Access to justice, good governance and the rule of law – reducing inequality and exclusion by promoting gender-sensitive, sustainable and inclusive growth
UNDP works in 170 countries and territories and is one of the main multilateral development bodies, seeking to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality and exclusion. We help countries to design policies, develop partnership and leadership skills, build their institutional capacity and share solutions to problems relating to:

- [ Sustainable development](#)
- [Democratic governance](#)
- [Climate and adaptation](#)

We promote the protection of human rights and encourage the active participation of women in all our work.

UNDP partners in Burundi:

- United Nations
- Peacebuilding
- Sustaining Peace
- GEF.org

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The UNDP programme in Burundi is aligned with the country’s priorities and endeavours to support the Government’s efforts to achieve the goals and targets outlined in the 2012-2016 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II). A new development plan covering the 2017-2019 period is under development. The UNDP programme helps the Government to adopt and integrate into all sectors the 17 new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will guide development funding and policy for the next 15 years, starting with a historic commitment to eradicate poverty. The UNDP programme also incorporates priorities from the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 2012-2018) and the UNDP 2014-2017 Strategic Plan.
Supporting Burundi
Access to justice, good governance and the rule of law – reducing inequality and exclusion by promoting gender-sensitive, inclusive and sustainable growth

UNDP in Burundi focuses on three priority areas

1. STRENGTHENING THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND RULE OF LAW, AND PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY
   This is achieved by supporting the judicial system, implementing the national public administration reform programme, building the capacity of supreme audit and anti-corruption institutions, supporting national economic strategic planning and steering mechanisms, particularly the Vision 2025 monitoring and evaluation mechanism, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II), and combating gender-based violence.

2. REVITALIZING THE LOCAL ECONOMY, PROMOTING CHAINS OF VALUE, AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
   This is achieved by implementing the national strategy for reintegrating conflict victims, stimulating and boosting the local economy, community resilience, supporting decentralization and local governance initiatives, job creation and social cohesion.

3. PROTECTING AND CONSERVING THE ENVIRONMENT, ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND RISK REDUCTION
   This is achieved by supporting the implementation of national climate change adaptation strategies and action plans, conserving and managing environmental resources, and supporting national capacity-building designed to enhance participatory management of protected areas.

All UNDP Burundi activities incorporate gender, human rights, knowledge management and results-based communication for development.

The consistent and cross-cutting integration of gender into programmes is one of the founding principles of the UNDP approach to creating a sustainable, inclusive and resilient world. In practice, it means that women’s practical and strategic needs are taken into account, their economic empowerment is promoted, and gender equality is respected when planning, monitoring and evaluating, and allocating resources.
In 2015-2016, UNDP support enabled the following to be achieved:

- A comprehensive review of Burundi’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II).
- The adoption and official launch of the National Employment Policy (NEP).
- Launch of the National Industrialization Policy development process.
- Partners were trained to use the Development Assistance Database (DAD).
- Drafting, adopting and circulating the last national report on the MDGs (2015).
- Circulating the 2013 National Report on Human Development, including organizing a big debate on the report at the University of Burundi.
- Organizing two national consultations and producing two national overview reports as part of the process of adopting the 2030 Agenda for SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals).
- Informing and raising the awareness of 1,600 national and local stakeholders to enable SDG focal points to be established in all the country’s local districts (two per district) and in all the ministries (one per ministry).

In 2017, the Policy and Strategy Unit will continue providing support for strategic steering, specifically via:

- Supporting the finalization, adoption and dissemination of the national SDGs context report for the country.
- Supporting the process of locating the SDGs in four pilot provinces.
- Support for the process of implementing the statistical revolution for improved monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs.
- Support for the finalization and dissemination of the comprehensive review of Burundi’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II).
- Support for the process of formulating a new national development plan as the PRSP II ended in 2016.
- Support for the finalization, adoption and circulation of Burundi’s National Industrialization Policy.
- Support for the development and adoption of a strategy and action plan to implement the national employment policy.
- Support for the formulation and adoption of the new 2017 Human Development Report focusing on social cohesion, the demographic dividend and sustainable development.
UNDP supports Burundi via the implementation of the good governance and anti-corruption strategy, by supporting initiatives to strengthen the rule of law through improving access to law and justice, bolstering the criminal justice system and combating gender-based violence (GBV).
In 2015-2016, UNDP support enabled the rule of law to be strengthened, with greater justice and equality being achieved through:

- A 10% reduction in the custody rate in Ngozi.
- A 40% reduction in the backlog of court cases in Ngozi, Kanyaza and Kirundo.
- Verdicts being reached on 597 cases of gender-based violence.
- Training of 191 gender-based violence focal point magistrates who have become more effective in their roles.
- Training of 50 magistrates and criminal investigation police officers on the law on gender-based violence.
- Creation of 42 specialized gender-based violence chambers in all the country’s jurisdictions and public prosecution departments.
- The organization of 55 travelling hearings in three provinces - Makamba, Kayanza and Kirundo – has enabled the backlog of cases to be reduced. Specifically, 1,039 cases processed, 449 were considered and judged, making for a 48.2% completion rate.
- The release of 556 unlawfully detained people following inspections of detention centres.
- The drafting of five annual plans and 15 quarterly plans enabled heads of department in the jurisdictions and public prosecutor’s offices to consistently monitor detentions.
- 926 cases were judged following pressure from the public ministry.
- Improved professional practices via the mentoring system covering 565 magistrates.
- 5,366 verdicts on ordinary cases resulted in 556 people being released.
- 27 legal clinics will be operational in 2017 via the partnership with two bars (Gitega and Bujumbura).
- Improved performance with the outcome of 80% of the judgements rendered in the province of Ngozi being enforced (600/800).
- Establishment of four new criminal justice system provincial technical groups to coordinate criminal justice system stakeholders.
UNDP support for good governance and combating corruption has enabled the following:

- The National Strategy on Good Governance and Combating Corruption to be implemented.
- The national administration reform programme to be implemented.
- Five one-stop shops to be set up in the provinces (Ngozi, Muyinga, Gitega, Mwaro and Muyinga).
- The State Inspector-General’s manual of administrative accounting and financial procedures to be published.
- Three institutional audits to be conducted by the Court of Auditors.
- An operational public procurement website.
- Four national frameworks for meetings between central government and the political parties have been set up at the provincial level.
- Training on conducting audits and budgetary oversight has been delivered to 35 magistrates from the Court of Auditors and 60 inspectors from the State Inspector-General. In the same vein, 70 officers and inspectors from the special anti-corruption squad have received training on the specialized techniques needed to do their jobs.
- 249 coordinators and managers of districts in the provinces of Muramvya, Mwaro, Muyinga, Kirundo, Bubanza and Cibitoke received training on administrative and HR management, budgetary and accounts procedures, and managing public procurement contracts.
- The adoption of three new reference documents for the High Court and three reference documents for the public prosecutor’s office to improve transparency when managing public affairs and to combat corruption.
- Training of 415 local leaders and 187 provincial representatives of political parties, of whom 21 were women, from the country’s 18 provinces, in communication and negotiation techniques, social cohesion and reconciliation.
- Training of 260 young people from political parties in non-violent communication techniques and peaceful conflict management.
- Organization of two discussion frameworks for young people grouped together in approved associations in nine of the country’s 18 provinces.
For 2017-2018, consolidating the rule of law will be the priority, through:

- The rollout of the legal assistance support project by supporting the legal clinics and directing people to alternative conflict resolution methods.
- The rollout of the transitional justice mechanisms support project via the Truth and Reconciliation Committee.
- Roll out of the project to improve legal and physical detention conditions in prisons.
- Extension of the one-stop shops to other provinces.
- Strengthening the criminal justice system, promoting national dialogue, combating sexual and gender-based violence.
- Improving legal and physical detention conditions in prisons.
- Making administrative services for citizens more accessible in prisons.
- Improving access to the law and justice.
Supporting Burundi
Access to justice, good governance and the rule of law – reducing inequality and exclusion by promoting gender-sensitive, inclusive and sustainable growth

Promoting sustainable development and job creation

This will be achieved by stepping up the pace of sustainable development by supporting the rollout of the national reintegration strategy, incorporating sustainable solutions, youth employment, access to economic opportunities and social cohesion.

UNDP has supported the creation of sustainable jobs, notably for vulnerable population groups, such as young people, and this has helped improved social cohesion. Achievements include:

- The creation of 411 jobs of which 50% are occupied by women.
- 16,718 temporary jobs have been created.
- Four youth centres have been built in Bujumbura rural, Rutana, Rumonge and Makamba. 12,600 young people have taken part in cultural, sporting and social cohesion activities.
- 1,800 vulnerable people from the provinces of Makamba and Rumonge were able to access credit to set up income-generating activities, which in turn benefited 39,246 people.
- Two major arterial routes in Bujumbura – Avenue de la Mission and Avenue de l’Amitié - were paved, using the highly intensive labour approach, which created 186 temporary jobs.
- 221 artisans, organized into 12 cooperatives, were trained in the trades of their choice.
- 29 local districts now have a community development plan.
- 20 local councils have improved their performance by utilizing customized district management software.
- An implementation framework for Bujumbura’s city master plan has been developed.

Promoting youth mobilization and partnerships, as a mark of social cohesion, has enabled the following:

- 304 young volunteers (of whom 46% are girls) have been mobilized to support 175 support facilities in several areas (health care, education and local governance).
- Adoption of the framework law on youth volunteering.
- 780 young people have been involved in social cohesion, job creation and youth volunteering promotion activities.
In 2017, UNDP is placing the emphasis on:

- **Dissemination of the national reintegration strategy** and mobilization of partners for the rollout of the action plan.
- **Helping young women and men to create youth committees** able to work with the local authorities on managing and coordinating the restoration of socio-economic infrastructure.
- **The launch of two provincial plans** outlining local economic priorities.
- **Developing two centres for peace and development** at the provincial level in order to deliver technical services to the local councils.
- **Extending micro-credit to the most vulnerable people** across the country.
- **Helping people to set up small businesses and social enterprises** so as to provide emergency employment to young people. The beneficiaries of these income-generating activities will then be trained so that they learn how to reinvest their savings. The income of young people and other vulnerable households affected by the crisis will consequently be increased and diversified.
- **Improving young people’s leadership skills** to facilitate community involvement and peaceful co-existence.
- **Guaranteeing the continuity, sustainability and close involvement of young people** on the pathway to social cohesion and self-empowerment.
- **Promoting people joining forces in cooperatives** within vulnerable groups.
- **Improving Burundi’s disaster preparedness and response capacity** by setting up three emergency operations centres in Mwaro, Muramvya and Rumonge.
- **Implementing the city of Bujumbura’s master plan.**
Helping to protect the environment and combat climate change

UNDP supports biodiversity protection initiatives, climate change adaptation, disaster risk management and the implementation of the major global environmental protection agendas.

**UNDP – Global Environment Facility (GEF) and government partnership has enabled:**

- Over 1,000 families to benefit from income-generating activities.
- 105km of paths to be restored to facilitate anti-poaching patrols.
- 420,000 trees to be planted to renew the country’s forests and flora.
- Neighbouring communities to become more involved in managing protected areas by creating alternative income-generating activities (over 1,000 families targeted).
- 496 new jobs to be created, of which 325 for women, in natural resource sustainable management solutions, ecosystem services, waste and chemical products.
- Tools to be created for the development of management plans for Kibira and Ruvuba Forests.
- Community networks to be set up to provide early warnings of the risk of disasters in the provinces of Kirundo, Makamba and Bujumbura.
- Disaster risk reduction platform capacity-building at the national, provincial (five) and local district (five) levels.

**The Global Environment Facility microfinance programme has enabled:**

- 1,300,000 forest and agro-forest trees to be planted.
- 120km of anti-erosion trenches to be dug.
- 780 goats to be given to project beneficiaries.
- Agricultural production to be increased following the reduction of erosion and soils to be fertilized with organic fertilizer produced by goat breeding.
In 2017, UNDP will continue to place the emphasis on:

- Supporting grass roots communities via the GEF microfinance programme in their efforts to combat climate change, reduce soil degradation and conserve biodiversity.
- Community resilience in the face of climate change by promoting smart agriculture, entrepreneurship and green jobs, and other early recovery initiatives in the provinces of Ruyigi, Rutana and Cankuzo. The aim is to reach at least 800,000 people of whom 60% are women.
- Extending the early warning network to three other provinces and improving community resilience to climate change and variability.
- Preventing natural disaster and climate change-related risks by means of a national information and awareness-raising roadshow.
- Improving the country’s disaster preparedness and response capacity by setting up three emergency operations centres in the provinces of Mwaro, Muramvya and Rumonge.
- Promoting eco-tourism to fund the networks of protected areas, rolling out the protected areas management plans, and increasing the alternative economic activities available to neighbouring communities.
- Implementing the city of Bujumbura’s master plan.
The UNDP operations department in Burundi

The UNDP operations department is the driving force behind the UNDP programme in Burundi, and is vital to the cooperation between the organization and the country when rolling out projects and programmes. The operations department encompasses five areas:

- **Finance**
- **Human Resources**
- **Procurement**
- **General services**
- **Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)**

Irrespective of whether they are in-country, for travel arrangements, visa formalities, customs clearance etc., HR supports six agencies/departments and programmes with recruitment and payment processing: IFAD, UNFPA, UN WOMEN, OCHA, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Burundi (OHCDHB), UNCDF and the WFP. The UNDP HR department also helps manage the pay of 281 national civil servants and UN volunteers working in the aforementioned six agencies.

Utilizing a strategic approach, the UNDP operations department has enabled the following:

- The mobilization of 1,210,544 USD by the Government and 1,393,883 USD by the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa to complete the renovation of the UNDP offices. The offices are now more secure and operational. The staff working environment has improved significantly, switching from containers to functional offices surrounded by green spaces.
- A data centre to store data for 15-20 years has been set up.
- The switch from VSAT (very small aperture terminal – a two-way satellite communication system) to fibre-optic has improved internet speed.
- The launch and widespread roll out of EFT (electronic funds transfers) instead of payment by cheque has saved time. From now on, as part of their work and for other activities, state partners, suppliers and agencies supported by UNDP enjoy direct access to their funds in their bank accounts.
- Training has built the capacity of staff and partners

In 2017-2018, the emphasis will be placed on:

- Implementing a more efficient workflow to improve the timescales for dealing with agencies’ and other partners’ matters.
- Capacity-building by implementing the training plan focusing on UNDP rules and procedures, and managing emergency situations. Staff, our government partners and NGOs will be the target groups in order to improve the expected results.
- Monitoring MOSS (Minimum Operating Security Standards) and staff capacity-building in order to maintain development activities.
UNDP has forged an effective partnership with donors, the Government, Japan, the EU, the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Switzerland in order to harness the additional resources needed to roll out its activities.

### Donor information sheet
(2014-2017, guide percentages)

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Feedback from UNDP partners in Burundi

Greater justice – thanks to UNDP support, there is greater respect for prisoners’ rights and the number of illegal detentions and arbitrary arrests have fallen.

Access to justice for all – a drop in the number of illegal detentions and greater respect for citizens’ rights, thanks to training.

Ernest Nduwimana, Kayanza public prosecutor, applauds the reduction in overcrowding in district cells. The transfer of prisoners to provincial cells and prisons has addressed this issue. “Before UNDP intervened, we were unable to organize inspections of local district detention centres and make plans for detainees to be better distributed. UNDP provided us with the vehicles we needed. The issue has now been addressed and UNDP support is very much appreciated by all justice system users. UNDP has also facilitated the supervision of criminal investigation police officers and supported the organization of travelling hearings in Ngozi.”

“In addition to the regular transfer of detainees, illegal detentions have dropped significantly,” adds Ferdinand Bigirindavyi, the Rutana public prosecutor. “UNDP has saved the day because the situation was getting critical. Likewise, supervision of investigating officers has meant that they are getting used to respecting citizens’ rights, and we are recording fewer arbitrary arrests and illegal detentions.”
**Improved management of gender-based violence because of training and the gender law**

Alice Émilie Ntamatungiro, focal point for the unit tasked with combating gender-based violence (GBV) at the Ministry of Justice, believes that “the training supported by UNDP for stakeholders involved in combating this violence, primarily magistrates, gender focal points, police officers and investigating police officers, is vital.” The training enables magistrates to improve the quality of GBV-related verdicts. Moreover, the acquisition of IT equipment and GBV monitoring and management software, supplied by UNDP, has enabled a database to be created which will facilitate the evaluation of processing of GBV cases, the nature and frequency of GBV offences, the sentences being passed etc. A total of 84 magistrates were trained, with 60 receiving training on the GBV software and 24 learning about the gender law passed in September 2016.

**Strengthening female leadership through cooperatives**

“Rice makes everyone smile”, stresses Judith Nzigama, a member of Tugwanyubukene cooperative. “Before joining the Tugwanyubukene co-op, my family was languishing in poverty. Our home wasn’t a peaceful place as I often bickered with my husband when he came home in the evening after having a beer. I believed that he was spending the small amount he had earned during the day on drink instead of buying something for our family’s evening meal. Fortunately, my suspicions were ill-founded, because his friends were inviting him for a drink.” The situation has now changed thanks to the co-op. “I now invite my husband for a drink once the surplus produce has been sold,” says Judith, with a mischievous expression on her face. Her husband adds that his wife is the pillar of the family and that he holds her in high esteem.

Bernard Bukura, the president of Tugwanyubukene cooperative, concludes, “the project brought us together so that we work more effectively and organize our development. You only need to look at our members to understand this. Before, they were impoverished and wore torn clothing, but now they are clean and have a smile on their lips.”
Institutional support for the Ministry for Local Economic Development

The partnership with UNDP has enabled resources to be mobilized and the programme to be rolled out nationwide.

“The projects incorporated in the three-year local economic development plan give real impetus to the rollout of the local economic development strategy,” says the Minister, Jeanne d’Arc Kagayo. “UNDP was the only partner to support the programme and the success achieved when implementing these projects is encouraging new people to get involved in order to roll out the programme nationwide.”

With the support of UNDP under the PACTE territorial convergence and commitment support programme, the Ministry for Local Economic Development extends micro-credit to economically active poor people to enable them to build micro-enterprises and generate a stable income. In Rumonge, two female beneficiaries of the micro-credit programme received a loan of 50,000 FBU and used it to develop their small peanut and doughnut selling business.

Inclusive approach for vulnerable people – access to employment – improved social cohesion

“I am satisfied with this programme as I personally feel that it offers added value to our organizations in terms of supervision, as well as for young people, as they take advantage of this opportunity to gain work experience and then subsequently are able to land a job after their period of volunteering,” said Cassien Bizabigomba, tasked with awareness-raising and mobilization at ADMH (Association for the Development of Disabled Service Personnel), which hosted four volunteers.

Our cooperatives have become development hubs in our region. On behalf of the beneficiaries in Rutana, Elias Nikoyagize explains that prior to the start of the project, the members of the four co-ops (goat breeding and rice growing) were unable to see what needed to be done to bring about real change in their lives. “We learned a lot about how cooperatives should be organized and our production increased significantly. Our children are no longer wandering the streets because they are in school, and our families eat their fill. Finally, we have reinforced relationships with our own people in the community.” Elias stressed that as a returnee, he is not in the least wary of his brothers who were fortunate enough not to go into exile. “In a nutshell”, he adds, “our cooperatives have become development hubs in our region. If further proof were needed, each co-op is currently expanding its activities. All we need is ongoing training to help us.”
Improved social cohesion in the community thanks to the guarantee fund

In Rurumone, Melchior Ndayirukiye firstly thanked the project leaders who made a significant contribution to improving social cohesion in the community. He was delighted that the guarantee fund set up to help beneficiaries was able to facilitate the diversification of income-generating activities. “We are continuing to fatten goats, we have bought a plot of land and four cows, and we are planning to sell around the Christmas period at a more attractive price,” said Melchior.

Odette Munezero spoke on behalf of the beneficiaries in Makamba (Nyanza-Lac) and talked about the extreme poverty in her community and how UNDP and BBIN/SPARK have helped them escape extreme poverty. “We have really changed our living conditions. Previously, we even had a returnee who was very poor but he has since opened a soap business and is now self-sufficient,” said Odette. “Our plan as an association is to move into other areas, such as building a pig abattoir. Pigs are currently slaughtered covertly, which puts consumers’ health at risk. Please do not abandon us,” begs Odette, “we still need your advice. Please advocate for us so that microfinance interest rates are reduced.”

In Mutambara, 1,200 young people are seeking to foster inter-community peace

Ulimwengu Bigirimana, president of the Mutambara youth centre, says, “by funding the building of the centre, UNDP has had a positive impact, because there was mistrust between the residents of the rural integrated village (host village for returnees) and the surrounding communities. The centre was the ideal forum for exchanging ideas. The atmosphere was hesitant and even difficult at the start, but we gradually got to know each other.” He added, “there was also a communication problem, as the returnees spoke Swahili, as is normal in Tanzania, while we speak Kirundi. The young residents broke down the language barrier by teaching the child returnees our language.”
Supporting community security and social cohesion by targeting young people affected by the conflicts

Young people make up 65% of the country’s population. They are the most vulnerable social group because daily life is a massive struggle for survival and there is little hope of finding a job. These young people are predisposed and exposed to all forms of problems in this context of political and social instability. The community security and social cohesion support project aimed at young people affected by conflict targets this group, notably in the provinces of Bujumbura Mairie, Bujumbura Rural and Bururi.

According to the Minister of Youth, Sport and Culture, Jean Bosco Hitimana, “this project will enable young people to bolster social cohesion and take part in the community’s socioeconomic development, while acquiring the means to support themselves.” He encourages them to “get actively involved in achieving the project’s goals to help the communities in the targeted provinces.”

Volunteers for development and fostering peace

Chosen by their peers, Michel Nsengiyumva and Alice Akimana provided a hard-hitting overview of the achievements of young volunteers in Ngozi, Gitega and Bujumbura rural, from March 2015 to March 2016. “Before we got involved in volunteering, we were either unemployed, studying for university qualifications or at the end of humanities courses. We are delighted to have brought about significant change in the lives of 250,000 beneficiaries who have taken advantage of our services during our year-long assignment. We are proud to have contributed to community development in Burundi in this way”, says a delighted Michel.

The beneficiary institutions are also clearly delighted. “The volunteers have plugged major gaps in the quality of services offered to citizens. They sometimes staffed whole areas which were sorely lacking staff,” explains Sylviana, the coordinator of an AIDS control association in Ngozi.
Partnering with research centres – Burundians select the post-2015 development agenda programme

The population wants to benefit from local services, such as support for farming and crafts. “Local development is vital.” This is the main conclusion drawn by Gilbert Niyongabo, a consultant representing CURDES (the university research centre for socio-economic development), at the workshop at which the results of phase two of the national consultations were presented. This speaker led the workshop and explained that “people want to benefit from local services, such as support for farming and crafts.” The people of Burundi are expressing their desire for self-improvement, making use of technical apprenticeships, training and work experience in their local areas. Those consulted wanted decentralization to reach the hill areas, rather than stopping at the provincial level, as is currently the case. In Gilbert Niyongabo’s view, all the partners should therefore focus on decentralizing support services so that they reach the hill areas.
Communities commit to providing greater protection for the environment and to combating climate change

“At the start of the project, we never thought that our area would change to such an extent that our neighbours would look longingly at our achievements and start to copy us”, explains Léopold Barusasiyeko, vice-president of the Kiyonza environmental conservation association in Kirundo. Forage crops and shrubs have been planted on the edge of boundary contour lines, as they help retain water, prevent soil erosion and keep fields moist in dry periods. “The lake no longer silts up due to rainwater run-off and the trees planted around the lakeshore have enabled spawning areas for fish reproduction and egg-laying to be re-established. Our involvement in shoreline management also stops fishermen from using banned nets, meaning that fish stocks are reproducing more quickly”, said Léopold. In the future, we are already considering a bigger development programme for the farms that run along the length of the lake. “This time we are planning to take into account resilience by introducing an income-generating activity which will encourage the local people to protect the environment and generate some income”.

The forest - our community pharmacy! Consolate is 40 years old. She is tasked with cultural organization for the DUSHIGIKIRE IBIDUKIKIJE association, which boasts 250 members. This local organization, supported by UNDP and the GEF, is actively involved in protecting the Murehe nature reserve in the north of the country. Consolate is a member of the Batwa community. She began living in the reserve in 1994. “I had already heard about the importance of conserving the environment as part of our daily lives. The local authorities moved us out of the nature reserve in 2002 and gave each household a one hectare plot of land. Our Batwa community was educated at that time about the environmental issues in this protected area. This motivated me to support eco-friendly initiatives.” The founding of DUSHIGIKIRE in 2012 was an excellent opportunity for Consolate to make a practical commitment to conserving the environment. “Thanks to the organization and the support of the GEF and UNDP, I have been able to undertake various training courses and increase my knowledge. For example, I learned how to set up nurseries, how to plant trees and how to plot contour lines. Our Batwa community believes that it is very important to protect the forest because the forest is our community pharmacy. The forest is the source of the medicinal plants that we use to treat ourselves. We never go to the doctor or hospital. We know how to treat ourselves using forest plants. This knowledge has been handed down by our ancestors and constitutes a priceless heritage.” The forest is also vital for fighting climate change and maintaining the level of rainfall needed for vegetation to remain healthy. “I hope that our efforts to conserve the Murehe Reserve will enable more wild animals to make their homes there, and I also hope that expanding the woodland areas will increase rainfall in the region.”
Despite a handful of people being reluctant, the vast majority of the population easily accepted and welcomed this environmental protection project,” says Gabriel. “The project started with several environmental conservation awareness-raising sessions. We then established the core principle of creating a greenbelt to protect the surrounding area and the marshes on the River Ruvubu, plotting contour lines in the members’ fields and installing improved stoves in people’s homes.”

As the leader, Gabriel played an active part in the work in order to serve as a role model and then in asking the community to follow suit. They created a nursery containing 400,000 forest plants from which they have taken 80,000 shrubs. They handed out the shrubs to individuals and reforested 160 hectares of communal land. Members of the association have also been paid a wage, particularly when preparing the nurseries, in order to inject cash into the communities to help them to develop.

To increase agricultural production and combat poaching, 300 goats were donated – one goat per household for each project member, as well as five improved breed billy goats so that the community’s herd reproduces. 600 improved stoves were also distributed to the families to limit excessive usage of wood, as this is one of the main causes of destruction of the park’s flora.

The marsh and Ruvubu River banks buffer zone had been seriously damaged by deforestation and farming but is already on the road to recovery. Gabriel confirms that “animals such as hippopotamus, which had fled the region, are starting to return, as they are once again finding grazing land, and this is encouraging us to continue down this route.”