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement of August 2000. Analysts judged the subsequent power-sharing government installed in 2001 to be a positive indicator of some of the essential elements of democratic consolidation.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Rustow, Dankart. (1970). "Transition to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model". *Comparative Politics*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 337-363.

<sup>3</sup> Daley, Patricia. *Gender and Genocide in Burundi: The Search for Spaces of Peace in the Great Lakes Region*. Bloomington Indiana Press. 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Lemarchand, René. *The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Bardall, Gabrielle. "The Roots of Electoral Violence: Tracing the Path of Electoral Authoritarianism in Burundi." *The Centre for the Study of Democratic Citizenship*. Quebec City, Quebec. 25-26 March 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Dahl, Robert. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. Yale University Press. 1972.



Progress in the years following 2001 was encouraging. Most of the armed opposition groups agreed to a ceasefire and were integrated into the transitional government between 2001 and 2005, including the former rebel group, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy–Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD). A new constitution mandating ethnic pluralism and quota systems for government administration was approved by referendum on 28 February 2005. These positive gains were capped with the 2005 transitional elections that created a new slate of leadership at all levels of government and brought the CNDD-FDD leader, Pierre Nkurunziza, the presidency. Organized with the significant support of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping forces (ONUB), as well as UN and international election assistance programmes, national and international observers widely recognized the elections as free, fair and competitive.<sup>7</sup>

These steps towards democracy were accompanied by persistent internal and cross-border insecurity, aggravated by the pervasive presence of small arms and a fractured political environment. In this context, the implementation of a new ceasefire agreement in 2008 and the integration of the Palipehutu/FNL into the armed forces and party politics in 2009 constituted decisive progress. Although the protracted disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process (especially among FNL ex-combatants) has slowed security- and

justice-sector reform, Burundi moved forward in institutionalizing democratic institutions between 2005 and 2010.

A second round of elections was organized between May and September 2010 and included presidential, legislative, senatorial, communal and hillside (*colline*) elections. They marked the first elections since all armed factions laid down their weapons. The international community provided extensive technical support to the process, including ONUB's successor, the UN Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) and UNDP. The UN electoral assistance for the 2010 elections was notable in that UNDP provided technical assistance for the conduct of the



<sup>7</sup> European Union Electoral Observation Mission (EU-COM). *Final Observation Report*. 2010. Cited in Bardall, CDSC March 2011.

elections, while the UN mission (BINUB) was in charge of the political support to the electoral process.

Despite the peaceful precedent of 2005 and the international assistance, political violence marked the lead-up to the communal elections on 24 May 2010.<sup>8</sup> The communal elections resulted in the ruling party, CNDD-FDD, receiving 64 percent of the vote. Alleging the presence of electoral fraud, 12 opposition parties united to form the ADC-Ikibiri coalition and opted to boycott the rest of the electoral process. After all six opposition candidates dropped out of the presidential race, incumbent Pierre Nkurunziza won 92 percent of the vote as the only candidate on the executive ballot. CNDD-FDD won over 80 percent of parliamentary seats during legislative elections in July 2010. Over the course of the five-month electoral period, political violence intensified, limitations were imposed on public assembly and association and several opposition leaders went into exile.<sup>9</sup>

Despite these shortcomings, the 2010 electoral process has been generally assessed as a success, at least logistically, in that the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) organized five elections in a very short time: communal (24 May), presidential (28 June), National Assembly (23 July),

Senate (28 July) and hillside, or “*Colline*” (7 September). The political challenges evidenced during the electoral period persisted into the post-election period. Since the 2010 elections, no official talks have been held between the CNDD-FDD government and the opposition parties of the ADC-Ikiriri coalition. The security situation remains fragile and significant governance challenges remain in the areas of justice-sector transparency, government oversight, security-sector reform and human rights.

## 2.2. Situational Analysis of Women's Political Participation

### Impact of Conflict and Ongoing Insecurity

Women's experiences in the decade-long civil conflict that claimed over 300,000 lives have profoundly shaped Burundian women's role in political life. The war affected women disproportionately. As bearers of ethnicity and culture, women were targeted for rape and other sexual violence by both parties of the conflict.<sup>10</sup> Forced displacement added to the burden many women faced as single breadwinners for their families. As a whole, the civil war took a heavy toll and, today, Burundi ranks 185 out of 187 on the 2012 UNDP Human Development Index.

<sup>8</sup> *Rapport de l'expert indépendant chargé d'examiner la situation des droits de l'homme au Burundi*, Akich Okola. 2011. A/HRC/16/CRP 1. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/countries/bi/mandate/index.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2011: Burundi*. <http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2011/burundi>; Nancy Welsh, National Endowment for Democracy, *Burundi's Political Parties in Peril*. Demdigest.new. 29 February 2012; *Rapport de l'expert indépendant chargé d'examiner la situation des droits de l'homme au Burundi*, Akich Okola. A/HRC/16/CRP .1. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/countries/bi/mandate/index.htm>; International Crisis Group. *Burundi: From Electoral Boycott to Political Impasse*. Africa Report No. 169 – 7 February 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Tripp, Aili Mari. 2005. “Empowering Women in the Great Lakes Region: Violence, Peace and Women's Leadership.” *Social and Human Science Papers in Women's Study/Gender Research*, no. 3. France: UNESCO, p. 3.

Burundian women were not passive victims of the war, but became an active and powerful force for peace at local and national levels. The conflict period laid the groundwork for an effective women's movement during the transition. The civil war brought many women into the public sphere for the first time, forcing them to take on new responsibilities and motivating them to advocate for peace. Women's relationships during the conflict and their efforts to keep their communities running during the war made them familiar with each other and well-acquainted by the time they began to develop a more formal women's movement later on. The fruits of these networks and common trust soon became apparent as Burundi began its political transition.

At the grassroots level, women built inter-ethnic relationships between Hutu and Tutsi groups.<sup>11</sup> From the beginning of the civil war, women organized on a multi-ethnic basis to educate and lobby for peace. Two umbrella organizations were formed – *le Collectif des Associations et ONGs Feminines du Burundi* (CAFOB) and *Dushirehamwe* – to bridge ethnic divides and promote women's rights at first during the conflict, then during the peace process and through ongoing efforts today to promote women's political participation. *Dushirehamwe*, which means 'Let's Reconcile', began in 1996 as a training-of-trainers project in gender and conflict transformation in partnership with International Alert. In 2002, they established themselves as an independent

local women's peace-building association and currently work with over 230 affiliated women's groups at the community level across the country. CAFOB was created in 1994 as an initiative of seven women's organizations and with the support of the Canadian

Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI). It was registered with the Ministry of the Interior on 20 January 1997. Today, it is composed of over 50 associations supporting the participation of Burundian women in civil and political life.



### Burundian Women during the Transition

Just as conflict shaped the struggles for a generation of Burundian women, it also formed the context for the emergence of a women's movement that played a key role in gender equality advancement during the subsequent political transition. The women's movement provided a training ground for female political and civic leaders and contributed significantly to changing the norms and customs that limited their political participation in the past.

Women were initially rejected from participating in the Arusha Peace Process, held in Tanzania from 1998 to 2000, but seven

<sup>11</sup> Ndimurukundu-Kururu, Barbara, 2005. 'Le rôle des femmes dans la reconstruction post-conflit: expériences et leçons retenues du Burundi.' Paper presented at gender consultation on 'Empowering women in the Great Lakes Region: Violence, peace and women's leadership,' Addis Ababa, June 2005, p. 2; Watt, Nigel, 2008. *Burundi: Biography of a Small African Country*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 117–118. Cited in Falch, Aschild. "Women's Political Participation and Influence in Post-Conflict Burundi and Nepal." Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). Prio Paper May 2010.

women were eventually granted permanent observer status following intense pressure from local and international women's lobby groups. The movement's lobbying activities culminated in the All-Party Burundi Women's Peace Conference, organized with the support of UNIFEM and the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation one month before the signing of the Peace accord in August 2000.<sup>12</sup> Representing women from 50 political parties, women's organizations, refugee and IDP groups, the Conference resulted in a declaration urging the negotiating parties to incorporate a gender perspective as a cross-cutting theme and to introduce a 30-percent quota in all institutions created by the peace agreement.<sup>13</sup> With extensive lobbying and support from ONUB, the UN and other international actors, most of the recommendations of the Conference were adopted, except the electoral quota for women.<sup>14</sup>

The quota was initially rejected due to a perceived shortage of qualified women candidates and its absence was reflected in the transitional government where women's participation remained very low. UNIFEM and other international actors cooperated with local women's organizations to maintain intense pressure and continue awareness-raising about the issue, however and the quota was finally introduced and

approved in the 2005 constitution. The ONUB Gender Advisory team worked closely with women's organizations in the subregion to advocate for the allocation of an electoral quota, using the political leverage of ONUB's senior management.

Although Burundian women have had the right to vote and stand for office since the first elections in 1961, Burundian politics has traditionally been "an overwhelmingly male preserve."<sup>15</sup> With the exception of Sylvie Kinigi, who held the office of prime minister for seven months from 1993 to 1994, women's roles have been traditionally limited to the domestic sphere and their political participation has been minimal. Two connected influences in the past decade cracked open this closed political sphere: the rise of an influential civil society women's movement and their successful introduction of gender goals into Burundi's legal framework.

Burundian women's organizations played a critical role in bringing gender issues to the forefront during the constitutional process. Through their coordinated lobbying and sensitization efforts, they effectively introduced the issue into the negotiation process and pushed for targeted gender equality goals. As a result, the post-transition constitution enshrines Burundi's regional and international commitments on gender

<sup>12</sup> Nduwimana, Françoise, n.d. *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security: Understanding the Implications, Fulfilling the Obligations*. Background report prepared for the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, pp. 82–83. Cited in Falch, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), 2006b. *Beyond Numbers: Supporting Women's Political Participation and Promoting Gender Equality in Post-Conflict Governance in Africa*. Available at: [http://www.womenwarpeace.org/webfm\\_send/99](http://www.womenwarpeace.org/webfm_send/99). Cited in Falch, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Falch, 2010, p 11.

<sup>15</sup> Bentley, Kristina A., and Roger Southall, 2005. *An African Peace Process: Mandela, South Africa and Burundi*. Cape Town: HSRC Press, p. 153. Cited in Falch, 2010.

equality.<sup>16</sup> The constitution seeks to ensure women's participation at all levels of decision-making in every area of national life by correcting existing imbalances and promoting gender balance in public administration,<sup>17</sup> the judiciary<sup>18</sup> and the state security forces.<sup>19</sup> This includes a 30-percent quota in elected and non-elected state institutions.<sup>20</sup> Subsequent legal reforms have been initiated to introduce gender quotas into the electoral code (see table), toughen penalties for violence against women and to enforce and extend the reach of the quota to the communal and colline levels. The women's civil society movement was the driving force behind these reforms and remains the most powerful voice for advancing gender equality in the country today.

### Burundian Women in Politics

Since the establishment of gender equality as a national goal and the introduction of the quota, progress in women's representation in parliament and government has been striking. In 2005, some women's seats had to be filled through a cooptation process. Used frequently in transitional political contexts, cooptation refers to the process of "absorbing new elements into the leadership or policy-determining structure of an organization as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence."<sup>21</sup> Co-opted actors

are given formal or informal power on the grounds of their élite status, specialist knowledge or potential to threaten or advance essential commitments or goals (such as gender equality). In Burundi, cooptation was introduced as a contingency resource in the electoral code in case the gender quota was not filled through elections. In 2005, women ran for office, but their positioning within political parties' lists of candidates did not allow them to achieve the minimum quota of 30 percent. As a result, cooptation was used to bring the needed corrections to allow the Parliament to comply with the electoral law on the representation of women.

ONUB's capacity and assets were used to advocate for the inclusion of gender concerns in the political process, from setting up the national and provincial electoral bodies, voter registration and voter education campaigns with modules specifically targeting women to elaborating the electoral laws and placement of women in the political parties electoral lists and training electoral officers and potential women candidates at the legislative, commune and *colline* levels. ONUB further supported the mobilization of women to participate in the elections and a cooperative movement was developed among the units for political affairs, electoral affairs, public information and gender and assistance was provided to women's organizations in the subregion.

<sup>16</sup> Burundi is signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

<sup>17</sup> Burundi's Constitution (law 1/010 of 18 March 2005)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Selznick, Philip. *TVA and the Grassroots*. 1949, pp. 13-15.



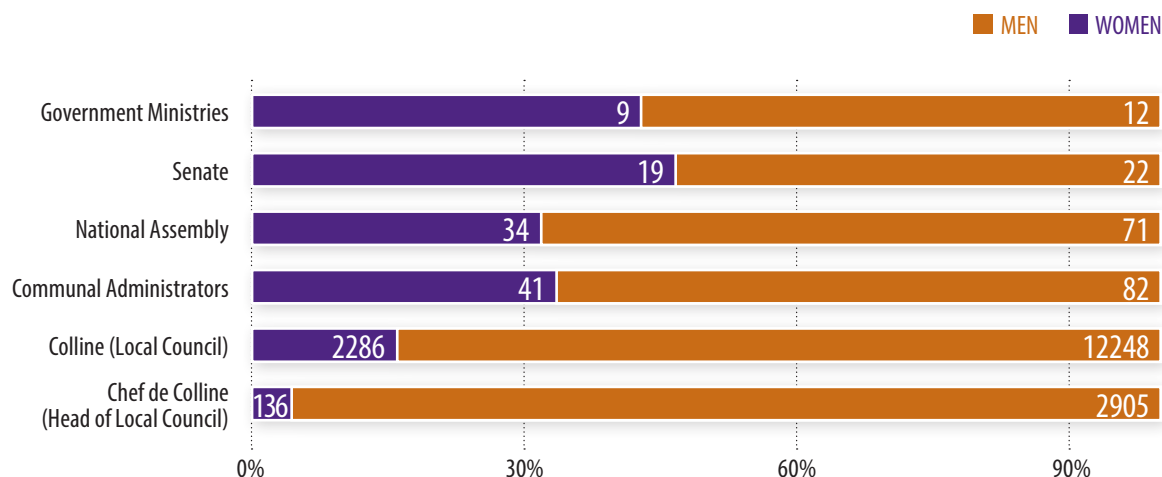
With the support of the organizations working on the elections, ONUB facilitated the elaboration of a road map for the elections detailing the activities that needed to be implemented, designed and agreed upon by all stakeholders. The Ministry subsequently validated this road map in a workshop organized with the support of UNIFEM. Local authorities and the elected government subsequently followed up by appointing women to predominant positions in the Cabinet, such as chairperson in the Parliament, the two vice presidents of the Senate, province governors and heads of Commune Councils, among others.

By 2010, enough women were running for office that the cooptation contingency measures were unnecessary to fulfil the 30-percent quota. Indeed, the quota was surpassed in all elected bodies in 2010, except the *collines*, and reached near-parity in the Senate. Only in the local races, where

the quota was not applied, did women's representation fall short, namely 14 percent of colline council members and only 4 percent of *Chefs de colline* (heads of hillside-level councils). At the ministerial level, the CNDD-FDD government named nine women to government leadership positions (out of 21 positions), including the key ministries of finance, justice, agriculture, communication, health and commerce. Three women were appointed as provincial governors. Gender equality was also reflected in the electoral management body (EMB). From its inception in 2009, the Independent National Election Commission (CENI) showed strong leadership on the topic of gender equality and promoted women in CENI bodies at all levels, including leadership positions.

Women's role in civil society has fuelled these changes to the political landscape for women. Numerous NGOs dedicated to

**Figure 1: Distribution of Women in Selected Decision-Making Bodies after the Elections of 2010**  
(percentage of seats held by women and men)



Source: UNDP analysis based on data provided by INEC



women's empowerment, including a few strong umbrella groups, helped the women's movement evolve during the transition and the following years. These relationships and the organizations' longevity have directly contributed to women's engagement with the challenges of the current political context. As such, women were able to effectively build on achievements and collectively learn from their mistakes. For example, when efforts to fulfil the quota in 2006 did not yield 30 percent women on candidate lists for the National Assembly, a unified front of women's organizations fought to include non-compliance measures to the quota in 2010.

Despite the positive gains achieved in women's political participation during the 2010 elections, the overarching shadow of the opposition boycott and violence around the elections obscured some of the advances. The boycott left the presidential and local elections uncontested and severely restricted opposition participation in the legislative and senatorial elections.<sup>22</sup> The boycott also impacted women's political participation by effectively excluding women candidates from a plurality of political parties and restricting voter turnout to incumbent party supporters. Opportunities for women's advancement within party structures varied sharply between ruling party and opposition parties. While fierce competition and negotiated deals narrowed the field for women aspirants in the opposition parties, the security of the



incumbent's position transformed its incentives to include women. Specifically, the incumbent party had incentive to employ measures that would increase its perceived legitimacy among domestic and international actors and could do so without risking its electoral success. To this end, maximizing women's participation increased party legitimacy that had been otherwise damaged by the opposition boycott. Overall, by generally undermining the stability and representativeness of the government, the boycott created a difficult and volatile environment for aspirant and elected women.

<sup>22</sup> Of 44 registered political parties, only the UPRONA (opposition party with ethnic Tutsi support) and a handful of small parties associated with the ruling CNDD-FDD participated in the legislative and senatorial elections, in addition to the CNDD-FDD.



### 3. INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE 2010 ELECTIONS

The UN agencies have coordinated support for women's political participation for over a decade. This has included UNIFEM, UNDP and the UN DPKO missions in Burundi, ONUB (2004-2006), BINUB (2006-2010) and BNUB (2011-present). Coordination has included building partnerships with women's organizations, NGOs, the electoral bodies, media and political parties.

Likewise, coordination has facilitated the collection, analysis and sharing of relevant information and data. Similarly, the long-term presence of several international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) including International Alert, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), Search for Common Ground, and others has contributed substantially to achievements in the area of gender equality in Burundi.

The peacebuilding mandate of the UN in Burundi started officially on January 1, 2007 when the UN Integrated Office in Burundi

(BINUB) came into being (SCR 1719, 2006). BINUB was a political and peacebuilding mission of the Department of Political Affairs of the UN Secretariat (that was previously lead by DPKO). In order to coordinate international assistance for the elections in Burundi, the international partners established twin mechanisms in May 2009: a Consultative Strategic Committee that served as a forum to define strategic guidelines for international assistance, and a Technical Coordination Committee that coordinated technical, logistical and financial assistance through the Independent National Electoral Commission and oversaw the management of the basket fund established by UNDP.

Following the recommendations of the 2009 Technical Assessment Mission (TAM) and Needs Assessment Missions (NAM) of the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department for Political Affairs (DPA/EAD) and a report from the Peace-Building Commission, UNDP designed the project *Appui au Cycle Electoral au Burundi-PACE*, which funded through a basket fund<sup>23</sup> and which was signed on 18 September 2009 for an overall amount of US\$32 million (total final UNDP contribution was US\$28 million). The project was to support the Government of Burundi through the CENI in the organization of free, transparent, credible and inclusive elections, notably through provision of technical and financial assistance in order to strengthen the capacities of CENI and the electoral administration of Burundi. BINUB, UNIFEM

and UNDP worked together in order to provide technical and financial support to women of Burundi (civil society, political women), which enabled the creation of a strategy for the integration of gender and improvement of political participation of women in elections (based on the experience from the 2005 elections and lessons learned from other countries).

UNDP and UNIFEM initially collaborated closely on the implementation of the programme (through co-location) until UNIFEM established its own office in country. UNDP support was channelled through the work of the country office's different units and projects. The integrated (UNDP-DPKO) Peace and Governance Section based at BINUB delivered most of UNDP support to

**Figure 2: International Actors in Promoting Women's Political Participation in Burundi**

UN Actors	DPA/EAD
	DPKO (ONUB (2004-2006), BINUB (2006-2010), BNUB (2011-present)
	UNDP
	UNIFEM, UN WOMEN
International NGOs	ACCORD
	Africare
	American Friends Service Committee
	CARE
	Institut Panos Paris
	Inter-Parliamentary Union
	International Alert
	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
	National Democratic Institute
	OXFAM-Novib
	Search for Common Ground

<sup>23</sup> Contributors were Australia, Belgium, Canada, EC, Egypt, France, Japan, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Peacebuilding Fund, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK.

women's increased political participation in the country between 2007 and 2009. UNDP's integrated Peace and Governance Section was composed of three units. The first unit on institutional development was responsible for support to Parliament and CSOs, including support to women parliamentarians. The second unit on decentralization and local governance managed the partnership between UNDP and the Burundian Senate. The partnership ultimately facilitated the creation of a network of locally elected officials, ABELO, in 2008 and ABELO's women's wing in 2010. The third unit on the reform of the public administration was not involved in women's participation.

Burundi was selected as one of 10 countries to benefit from UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention's (BCPR) global programme to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. The crisis prevention and recovery (CPR) context offered a programmatic and strategic framework for UNDP to better position itself within the UN as one of the key agencies engaged in the field of women's political participation. UNDP based its support on the implementation of Resolution 1325 and the other international mechanisms on gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as UNDP's accountability framework including the Gender Equality Strategy and the 8-Point Agenda. UNDP also drew on the Burundi national legal and strategic framework on women's political participation.

UNDP's principal activities in this area took place under the global programme to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. This programme engaged a senior gender advisor for three years as part

of the country office team and provided seed funding for pilot activities. UNDP also raised additional funding through the DGTTF, Swedish Cooperation, the PBF's emergency window, and Swiss Cooperation to develop different projects and initiatives in support of civil society organizations (CSOs) (including women's organizations) and the EMB. Through the implementation of these projects, all 714 locally elected women officials were trained, paving the way to implement ABELO's statute for Burundi's first-ever network of locally elected women (RFEL-Réseau des Femmes Elues Locales).

UNDP had an overall coordination role as it implemented the electoral assistance project through a basket fund mechanism. Under the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator of the UN System, a gender resource thematic group was established with the participation of UNIFEM (later UN Women), UNDP and BINUB to play an advisory role. On the programmatic side, UN Women and UNDP developed a partnership through a memorandum of understanding (MOU), designating UN Women to implement the gender and election part accounting for about 17 percent of UNDP's US\$3 million PBF project. UNDP implemented the national identity card initiative, which the PBF project partly funded.

Key local actors engaged with UNDP and the international community during this process included:

- The Synergy Partners for the Promotion of Women's Rights (SPPDF), which was responsible for implementing the national strategy for increased participation of women in the 2010 elections

## UN GENDER ADVISORS

UN agencies recognized the importance of including senior gender advisory capacity into their programming well before the 2010 election. The first DPKO gender advisor of the UN Office in Burundi (ONUB) was appointed in 2004, when much of the work focused on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of women fighters as well as supporting women's full participation in the ongoing political process.

As a result of the gender advisor's lobbying at the time, the category of 'women fighters' was redefined to include not only active fighters, but also women who supported or were forced into the war in different roles, including porters, cooks and sexual slaves. Of the 485 women disarmed in Burundi in 2005, 231 joined the country's police force.<sup>24</sup> During the 2005 elections, the ONUB gender advisor energetically worked with women's organizations in Burundi by supporting training and capacity-building workshops and partnering with organizations such as SOFEPA to promote women's political participation.<sup>25</sup> A gender advisor was also placed with BINUB until 2010.

In August 2009, a senior gender advisor was made available to the UNDP country office as part of the implementation of the global programme to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in 10 selected countries, including Burundi. In addition to her work in UNDP, the senior gender advisor allocated part of her time to the UN Country Team and part to the integrated Gender Thematic Group. The senior gender advisor's guidance during the 2010 elections laid the foundation for UNDP and broader UN support to the Government of Burundi to encourage women to register, vote and train to run for office.<sup>26</sup> The work of the advisor was integral to progress in supporting women candidates, voter turnout and donor coordination around this issue.

- The Collective of Associations and Women's NGOs of Burundi (CAFOB), which trained candidates in the legislative and *colline* elections
- *Dushirehamwe*, which worked with the SPPDF in organizing the forum for the development of the priorities for gender equality in the legislature from 2010 to 2015
- Association of Women Journalists (AFJO), which, thanks to its experience in promoting women's rights and gender equality in the media, was responsible for the development of the TV and radio spots for the media campaign
- Foundation Intahe, which includes Bashingantahe (traditional 'men of integrity'/local conflict resolvers) and worked with political parties to encourage women to apply

<sup>24</sup> United National Peace Operations Year in Review 2005. *Challenges in Peace Operations. Gender in Peacekeeping: an evolving field of practice.*

<sup>25</sup> NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. *Burundi and the Peacebuilding Commission: Women's participation in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.* January 2008. <http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pdf>

<sup>26</sup> *UNDP In Action: Realizing Women's Peace and Security.* Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery. 2011. UNDP.



**Figure 3: Burundian Associations & Women's Political Participation**

Associations of Elected Women	Association des Femmes Burundaises pour la Paix Deputé à l'Assemblée Nationale
	Association des Femmes Parlementaires du Burundi
	Réseau des femmes élues locales
	Solidarité Femmes Parlamentaires
Women's Civic Organizations	Association des Femmes Journalistes (AFJO)
	Collectif des Associations et ONGs Féminines du Burundi (CAFOB)
	Dushirehamwe
	Synergie des partenaires pour la promotion des droits de la femme (SPPDF)
Other Organizations	Coalition de la société civile pour l'observation et le monitoring des élections (COSOME)
	Commission Episcopale Justice et Paix (CEJP)
	La Foundation Intahe
	Plan d'Action Commun d'Appui aux Médias (PACAM) – 'Synergie des médias'

During the 2010 elections, the UN supported several programmes and initiatives to empower women and encourage their vigorous participation in the electoral process. The initiatives supported included:

- (a) The adoption of a strengthened electoral law that established a 30-percent quota for representation of women in communal councils
- (b) The registration of women on voter lists and their vigorous participation in election observation
- (c) Support for the election of women candidates to the National Assembly
- (d) Awareness-raising about the rights of women vis-à-vis the elections
- (e) Encouragement of representation by women within the electoral commission

- (f) Support for the integration of women's concerns into political party platforms<sup>27</sup>

### 3.1. International Support and the 2010 Elections Process

The 2010 elections marked a substantial change in the approach to UN electoral assistance from 2005. The 2005 elections were supported by ONUB (DPKO mission chapter VII mandate) with a strong electoral mandate. The UN military and civilian support staff was immense, with more than 120 staff engaged at the Electoral Division alone. In 2010, overall some 30 internationals supported the elections (experts and UN volunteers) and BINUB support was targeted at the political level. In the 2010 elections, CENI was the steering force in electoral administration, unlike in 2005, when the Commission had significantly less capacity.

<sup>27</sup> *Seventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi*. 30 November 2010. <http://www.bnub.unmissions.org>. Accessed 20 April 2012.



UNDP's 2009 programme to support the Burundian electoral project (PACE) consisted of a comprehensive technical assistance initiative designed according to three pillars of activity: support to the CENI for the organization of the five elections planned for 2010; civic education, human rights, civil society, media and gender; and electoral security and electoral dispute resolution. The gender component of PACE (a joint initiative of UNIFEM, UNDP and BINUB) supported the development of a gender mainstreaming

strategy to improve the political participation of women based on the experiences of the 2005 elections as well as international experiences. The strategy was developed through consultations with Burundian women of all backgrounds and through a coordinated effort of BINUB, UNDP and UNIFEM. The other pillars of the UNDP PACE programme took gender considerations into account, with particularly successful results in some areas such as voter registration and security, as described below.

## UNDP GENDER AND ELECTIONS PROGRAMMING

[Extracts from UNDP Programme Document, Support to the Burundian Electoral Cycle, 18 September 2009]

The development of an inclusive approach to electoral management that is sensitive to gender concerns and the concerns of other vulnerable groups is crucial. Taking into account the specific context of Burundi, the project's gender component is centred around the following four pillars:

### Developing a strategy to integrate the gender dimension in the electoral process

When women do not share a common vision and agenda, they risk fragmenting their efforts and becoming inefficient in promoting and communicating their vision to their constituents. The development of a strategy to integrate a gender dimension into the electoral process is a response to this risk. It provides for the creation of a framework before, during and after the elections as a tool to ensure a synergy between stakeholders and therefore promote mobilization and greater strength for advocacy efforts.

### Technical support for the integration of gender in the CENI activities and programmes

Gender mainstreaming in CENI's work and programmes should be encouraged through a communication strategy and development activities to ensure the inclusion of gender in all stages of the process, including recruitment administrative staff, poll workers, commissioners, etc. To increase the participation rate of women in the electoral process and generally to enhance their role, close collaboration with CENI will be required. Technical support for gender mainstreaming in CENI activities will enable the development of an inclusive approach by systematically supporting the creation of conditions for equal participation of women, men and vulnerable groups in the electoral process.



### ◀ **Support the mobilization of women in elections as voters, observers, witnesses and key actors in the peaceful settlement of electoral disputes**

The mobilization of women as voters is important to enable them to exercise their right to express their political choice. The concept of gender mainstreaming in the electoral process should not be limited to women as voters, but must also address the effective participation of women in the electoral process at all levels. In 2010, Burundian women will be involved in the process as:

- Members of registration offices within Burundi and abroad
- Candidate and party supporters
- CENI members at national, provincial and municipal levels
- Poll workers within Burundi and abroad
- Election observers
- Candidates
- Members of sponsoring groups
- Proxy voters (requesting proxy and assisting in proxy)
- Members of the administration, security services and judicial services

They must be prepared to play these roles through training, information and the provision of other tools required. It is also important to assist in conducting advocacy and in providing useful information to other actors who will be involved in the integration process of women. These combined actions targeted towards women in each of these categories and towards other actors with whom they will interact will facilitate the identification of a sufficient number of women who meet the criteria for each role.

Support to political parties to elicit applications from women and mainstream gender into their programmes

One of the main functions of political parties is to nominate and support their candidates through logistical and often financial support. The existence of the current 30-percent legal quota for women's representation at the national level and the anticipated broadening of the quota at the local level gives political parties more responsibility in the promotion of female candidates and their positioning on the candidate lists. The support provided will provide training, awareness and useful advocacy directed towards the leadership of political parties [...] to promote the effective representation of women.

**(Unofficial translation from French in the original)**

A number of other international actors were also providing assistance to the electoral process during the 2010 elections, including IFES, NDI, the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)

and International Alert. Although a comprehensive review is beyond the scope of this research, some of the main initiatives are described on the next pages.

Building on over 10 years of democracy support programmes in the country, IFES's electoral support activities in 2010 focused on three areas: 1) building the professional capacities of electoral administrators at all levels through training and advising as well as post-elections activities; 2) providing civic education, especially to marginalized groups such as Twa and women in remote locations, and 3) supporting a national-scale election violence monitoring and prevention system.<sup>28</sup> Gender issues were mainstreamed and/or targeted for specific support through many of these activities.

NDI opened its Burundi office in March 2010 to conduct presidential debates and voter education programme with funding from the Howard G. Buffett Foundation and the National Endowment for Democracy. After the election boycott, NDI redirected its programme activities to support high-level roundtable debates and focus group research. Numerous radio and television stations recorded and broadcast all roundtables. NDI conducted focus group research in Burundi aimed at collecting citizen views about Burundi's 2010 electoral process. The discussions provided citizens with nonpartisan avenues for expressing their views on a range of pressing issues facing Burundi.<sup>29</sup>

EISA implemented a three-part programme comprised of 1) domestic election observation training for political parties and CSOs, 2) technical assistance for the Electoral Commission and 3) training of mediators in election-related conflict in order to diffuse

tensions at the polling centres. EISA Burundi promoted dialogue between political parties in parliament and the national political arena.

International Alert has worked in Burundi since 1995, including by providing training in conflict resolution to women throughout the country and supporting women in the political arena who seek access to the negotiating table. Alert-Burundi contributed to Alert's Great Lakes regional research on women's political participation and worked with the UN Peacebuilding Commission to support the contribution of women's organizations to the Strategic Peacebuilding Framework and to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects under the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). In 2010, International Alert worked with its local partner, the women's organization Dushirehamwe, to prevent election violence.<sup>30</sup>

OXFAM-NOVIB considered women to be the major focus of its programming, working especially on women's right to social and political participation in Burundi. It supported local NGOs in spreading information about women's rights through new and traditional media and sought to ensure that local partners promoted women's leadership roles and mainstreamed gender justice in their work. Its programme also involved building the capacity of local partner organizations to lobby for legislation protecting women as well as monitoring government budgets and holding government accountable for combating

<sup>28</sup> Final Report. IFES Burundi: Electoral Assistance and Technical Support (BEATS). 15 June 2009 – 30 April 2011.

<sup>29</sup> National Democratic Institute. <http://www.ndi.org>

<sup>30</sup> International Alert. <http://www.international-alert.org>

corruption. OXFAM-NOVIB was also engaged in preventing election violence during the 2010 elections.<sup>31</sup>

### Electoral Reform

Despite the success of the women's lobby during the peace accord negotiations and the revised constitution of 2005, significant gaps remained in Burundi's legal framework regarding women's rights in 2010. With support from UNIFEM, the Association of Women Lawyers of Burundi (*Association des Femmes Juristes du Burundi*,

AFJB) spearheaded the legal reform movement since the beginning of the transition, campaigning for equal inheritance rights and legal sanctions for rape and other forms of gender-based violence.<sup>32</sup>

In advance of the 2010 elections, UNIFEM, SOFEB, AFEPABU, CARE and OXFAM-NOVIB focused on analyzing the electoral law for gaps regarding women's participation and on advocating for the resolution of those gaps prior to the elections. The UNDP gender advisor provided expert legal advice for the review of the electoral law. Innovative

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## Gender-related Highlights of the Burundian Electoral Code

**Article 12** ensures gender balance in voter registration offices.

**Article 38** ensures gender and ethnic balance in the composition of the national, regional and local branches of the CENI.

**Article 40** stipulates that appeals against non-compliance with the political, ethnic and gender composition of the different levels of the CENI can be submitted by anyone (including the political parties participating in the elections) and that a final decision must be made on the complaint within four days of its submission.

**Article 49** allows proxy voting for pregnant women and other groups with reduced mobility. The proxy must bring the electoral card of the principal and be authorized by the members of the polling station.

**Article 97** states that presidential candidacies must be sponsored by a group of 200 people composed of mixed sexes and ethnicities, reflecting the national character.

**Article 108** defines a 30 percent minimum quota for women's representation in the National Assembly using a closed list-PR system with at least one woman out of every four on the lists. If the gender and ethnic quotas are not met, the CENI is authorized to correct the imbalance through a co-optation process defined in this article and conducted in consultation with political parties. Co-optation of Twa representatives also includes gender balance.

**Articles 110 and 143** say that, on the first day of the first session of a newly elected National Assembly or Senate, the body must elect a president and two vice-presidents based on ethnic and gender balance.

**Article 113** stipulates that, if an elected MP desists from office, he/she must be replaced by a person of the same ethnicity and gender.

**Article 127** determines the party lists, wherein at least one candidate out of every four must be a woman.

**Articles 108, 141 and 181** respectively ensure a 30-percent quota in both houses of parliament and the communal council.

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<sup>31</sup> OXFAM-NOVIB. <http://www.oxfamnovib.nl>

<sup>32</sup> Falch. 2010.

lobbying strategies included a dinner-debate advocacy meeting with members of parliament and of the government on opportunities for a better integration of women's issues into current electoral texts and a press conference to increase public awareness about the issue of gender and the legal framework.

Article 191 gives CENI the authority to adjust the outcomes of the communal council to respect ethnic and gender quotas, in consultation with political parties, in the case that electoral outcomes do not result in the targeted distribution.

The initiative also lobbied the Ministry of Interior and Parliament on proposed amendments and organized advocacy meetings with the CENI to ensure fair representation in the EMB local offices. Political parties were offered the opportunity to express their positions on the amendments and on women's position on electoral lists on publically broadcast programmes. Ultimately, the 30-percent quota was introduced for all levels of elected office, except for *colline* leadership. It is integrated into other offices, such as those of the president/vice-presidents of the National Assembly and Senate and the CENI is allowed (in consultation with political parties) to adjust electoral outcomes to ensure that the quota is respected.

### Mainstreaming Gender into the CENI

The 30-percent quota for women's representation also applies to Burundi's CENI. The 30-percent quota was applied at the national level as well as at lower administrative levels of the EMB (communal commissions). The CENI also sought to maximize women's presence as poll workers on

election day. The CENI did not merely bring in more women, though. Rather, it integrated them into its structure and is one of the most advanced institutions in the country in this regard. Notably, women were assigned to senior positions of significant trust and responsibility – e.g., Vice-president, Chief of Staff, Head of Operations, Finance and Administration, and the Head of Information and Communication Services – and were credibly recruited based on their substantial records of public service and achievement rather than simply due to party affiliation. For example, CENI Vice-President Marguerite Bukuru was a well-respected and outspoken member of civil society with a reputation for political independence and experience as a minister and with UNHCR. Women CENI members were publically visible throughout the elections and participated robustly in capacity-building and in the training opportunities offered during the process.

CENI's achievements in this area were realized in great measure through the leadership of its president and building on the foundation of the legal commitments set forth with the quota provisions. Although international assistance providers aided the CENI in its work, UNDP or others did not target the promotion of women within the EMB and the introduction of gender-sensitive electoral administration as specific areas for electoral assistance. UNIFEM, UNDP and the DPA gender advisor collaborated



on mainstreaming gender into the electoral process in order to pool basket fund resources as well as additional funds, which UNIFEM and UNDP received from the Peacebuilding Fund. Informed by the 2005 elections, UNIFEM led support for the CENI to ensure that it held political parties accountable for women's placement on official candidates' lists. This was to ensure that women were elected rather than appointed by the CENI after the election, as had occurred in 2005, when women were not on party lists in sufficient numbers.

The UNDP gender advisor worked closely with the CENI to identify areas to incorporate and mainstream gender issues, including supporting a training session on gender cooptation for the communal levels of the CENI (the CECI). UNDP also supported the disaggregation of electoral statistics, including by compiling disaggregated data and providing it to the CENI in a user-friendly format for use in public communications. UNDP also worked with the CENI on making sure that polling stations were accessible to women.

IFES also supported the development of the CENI's capacity to mainstream gender through the delivery of three BRIDGE (Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections) trainings during 2010.<sup>33</sup> All of the trainings ensured equitable participation of male and female CENI and CEPI members to promote the capacity development of election administrators of both sexes. IFES BRIDGE trainings during the electoral process focused on electoral operations

(including how the CENI could adapt operations planning to gender needs at the local level) and on electoral dispute resolution (including considerations of access to formal versus alternative dispute resolution mechanisms for women). The final training, a Train the Facilitators course held in December 2010, successfully resulted in the semi-accreditation of four women members of the Burundian EMB as BRIDGE facilitators. Following the elections in 2011, the CENI president participated in a GPECS-sponsored training in Dakar on political participation of women and men in Africa and on electoral assistance and gender.

### Registering Women Voters

In order to vote in Burundi, an elector must possess a National Identification Card (NIC). Burundian women were at risk of low voter registration because more women than men lacked such ID cards, due to lower awareness levels and displacement during the conflict. Furthermore, the CENI's efforts to update the list in 2010 met specific challenges; in particular, it paid special attention to refugees who had returned to the country after 2005 (the majority of whom were estimated to be women) by locating them in their temporary or permanent housing sites. It also focused registration efforts on youth voters, Batwa and other specific groups – particularly women – who were identified as potentially lacking the legal documents necessary for their inclusion on the lists or who, for one reason or another, had been marginalized in previous electoral censuses.

<sup>33</sup> BRIDGE stands for Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections. It is a modular professional development programme with a particular focus on electoral processes. <http://www.bridge-project.org>



In response, UNDP undertook a major initiative to ensure that women and other disadvantaged members of the population received their NICs ahead of the 2010 elections. UNDP sought funding from the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The Fund was created in 2006 to address immediate needs in countries emerging from conflict to provide rapid support to fill critical gaps in the process. The PBF aims to contribute to gender equality by increasing the participation of women in political processes, strengthening their voices in post-conflict planning processes and addressing their specific post-conflict needs.<sup>34</sup> In 2010, the PBF was a relatively new multi-donor trust fund set up for targeted post-conflict countries, including Burundi, Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Central African Republic. Drawing on this unique resource, and in cooperation with CAFOB and the AFEFABU, UNDP launched a large-scale awareness campaign to encourage all Burundians, and especially women, to turn out to obtain their NICs. Following a request from the Ministry of the Interior, UNDP provided substantial assistance to the 129 NIC delivery centres. The support consisted of material support as well as human resource and capacity assistance. Material support included procuring the technology and printed materials required to produce 1.1 million voter registration cards. In terms of human resources, UNDP reinforced the 129 card delivery centres by recruiting, training and remunerating a total of 1,032 staff for the centres as well as training 2,908 *colline* leaders. With the support of UNDP's Gender Thematic Trust Fund and the Swiss Cooperation, the Government of Burundi successfully



delivered almost 1 million voter ID cards, 58 percent of which were for Burundian women.

In addition to the UN PBF activities to bolster women's registration, IFES provided significant training support to CENI's voter registration programme, including a cascade-format training for 15,790 voter registration agents and a targeted six-day training on gender and elections for 98 members of CENI's staff to complement the registration agent training. Training participants in the targeted session on gender, the majority of whom were women, received necessary background information to independently train other women on the pre-electoral context, the political participation of women in the electoral process, as well as gender issues and elections.

<sup>34</sup> United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. <http://www.unpb.org>

### Civic Education

Within the framework of the *Élis et fais toi élire* campaign, three UN agencies (UNDP, UNIFEM and BINUB) coordinated funding and implementation to provide civic education to women across the country. In addition to the component targeted at women aspirants and candidates, the *Élis et fais toi élire* campaign emphasized women's civic and voter education. Working through the SPPDF, the UN agencies trained 258 trainers who implemented both components. These trainers were deployed in pairs in all 129 communes of the country to raise awareness about the elections, including about the importance of women's participation and how to vote. The trainers worked through local networks of women's associations and community organizations to reach the broadest audience possible. Drawing on funding from the PBF, UNIFEM, UNDP and BINUB coordinated to provide national coverage. The PBF, through UNIFEM, covered 53 communes in seven provinces (Kirundo, Kayanza, Muramvya, Makamba, Bururi, Bubanza and Bujumbura-Mairie) and trained 100 civic education trainers, while UNDP and BINUB covered six provinces and the training of 150 trainers.

The CENI and other national and international NGOs conducted civic and voter education for all Burundians on a nationwide scale over the course of the electoral process. While the *Élis et fais toi élire* campaign stands out as the most notable women-specific campaign, the diversity and innovation of education tools introduced in the Burundian elections had a positive effect on reaching women in remote locations. Educational programs by NGOs were truly creative and varied, including initiatives such as:

#### IFES

Community-based theatre, traditional music and dance events, a song competition, a travelling 'Elections and Peace Caravan' and the establishment of a training centre for civic educators

#### NDI

Nationally televised and radio-broadcast debates and dialogues on issues such as prevention of electoral and political violence, agriculture and food security, and participatory governance and accountability

#### SFCG

Studio Ijambo's news, special features, roundtables, telephone call-ins, music and popular soap opera series

The use of diversified and creative educational tools drawing on traditional communication approaches is a valuable lesson for civic and voter outreach programmes targeting women voters who often have less access to traditional, formal educational tools or have higher levels of illiteracy. The community-based events were also notable in that women could comfortably bring their children – indeed, children reportedly often demanded that their mothers bring them to attend the colourful and entertaining civic education events such as music festivals and dancing.

### Election Observation

UNDP received a request from national CSOs seeking assistance to train women for their domestic observation programmes for the communal, presidential and legislative elections. UNDP provided a grant to IFES/NDI for this purpose. Although neither the UN nor IFES/NDI engaged directly in electoral

observation, they supported the training of the domestic observation group COSOME. Through this support, over 7,600 domestic observers were trained, half of whom were women. IFES developed a core training group of 140 trainers, including 78 women, to train the domestic observers. According to COSOME, the effort to ensure that nearly 50 percent of recruited election observers were women led to increased confidence in the elections and may have played a role in maintaining a greater level of peace at polling stations on election day.

### Media

Coordination of independent and state media outlets was one of the greatest successes of international electoral assistance. Under the auspices of the Burundian Association of Broadcasters (ABR), 15 radio stations, two TV channels and five written publications pooled their resources to provide comprehensive coverage of the election cycle. The PACAM (*Plan d'Action Commun d'Appui aux Médias*) of Burundi or media synergy built off a similar experience in 2005 and was unprecedented in scope and participation during the 2010 elections. The project was initiated by the French Cooperation and included several UN agencies, including UNDP, DfID, SIDA, the Belgian, Swiss, German and French Embassies, USAID and the European Union.

Throughout the election cycle, the media synergy contributed increased balance and objectivity in journalism and helped reduce rumour-based and inflammatory election coverage. Numerous NGOs contributed resources, training and support, including La Benevolencija, the *Centre de Recherche et*

*de Formation pour la Paix* (CERFOPAX-Chaire Unesco of the University of Burundi), NDI, COSOME, ABR, SFCG, Institut Panos Paris and RFI and CFI. The Media Synergy ensured basic coverage for women candidates as well as a platform for parties to debate their positions on women's issues and women's political participation. The Synergy made specific efforts to enhance their targeted outreach to women voters. Burundian women's associations used it to inform and educate about women's political participation and issues of priority for the women's movement, such as non-violence. Also, by providing accessible civic education information and contributing to the general security of the elections, the PACAM helped overcome two of the major barriers to voter turnout among Burundian women.

Support for gender-specific media campaigns was also a feature of international electoral assistance. The White Scarf Campaign for Peace and Against Violence, described in the next section, employed an extensive media strategy. The initiative included a media campaign on non-violence and on women's roles as agents of peace from July through September 2010. The media campaign also addressed women's political participation and gender equality priorities. The initiative produced three media spots focusing on women's role in resolving disputes and conflict through the remedies provided in the revised electoral



code. The spots were produced and distributed in French, Swahili and Kirundi and aired for seven days on 15 radio stations members of the Media Synergy, ahead of the colline and legislative elections.

### Preventing and Mitigating Election Violence

Political violence has continued to plague the Burundian electoral process since 2005. In particular, intimidation techniques such as grenades thrown in public spaces, rumours

of threatened violence and/or sexual assault at polling stations and threats to personal safety of party supporters and candidates have created a perilous and terrifying climate for political participation, especially for women who were singled out as victims of violence during the war.

Early in the 2010 electoral process, UNDP and UNIFEM sponsored the participation of Burundian women in the Regional Conference on Women's Political Participation and Non-Violence in Bujumbura. In collaboration with the SPPDF, Action Aid, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), 150 men and women from 10 African countries (Burundi, Central African Republic, Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) exchanged experiences on the best strategies to improve women's participation in decision-making, the role of women in the democratic process and promoting non-violence. The Conference participants made recommendations in the form of a statement on strategies to promote women's political participation and non-violence during elections and post-election. Drawing upon this statement, the women held lobbying meetings with four leading political parties (FRODEBU, UPRONA, CNDD-FDD and MRC) and with the CENI.<sup>35</sup>

Women are recognized peace-builders in Burundi at the national level, where they successfully advocated during the Arusha Accords, and at the local level, where they have been essential to reconciliation efforts. As part of the effort to capitalize on women's

## AMATORA MU MAHORO – CONFRONTING ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN BURUNDI

The *Amatora Mu Mahoro* initiative had a substantial impact in attacking the climate of impunity for acts of political violence that has dominated Burundian politics for decades and in holding responsible parties accountable. By lifting the veil on otherwise hidden acts of violence, threats and intimidation, the programme empowered victims, women in particular, to seek accountability and demand an end to the violence. By systematically recording the forms of violence as well as the perpetrators and the locations, the programme helped decrease the terror caused by seeming chaos and identify patterns and specific perpetrators, which could all then be addressed methodically. Likewise, the programme, with the public backing of the president of the CENI and the Archbishop of Bujumbura, presented a united front against impunity and violence by bringing together a large coalition of national and international organizations. It helped voters, especially the most vulnerable citizens such as women, youth and the disabled, participate as voters and political party supporters in greater security.

<sup>35</sup> PACE Final Report. "Rapport d'évaluation: Projet d'appui au cycle électoral au Burundi (PACE) 2010." Abderhamana Niang, Thompson F. Sama, Manirambona Godefroid. July 2011.

peace-building skills, UNDP also sponsored a series of roundtables on electoral conflict prevention and mediation for women leaders at the community level as well as trainings in the participation of women as agents of peace in provinces at high risk of violence. Active during the first six months after the elections, the programme monitored potential pockets of conflict and provided outreach to prevent flare-ups and encouraged women to work as agents of peace during the post-election period.

As the threat of violence increased over the course of the electoral period, women's associations took action to prevent and mitigate election-related violence. In particular, CAFOB and Dushirehamwe launched the White Scarves for Peace and Against Violence campaign. The campaign's objective was to demonstrate Burundian women's rejection of violence and to invite the women of Burundi to prevent violence within their communities. UNDP coordinated with Panos Paris, BINUB and International Alert to support the campaign, including by providing communications expertise and material support of the symbolic candles and 10,000 white scarves used in the campaign. The campaign received intense media coverage on local television and radio stations.

In a separate initiative, a coalition of international and domestic organizations<sup>36</sup> worked together to create the *Amatora Mu Mahoro* (Elections in Peace) programme, Burundi's

first-ever nationwide election violence prevention system. Using data collected by over 400 local monitors nationwide and based on IFES's Election Violence Education and Resolution programme (EVER), the system identified areas susceptible to electoral violence as well as successful peace initiatives around the country. *Amatora Mu Mahoro's* gender-disaggregated data on election violence provided the first insight into the forms of election violence that Burundian women most often face. Among other findings, it revealed that Burundian women were most often victims of psychological violence and intimidation, arbitrary detention and coercive pressure to join or support a political party.<sup>37</sup>

### 3.2. Support to Women Candidates and Parliamentarians

The objectives of UNDP and partner activities in this area focused on a dual goal of mobilizing and supporting women as candidates and reinforcing their capacities to compete and hold office. In addition to efforts focused on women, targeted activities also sought to encourage political parties to incorporate gender mainstreaming into their platforms and campaigns by respecting the quota and placing women in winnable positions on the lists. While some activities were planned, others were developed spontaneously in response to needs arising over the course of the electoral period.

<sup>36</sup> *Amatora Mu Mahoro* was a partnership of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the Civil Society Coalition for Election Monitoring (Coalition de la Société Civile pour le Monitoring Electorale, COSOME), the Quaker Peace Network-Burundi (QPN), the Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace (Commission Episcopale Justice et Paix, CEJP) and Oxfam Novib, with the support of USAID. The system was developed in collaboration with Accord, American Friends Service Committee, La Benevolencija, Human Rights Watch, International Alert and Search for Common Ground.

<sup>37</sup> Bardall, Gabrielle. *Advisor for Election Violence, IFES-Burundi / Amatora Mu Mahoro*. <http://www.burundi.ushahidi.org>



The electoral law quota required that all elected bodies (with the exception of the *Chefs de Colline*) include a minimum representation of 30 percent women representatives. In the Senate and National Assembly, legal provisions also required women to be in positions of leadership, as either president or vice president of both bodies. Therefore, UNDP and other organizations targeted their programmes to build the capacities of women to run for election.

### Women Candidates

UNDP and UNIFEM activities to encourage women to present themselves as candidates were coordinated through long-standing local partnerships. Prior to the 2005 elections and again in 2010, the SPPDF organized the nationwide campaign *Elis et Fais-toi-élire*

(Vote and Get Yourself Elected) to encourage women to participate in the elections. In 2010, CAFOB joined the SPPDF campaign and launched a complimentary activity, *Elle Est Capable* (She Can, She is Able), to target men and women. The two organizations, with the support of UNDP, BINUB and UNIFEM, developed a comprehensive strategy to engage women in the electoral process as voters and candidates and within the electoral administration.

The *Elis et Fais-toi-élire* campaign provides a particular example of the breadth of this approach for women candidates and the deep connections to the peace movement during the conflict. After almost a decade of developing organizational capacity in collaboration with its international partners, the SPPDF launched a major campaign in 2010 to promote women's political participation. Their campaign trained 258 female trainers who were subsequently deployed across the country on a dual mission. First, they led outreach campaigns in some of the most remote areas of the country to educate women and encourage them to register and to vote (see below). Their second mandate was to reach out to women candidates around the country and offer them support and training for their campaign activities.

Trainings included leadership skills and communication strategies, among others. In all, 80 women received training two days before the opening of the campaign for parliamentary elections, including women from the incumbent CNDD-FDD, the opposition party UPRONA and the four smaller parties associated with the CNDD-FDD. Another 400 women selected according to their influence in their community received

## QUOTA CONTROVERSIES

Arguably, Burundian women candidates had to 'prove' themselves more than their male counterparts and, for this reason, support for women candidates was particularly important. On the one hand, the quota requirements placed a heavy burden on many women, who were newcomers to the political process and faced resistance from citizens and other parliamentarians that viewed the quota as an 'easy' backdoor into government based on affirmative action more than qualifications. Women also had to deal with fierce competition within the opposition parties in the formation of coalitions. Finally, as in any post-conflict society, politics is dominated by ex-combatant groups, which almost invariably, are dominated by men. Burundian women candidates had to fight to be heard and to demonstrate their ideas and contributions within this challenging context. The training and capacity support programmes by UNDP and partners responded to this important need.





a two-day training for the *colline* elections.<sup>38</sup> UNDP also provided assistance through the SPPDF to support women legislative candidates by enabling them to engage in outreach in their constituent communes. A grant through the SPPDF provided training to women candidates in the colline elections. UNIFEM, UNDP and BINUB joined forces to ensure equal coverage of the programme nationwide and to provide data to orient the group's advocacy efforts. The UN also supported the SPPDF in developing a three-year action plan and partnership strategy in order to avoid a vacuum after the 2010 elections, when almost 80 percent of membership turnover occurred.<sup>39</sup>

Working with Partners for the Promotion of Women's Rights (SPPWR), IFES organized and held a workshop to discuss the participation of women as voters and as candidates in the electoral process. This workshop, which took place in late March 2010, was held in Bururi Province, one of the two provinces with a woman governor. The goal of the workshop was to reinforce potential women

candidates' capacities to effectively and efficiently participate in the ongoing electoral process. By the end of the workshop, 25 women said that they would run for office at the communal level, while 14 women said that they would run for legislative office.

### Women Parliamentarians

UNDP and several other international organizations have supported women elected to office at the national and regional levels. At the outset of the process, UNDP supported a training entitled Gender and Political Participation for male and female parliamentarians to help women prepare for the 2010 elections and to sensitize men and women parliamentarians to the importance of women's political participation.

UNDP has also invested in the development of networks of elected women. The *Association des Femmes Parlementaires du Burundi* (AFEPABU) includes 34 women parliamentarians and 19 women senators. The group was formed in 2006 and began receiving

<sup>38</sup> PACE Final Report.

<sup>39</sup> PACE Final Report.

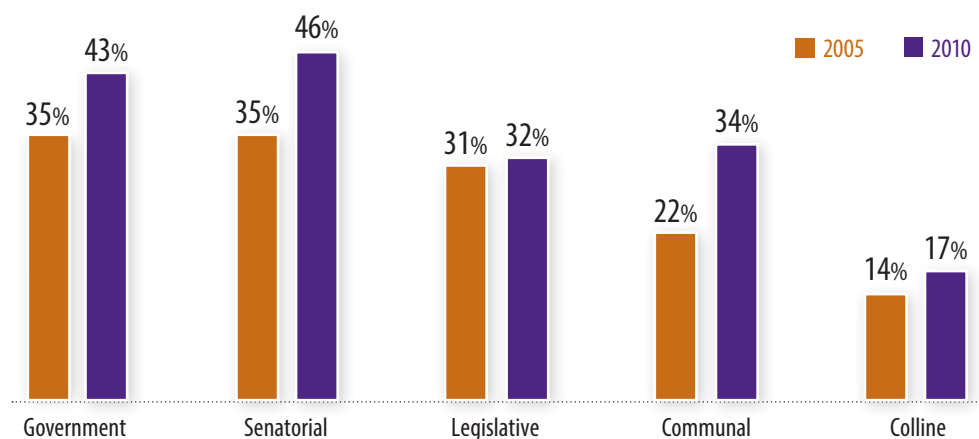
support from UNDP as well as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Association of Europeans Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA), UNIFEM and IFES during the 2010 elections. AFEFABU was created to open an avenue for advocacy and focuses on capacity-building for women in decision-making positions (including law makers) and reviews laws to eliminate discrimination against women. Following the 2010 elections, UNDP supported the AFEFABU in developing a three-year strategic plan for 2012-2014 to maximize the ability of the women's caucus to design, plan and execute advocacy campaigns and pursue legislative priorities. The 2012-2014 strategic plan identified four priorities: capacity-building of elected women, the continuation of the *Elis et Fais-toi-élire* campaign, resource mobilization, and legislation around women's issues.

In order to support a transfer of knowledge between incoming and outgoing locally elected women officials, UNDP organized five-day regional workshops in all 17 provinces of the country in August 2010.

The workshop provided an opportunity to sensitize the newly elected women to their new roles, to exchange information and experience, to build coaching relationships and to encourage knowledge transfer between incoming and outgoing representatives. The workshops brought together almost 1,300 women from all corners of the country. A similar activity was organized for women MPs and ministers in October 2010, with 100 participants. Among the outcomes of the workshop for MPs and ministers, participants sought to create a framework for dialogue between elected women and women civil society members. They also identified actions targeting a variety of stakeholders such as youth, subregional women MPs, union organizations, media and male MPs.

In addition to supporting elected women at the national level, coordinating women representatives at the communal level has met with particular success. In 2009, UNDP held 12 training workshops at the provincial level on leadership and personal

**Figure 4: Women's representation in the House in 2005 and 2010**



Source: UNDP analysis based on data provided by INEC

development for the 714 women communal councillors and provincial consultations with the members of the Burundian Association of Communal Councillors (ABELO). The provincial consultations resulted in the creation of a women's wing of the association, the *Réseau des femmes élues locales* (RFEL), in order to provide a forum where women could address issues of common concern and air their questions about their official responsibilities. UNDP also worked with the RFEL in 2010 to create a three-year strategic action plan. The women's wing filled an important gap by educating newly elected officials about their duties and focusing on empowerment through capacity development, leadership training and conflict resolution and prevention throughout the electoral cycle. The women's wing has become effective in networking with community-based organizations to build partnerships and to identify and overcome barriers to women's participation as candidates and representatives. RFEL has benefited from the support of a number of UN agencies in addition to UNDP, such as UNAIDS, UNIFEM and UNFPA.<sup>40</sup> In turn, ABELO is a member of the East African Local Governments Association, which includes local government associations from Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Burundi. This network may provide Burundian women an opportunity to network with other locally elected officials from the region.

Other organizations providing capacity support to women parliamentarians include IFES, which, in partnership with the local organization SPPDF, trained 53 women

members of Parliament, focusing on national and international law, democratic culture, international humanitarian law, communication techniques and negotiation skills, and leadership management, lobbying and advocacy. The Inter-Parliamentary Union has supported the Burundian Parliament for more than 10 years. This support has focused on strengthening the capacities of women parliamentarians and the impact of their action in Parliament. From 2007 to 2009, a series of capacity-building activities were implemented. Several coordination meetings between women parliamentarians, governmental bodies, CSOs and women's associations helped women MPs to define legislative priorities and address discriminatory provisions in existing legislation. Access to resources and information on women's rights and gender equality was also facilitated through the establishment of a resource centre at the parliamentary library.

Supporting the capacity of women aspirants, candidates and parliamentarians is a critical step in building women's political participation. Legislated quotas only guarantee women's quantitative presence in parliament; however, their substantive participation ultimately determines their impact on policy and their long-term electoral success. The interventions of UNDP and other organizations have helped women in politics develop more meaningful platforms and establish better communication channels with their constituents.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Marie Chantal Habonimana. Former Chair of ABELO, Former President of Network of Locally Elected Women Officials (RFEL). 25 October 2011.

### Convening Political Parties to Advance Gender Equality

While much effort has been made to increase the capacity of women elected to office, an important area of support for international assistance has focused on strengthening gender mainstreaming within political parties and engaging men in efforts toward gender equality goals. During the 2010 elections, UNDP convened initiatives aimed at leaders of political parties on the integration of gender equality into their party platforms and internal governance. UNDP used its impartial convening power to bring together political party leaders and provide a forum for discussion with CSOs to discuss women's participation in the elections and especially their placement and position on the candidate lists.

UNDP supported the introduction of a gender equality platform by political parties in parliament. As part of the outreach to political parties as a whole, UNDP supported the development of gender priorities at the outset of the new parliamentary session. During a two-day forum, 80 representatives of women's organizations and networks from various political, economic, socio-cultural and political party groups identified 16 priority areas for gender equality that they believed should be addressed during

the 2010-2015 session of parliament. These include issues of land rights, inheritance and gender-based violence.<sup>41</sup> The resulting compact on gender priorities for parliament was signed by the five political parties (KAZE/FDD, PMP, UPRONA, Frodebu Nyakuri, UPD) that participated in the four elections and by an independent candidate. At the time of writing, talks were underway with the CNDD-FDD for its signature. In addition, to educate and inform CSOs, political parties, the international community and the general public for the 2010-2015 parliamentary term, UNDP printed and distributed 800 posters in Kirundi and French.

Finally, in an untraditional initiative, UNIFEM provided an incentive programme for political parties to promote women's participation at the request of the ministry responsible for promoting gender equality (the *Ministre des Droits de la Personne Humaine et du Genre*, MDPHG), the CENI and Burundian political parties and women candidates. UNIFEM offered financial incentives to parties by paying the full cost of filing for lists topped by a women candidate and a proportional rate based on how many women appeared among the first three candidates on the list, the third through sixth candidates, the sixth through ninth candidates, etc. This programme contributed to the 21 percent of party lists that were headed by women and to the presence of 81 women in the top three spots of their lists and the total of 347 women candidates out of 944 total (36.8 percent) for the National Assembly. Providing such incentives is not a standard approach in UN programmes.



<sup>41</sup> Fonds de consolidation de la paix au Burundi: Rapport narratif final sur les progrès réalisés. UNDP. 2010.

### Long-Term Support to Women's Civil Society

UNIFEM, UNDP and others played a fundamental role in supporting the formation of a formal women's movement at the end of the conflict. These investments positioned women to participate in the Arusha Peace Process, a critical moment for rebuilding the country and for anchoring a commitment to women's role in government. Likewise, this long-term commitment enabled women's groups to progressively organize themselves more efficiently for the 2005 and 2010 elections.

Key amongst the actors that emerged from this long-term partnership is the SPPDF. The SPPDF was initially created in 2004 as a reflection of the women's movement during the Arusha Accords, but struggled with political and ethnic tensions through the 2005 elections.<sup>42</sup> Over time, however, the ongoing support of a variety of international actors took effect. Initially, Search for Common Ground, International Alert, Africare and ACCORD (South Africa) trained the first group of women who later went on to become some of the strongest voices in SPPDF women's civil society movement. The core group subsequently trained many others and became influential in the creation of CAFOB, Dusherhamwe, Women for Peace and other organizations. Through the 2010 elections, these organizations mobilized women to participate as voters and candidates, encouraged solidarity and non-violence at the community level and assessed women's political participation nationwide following the elections.

The support for women's CSOs was a critical factor for subsequent achievements during the transition period and the 2005 and 2010 electoral cycles. The development of human resources, institutional capacity, and lobbying and organizational skills set the stage for the campaigns to enhance the gender equality provisions of the Burundian legal framework and the political participation of women during the 2005 and 2010 elections.

### Mainstreaming Gender in State Institutions

Although not the focus of this study, several activities can be highlighted for their support for mainstreaming gender into state institutions. UNDP supported workshops to promote the engagement of MPs to mainstream gender equality into their legislative institutions. Working with two national consultants, UNDP supported the development of a post-election, multi-year training and capacity development plan to mainstream gender at all levels of elected office. Targeted support was provided to mainstream gender issues into state institutions, such as the elaboration of a gender strategy for the Ministry of National Defence and Ex-Combatants. UNDP, in partnership with UNFPA, assisted in an evaluation and update of the national gender strategy in partnership with the Ministry of National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender.

<sup>42</sup> Falch, 2010.





## 4. LESSONS LEARNED

### 4.1. Good Practices

The outcomes of the international community's efforts to support women's political participation in Burundi can be viewed in terms of immediate outcomes and longer-term frameworks for development. In the immediate outcomes, the high level of participation of women as voters and candidates, the outcomes in parliamentary representation exceeding quota requirements and the incorporation of women into the electoral administration were clear gains, despite the troubled political climate. In a broader perspective, the evolution of the women's movement and the ripening of its ties with the international support community evidenced an effective synergy approach.

#### Long-Term Engagement with Women's Movement

The achievements of 2010 were the product of over a decade of partnership between local and international actors and of the evolution of a coherent and organized women's movement committed to social

change and learning. This demonstrates several best practices, including the importance of taking a long-term outlook on change. Success was grounded not only in building on structures, but also on competencies, such as the view of women as peace-builders in society, and on solidifying a robust women's movement. Adopting a long-term approach also allowed partner organizations to overcome internal challenges and divisions.

Early trainings by groups like International Alert provided women with basic organizational and capacity-building skills not necessarily delivered for the purpose of increasing their participation in elected bodies. These skills trainings, which began immediately after the conflict, ultimately provided a foundation for the women's political participation.

#### Synergy of the Donors

The synergy among the donors operating under UNDP coordination allowed for responsive programming and



flexible funding, often drawing on a variety of traditional and innovative funding sources. Traditionally, the fundamental challenge for women and elections is funding, as technical electoral support (EMBs, voter registration and other aspects of the process) has often not included a priority focus or consideration of gender mainstreaming aspects. The multi-donor Peacebuilding Commission funds enabled UNDP to prioritize gender mainstreaming during a crisis moment shortly before the elections. Likewise, broad collaboration between national and international organizations strengthened various initiatives and helped them overcome logistical and political pressures, as in the case of the *Amatora Mu Mahoro* violence-prevention initiative.

### Political Actors

Work with political actors, including women candidates, women parliamentarians and political parties as a whole, is an important area of good practice. Prioritizing the needs of candidates and recently elected women representatives responded to one of the most significant barriers to entry for women representatives. Likewise, the development of the compact on gender priorities was an important strategic tool to bring gender issues to the forefront for elected officials (women and men) and to collaboratively set goals for the upcoming parliamentary session. It contributed to the sensitization of male representatives through a practical exercise that constructed gender mainstreaming in approachable, concrete terms. The formal networks created between women representatives as well as the informal channels of communication opened during the compact process may

allow for consultation and the diffusing of potential conflicts through structured dialogue.

### Capitalizing on Women as Peacemakers

International support was effective in recognizing and capitalizing on Burundian women's role as peacemakers. Historically, women were able to bridge the ethnic and party boundaries through their lobbying and political associations. Assistance providers effectively drew on this experience to prevent and mitigate election violence in 2010. In particular, the use of grassroots communication channels and traditional networks was effective in this area.

### Ongoing Legal Review and Oversight

The women's movement, with the support of the international community, has continually returned to the Burundian legal framework as a source for advocacy and improvement of women's participation. Despite the triumph of the quota campaign in 2005, activists successfully maintained pressure to analyse and improve the framework during the 2010 elections. The compact on gender priorities, which identified legislative priorities for the upcoming session of parliament, was also a valuable strategy to ensure that the legal framework continues to promote women's increasing participation.

### Use of International Instruments and Regional Targets for Women

Burundi's signatory status on a variety of regional and international agreements on gender provided the basis for much of the advocacy during the 2010 elections. In



particular, targets set forth in international agreements helped shape the dialogue around mainstreaming gender in Burundi and aided in establishing goals.

### Gender Equality in the CENI

The placement of women in executive positions of the CENI, as well as throughout its local representative offices, has made a clear statement in favour of women's inclusion. The move demonstrates the political will and respect for women in positions of responsibility and provides a standard for parties and other actors to live up to. The leadership of the CENI constituted a good practice. Women's leadership in the CENI helped ensure a more gender-sensitive approach to electoral administration (for example, targeted voter identification) and their visibility in the pre-electoral period encouraged Burundian women to identify

with the process and participate in greater numbers. The support of a UNDP gender advisor and the inclusion of gender as a specific and an integrated topic in capacity support activities by UNDP, IFES and others was a good practice and could be taken a step further in the future – for example, by drawing more on the highly popular BRIDGE resources or integrating gender more deeply into operation trainings. The CENI can build on its success in this area by documenting its achievements, analysing areas for future improvement and sharing its approach with other regional EMBs.

### Rapid Response for Women during Post-Conflict Transition

By supporting women to participate in a conference preceding the Peace Accords and putting pressure on leaders to ensure their participation in the peace talks, women gained a seat at the table during a critical moment of decision-making for the future of Burundi. In Arusha, women secured the quota in the new constitution, which laid the foundation for their political advances in 2008 and 2010. This came partly as a result of the funds and pressure applied by international assistance providers. It is a recognized good practice to take advantage of major political openings such as peace negotiations to ensure gender targets are established from the outset.

### Developing UNDP's Capacities for Gender Mainstreaming

Electoral assistance missions face demanding deadlines and extensive logistical challenges, which often result in insufficient capacity to manage gender throughout all areas of electoral assistance. Therefore, the presence of a

dedicated senior gender advisor was critical for ensuring that gender issues were given the priority that they required. The presence of a gender advisor throughout the electoral cycle is identified as a good practice as well, as capacity development and civic education involved in women's political participation are long-term actions. The gender advisor used the management role of the electoral assistance project by UNDP and her position in the senior management team of the CO and UNCT to reach out to the CENI and different key government decision makers to develop a good partnership and position a gender agenda in the process. She provided technical advice and support to the CENI and to CTA and team whenever they needed it to communicate on gender-related issues. She used the information at the CENI level to package in a practical and easily understandable way and made it available to the CENI.

## 4.2. Further Opportunities

### Engaging with Perceptions of Women's Public Roles

Burundian political party culture represents an ongoing barrier for women candidates and elected officials. In local culture, women are not expected to speak in public and therefore risk social censure for perceived inappropriate behaviour. According to Ashild Falch's research, "[Burundian] political leaders are resistant to letting women speak up and engage in political discussions, and women party members often appear to be subordinate to their male colleagues."<sup>43</sup> This leads to the exclusion of women from political party decision-making forums and

positions. International assistance made only limited progress in overcoming this major barrier during the 2010 electoral cycle. While public sensitization activities, leadership training for candidates and engagement with male party leaders were positive steps in addressing this issue, they were inadequate, given the extent of the barrier. Engaging with perceptions of gender roles is an ongoing activity that needs to be addressed throughout the electoral cycle, not only during election periods.

### Local Elections

Globally, women in developing states often enter politics through local-level office. Hence, the absence of a quota for women at the *colline* level remained a serious impediment for women's participation. The outcome of the local elections demonstrates this clearly, as only 4 percent of colline leaders are women after the 2010 vote.

### Supporting Gender through the CENI

The CENI was one of the strongest advocates for mainstreaming women's political participation; however, it received only limited support from international assistance providers in this area. This is considered a missed opportunity: ideally, assistance providers should seek to identify the strongest actors in the field of gender equality as well as the weakest and develop relevant strategies around them. By highlighting local leaders in this area, assistance providers can reinforce this local leadership and build on progress to date.

<sup>43</sup> Falch, 2010.

### Responding to Boycott Dynamics

The boycott was implemented immediately after the communal elections and profoundly changed the dynamics of the electoral process, affecting women's political participation. Women's participation in politics involved immediate goals, such as number of seats won, but also longer-term perspectives, including women's active integration into opposition parties. The emphasis on working exclusively with women candidates in the elections ultimately overlooked these broader issues. One effect of the boycott was to withdraw the women candidates from opposition groups from political competition and thus largely from international assistance activities. This is a missed opportunity in the short term that may have potentially negative effects in the long term as well, including creating an experience gap between women politicians in the incumbent party and in opposition groups and missing out on important conflict-prevention opportunities within the opposition. The male leadership of opposition parties made the boycott decision. If assistance providers had given equal priority to women's political leadership,, their role as peace-builders and mediators could have made a positive effect on the course of events. Likewise, building women into the leadership of opposition groups would have been a strategic opportunity in anticipation of the regularization of relationships in the future.

### Understanding the Impact of Women Elected to Office

Progress in gender equality in Burundi was largely measured in quantitative terms. In

order to more effectively promote women's participation and to evaluate progress, it is necessary to understand more broadly how women and men can jointly contribute to women's increased effectiveness and impact in decision-making.

### Incentives for Parties and Candidates

Although some practices were enacted in order to respond to immediate challenges and needs, their long-term impacts may outweigh short-term gains. Notably, the provision of financial incentives in the form of filing fees or other monetary inducements is an undesirable practice by international organizations. These measures are effective in increasing the number of women placed at the top of lists and elected to office, which, in turn, may give women an otherwise unattainable opportunity to prove themselves in office and pave the way for others. Some drawbacks of this approach include reinforcing the image of women as "illegitimate politicians"<sup>44</sup> artificially placed in government and developing an expectation for similar financial support in the future. In turn, this may diminish the image of women in politics over the long term. These incentives are not a sustainable practice, as they are unlikely to contribute to long-term change of perceptions and values of political parties that would be the basis of lasting inclusion. They may also create a misleading inflation of the gains made in incorporating women in political parties in 2010. Likewise, providing any form of financial support to individual candidates of any sex is viewed as an undesirable practice, first and foremost because of questions of donor neutrality.

<sup>44</sup> Falch, 2010.



## 5. CONCLUSION

There has been considerable progress since the 2005 elections, most notably in the increase in women running for, and elected to, political office.

Today, Burundi is among the topmost in the world in terms of women's representation in legislative bodies. Over 10 years of mobilization and lobbying have also placed Burundian women's civil society in a strong position as defender and advocate for progress in this area. Elected women's associations have also matured and overcome internal divisions sufficiently to work together towards common goals during the 2010 process.

Quantitative progress masks ongoing challenges, however. The large number of women on party lists and elected to office is largely the result of affirmative action measures, as is apparent in the colline elections where the quota was absent. Cultural norms and structural barriers, such as lower levels of education, continue to hinder women who are elected to office. Finally, in 2010, a significant proportion of political activity took place outside the official

electoral channels in the form of the opposition boycott. This altered the sphere of engagement for women in politics and, in the absence of adapted tools for supporting women in non-traditional political situations, women members of the boycotting groups found their representation diminished.

Recommendations for enhancing international assistance for women's political participation:

- **Invest in long-term partnerships.** Women's skills, networks and political capital are built over time and often begin at the grassroots level. Long-term capacity development in leadership and networking skills lays the foundation for enhanced political participation.
- **Seek strength in numbers.** Pooling skills in a variety of areas – from media to violence prevention to civil society strengthening – creates dynamic and resilient networks of engagement.



- **Coordination of resources.** Basket funds and dedicated gender working groups amongst donors enable broad geographic and thematic coverage of programmes as well as budget effectiveness.
- **Engage with male leaders.** Male leaders of political parties and in parliament often have the greatest impact on women's participation in those arenas. Men should be a part of the dialogue process, sensitized to the issues and building a base of support identified from within their ranks.
- **Bring local skills to the national level.** Women's unique strengths at the local level can provide singular benefits during an electoral period. Women's traditional roles in peace-building and grassroots communications are examples.
- **Be vigilant with the legal framework.** The legal framework is often the first step in making practical gains in gender equity. In general, there is space for constant improvement and advocates should continually seek to enhance the framework.
- **Identify local strengths as well as weakness.** Gender assessments should identify the strongest areas for gender promotion in a country, including key actors and institutions, and identify creative ways to further their success.
- **Work with dedicated gender advisors.** Ensuring a gender mainstreaming strategies requires examining all aspects of electoral administration. In order to integrate gender concerns fully, a knowledgeable gender advisor may provide much needed expertise to any electoral assistance mission. The gender advisor's role is to support the EMB staff and to work closely with all staff in the UNDP electoral assistance team.
- **Seek sustainable incentives for promoting women candidates.** Consider the short- and long-term advantages of any incentive programme and strive to promote only those incentives that contribute to sustainable growth in women's political development and do not jeopardize perceptions about the neutrality of donors.
- **Be responsive to non-traditional political contexts.** When faced with non-traditional political contexts such as boycotts, assistance providers should seek flexible and creative solutions to ensure that women candidates are not marginalized or disproportionately disadvantaged.
- **Evaluate quality and quantity.** Assistance providers should seek to employ evaluation indicators that measure quantitative progress and qualitative gains in women's political participation. Success may not always be equated with only one or the other of these measures.
- **Engage early.** Support for women's participation must be provided well in advance of an election; ongoing support is required in each step of the election cycle. Gender must be thought of at the beginning stages of the technical electoral support, not after.
- **Educate broadly.** Inform women about laws so they can use them. Use civic education tools to ensure that women have the information that they require to make informed decisions.











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