



AGENCY FOR
PEACEBUILDING

FINAL REPORT

Final external evaluation of the
“Tubiri Tuvurana Ubupfu:
Strengthening Trust and Positive
Relations Between Youth and
Police in Burundi” project

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Abbreviations

AP	Agency for Peacebuilding
CFM	Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms
CGA	Common Ground Approach
CNDD-FDD	Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie – Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FRODEBU	Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi
GIZ	<i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</i>
JEDEBU	Jeunes Démocratiques du Burundi
JPH	Jeunesse Patriotique Hutu
LPCs	Local Peace Committees
Palipehutu-FLN	Parti pour la Libération du Peuple Hutu – Forces de Libération Nationale
PNB	Police Nationale du Burundi
Search	Search for Common Ground
ToT	Training of Trainers

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Executive summary

The report presents the findings from the final evaluation of the project “*Tubiri Tuvurana Ubupfu: Strengthening Trust and Positive Relations Between Youth and Police in Burundi*”. Implemented by Search for Common Ground (Search) and funded by the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, the project ran over a period of 30 months starting on September 1st, 2019, and ending on February 28, 2022. The final evaluation took place between December 2021 and February 2022 and consisted of a review of project documents, a literature review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and a survey.

The overall goal of the evaluation was to provide an external and independent assessment of the project as a whole, with the particular aim of measuring the extent to which the project has been successful at achieving its outcomes, and why and where improvements for the future can be made. In so doing, the evaluation focused on the criteria of effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

Project description

The “*Tubiri Tuvurana Ubupfu*” project’s main aim was to strengthen trust and positive relationships between youth and police to prevent violence before, during and after the 2020 electoral cycle, thereby avoiding the experience of the 2015 elections, when the country witnessed intense political violence. To this effect, the project set out to transform the relationship between the police and youth, who have often been at the forefront of political clashes, by encouraging constructive and humanizing interactions between them and with other members of the community. The project intended, in particular, to harness the potential of mixed security committees, community policing structures that have been set up in communities across the country, and to strengthen them to become vehicles where the community, police and local authorities could safely interact and de-escalate tensions.

The project focused on three interconnected objectives: first, to increase the capacity of police officers, mixed security committee and youth to peacefully address tensions and conflict in their communities; secondly, to foster the dialogue between communities and police on sensitive issues, including security and the electoral process; and lastly, to strengthen alternative, positive narratives of collaboration between police forces and youth. In line with these objectives, project activities covered topics of conflict transformation, consensus building, and conflict and gender-sensitive community outreach.

Context analysis

Since its accession to independence in 1962 and up until late 1990’s, Burundi was marked by different cycles of violent clashes between its two largest ethnic groups, Hutu and Tutsi, and related political factions. In August 2000, following years of negotiations, the signature of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement laid down the basis for a peace process that is still unfolding to this day. The Agreement made the reform of defence and security forces one of its priorities and introduced the concept of community policing. This was based on a new understanding of security that, owing to the equal inclusion of Burundian ethnic groups, aimed at promoting social cohesion after protracted violent clashes. On these premises the new Burundian National Police (*Police nationale du Burundi*. or PNB) was established in 2004.

It is in this framework that the institution of mixed security committees (*comités mixtes de sécurité*) was first conceived of, and then formally recognised and regulated in 2014. Committees include representatives of the local administration, the police, the justice system, the population and civil society organisations (CSOs); they have a wide range of different tasks, some overlapping the duties of local authorities and security forces, such as protecting the population against political and economic threats, promoting human rights and patriotic education, as well as ensuring food security and reinforcing family planning.

Despite these efforts, tensions between police and communities have remained high, especially around elections. This was the case of 2015 elections, which were marked by confrontations between security forces and young demonstrators. Since then, regional and international observers have looked into these events and documented human rights violations and abuses in Burundi. The last electoral cycle in 2020 took place in a less restrictive environment and brought to power a new president, Évariste Ndayishimiye, who made a commitment to promote the rule of law and fight corruption. Nevertheless, human rights violations continue to be documented, mostly targeting opposition parties and individuals suspected of being involved in armed attacks.

Evaluation findings

Findings are presented under the evaluation's three focus criteria: effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

Effectiveness. The general assessment is positive: all intended results—capacity building, dialogue and the creation of positive narratives were achieved, with clear benefits for all target groups. The trainings on the Common Ground Approach (CGA) created awareness among young people on peaceful conflict resolution tools, informed police officers of different laws on which they could tap on when it came to reconciling parties in conflict and helped mixed security committee members to know the laws they should abide by and provided them with a clearer idea of what kind of conflict cases they should deal with.

As regards dialogue between communities and police, there is a consensus from all sources that this project came as a bridge that connected people with different perceptions and opinions. The project effectively provided target groups with opportunities to meet and discuss sensitive topics. As a result, information sharing has improved, and several police officers interviewed affirmed that the role of watchmen is now shared between different stakeholders. On the media side, radio production and broadcast as well as the participatory theatre performances offered examples of constructive interactions between different stakeholders. Speakers who intervened in the radio programmes represented a diverse range of political affiliations and professional backgrounds, and addressed a number of sensitive issues. Listeners and participants were allowed to dig deeper into these issues, and to look at the different factors that engender insecurity in their communities.

While the results were largely achieved, the project also encountered several challenges, mainly related to the engagement of the police and the participation of women. Due to the electoral period, the protocol with the General Inspection of the Police was signed in mid-September 2020, almost one year after the project started. As a result, activities involving police officers were postponed until after that time. The participation of women in project activities was particularly low among police officers and mixed security committee members. Although this is connected to the limited representation of women in these groups, shortcomings in other activities suggest that this was a project-wide problem. The inclusion of women was indeed limited among the radio programmes' speakers and listeners too.

Impact. The project positively shifted some patterns of collaboration between different groups of people, which opened up a space for information sharing, in particular between youth and the mixed security committees on one side, and mixed security committees and the police on the other. Community dialogues appear in particular to have helped some people to open their minds and change their behaviour. Several people interviewed claimed, in fact, that the dialogues were an opportunity of self-evaluation and decision-making, as they led some people to “divorce with their bad habits”.

Some challenges were also recorded, in particular with the implementation of the joint peace initiatives. While these were initially conceived as a way to involve all the target groups in the realisation of cooperative actions, they then turned into income generating activities to be realised mainly by young people, and the role of police and security committee members was limited to one of supervision.

Lastly, under this criterion the evaluation sought to validate the project's theory of change. This was found to include three main causal mechanisms: (i) youth claim agency on peace and security; (ii) police officers adopt more inclusive practices in the implementation of their assigned duties; and (iii) communities embrace more inclusive approaches to peace and security. The first mechanism was fully validated and is indeed key to impact. The second, however, could not be fully validated, as it does not give enough attention to necessary changes at the institutional level. The third mechanism has produced positive changes, yet there is currently not enough data to assess its contribution to impact.

Sustainability. The project presents several elements of sustainability. Interviews highlighted that youth champions are continuing to act as mediators within their communities and their behaviour is seen as a good example to their peers. The delivery of Training of Trainers (ToT) on the CGA to police officers is conducive to the replication of training sessions, which will thereby strengthen the police force's abilities on conflict transformation and contribute to the institutionalisation of community policing. Elements related to the creation of positive narratives of collaboration between police forces and youth are likely to remain in place since the project leaves a legacy in terms of contents. Programmes that partner radios are currently developing have been inspired from those aired under the project.

More problematic appears the sustainability of results related to dialogues on sensitive issues between youth, police, mixed security committee members and communities at large. Spaces for dialogue provided by the project will not remain in place after the intervention. Moreover, joint peace initiatives do provide young people with opportunities to meet and cooperate, but involve police and security committee members only to the limited extent of overseeing the income generating activities.

Lessons Learned

On the basis of the findings described in the previous section, a number of lessons learned can be identified, some of which will undoubtedly confirm that many in the organization already know, or sense, and others that are perhaps new and can lead to further reflections.

First of all, work with the media is important, but their capacity needs to be strengthened. The collaboration with partner radios exposed the limited capacity of journalists to cover sensitive issues and chair debates involving speakers addressing topics from opposite standpoints.

Secondly, and equally important projects such as this one must account for resistance from authorities. Collaborating with local authorities was difficult in a few cases, particularly during the electoral period. This highlights the reluctance existing among politicians towards the democratisation of the political arena. Resistance also accounts for different expectations that should surround the application of ToT models.

Thirdly, youth champions, as defined by the project, can be counted on to act as multipliers. Compared to other youths, champions can, in fact, be a powerful weapon ready to air their thinking without worrying on who will hear about it.

Fourthly, gender mainstreaming starts with equal representation. Search was not strict on equal representation of women and men, which led the local administration to mostly target men as for them security matters concerned mostly men. This limited the contributions of women to project activities. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that the project's target institutions are generally male-dominated.

Finally, intervening on local sources of conflict can be a very powerful to validate dialogue. This said, one should acknowledge that such conflicts may vary a lot from location to location. Effectively tackling local conflicts might also require lobbying activities vis-à-vis the local administration, other NGOs and UN agencies.

Conclusions and recommendations

The evaluation confirms the effectiveness of the project, and also identifies positive elements relating to its impact and sustainability. This said, there are two challenges worth highlighting. The first relates to the participation of police officers, which was different than that of young people, for reasons outside of Search's control, but nonetheless significant for impact and sustainability. The second challenge relates to the participation of women. The project was not able to reach gender parity across several activities, primarily because the institutions it targeted, the mixed security committees and the police force, are male-dominated. Yet, more research should be done to understand why women participate less on this front, to build a more gender-sensitive approach capable, if anything, at least to build the basis for greater inclusivity in future endeavours.

The evaluation concludes with the following recommendations:

To the donor:

- **Continue supporting work advancing community-based security approaches.** The project's experience is that these approaches respond to a clear need and there should be resources, both financial and political, to continue this work.
- **Facilitate engagement with central institutions.** Organizations like Search can find it difficult to overcome resistance to engagement, while donors can provide some leverage in engaging high-level officials.

To Search:

- **Extend the action to other municipalities and provinces across the country.** Several project participants and stakeholders suggested this, as have some radio partners.
- **Keep engaging police and mixed security committees in capacity building and dialogue.** In particular, Search should focus on increasing the participation of women and of young people from parties in opposition, focusing less on trainings and dialogue opportunities, and more on advocacy and networking.
- **Support the capacity building of media professionals.** Journalists and media professionals continue to lack the competencies to tackle sensitive issues, and their capacities should be reinforced in the future.
- **Strengthen gender-mainstreaming actions.** More should be done to ensure equal participation of women, and also their empowerment. Search should invest in an in-depth study of the gendered dynamics of political participation, with a focus on the local and community levels.
- **Increase consultations and feedback mechanisms.** Search should establish formal channels to collect feedback (including complaints) on their intervention, which can serve for strengthening their accountability work and also constitute a rich source of learning for the organization.
- **Review and make more use of the theory of change.** The theory of change can be improved, especially in addressing the need to engage police officers differently (at both local and central levels). Monitoring and evaluation efforts should then be built to use this theory of change.

Introduction

The report presents the findings from the final evaluation of the project "*Tubiri Tuvurana Ubupfu: Strengthening Trust and Positive Relations Between Youth and Police in Burundi*", which has been implemented by Search for Common Ground (Search). Funded by the Foreign

Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, the project ran over a period of 30 months starting on September 1st, 2019, and ending on February 28, 2022.

The final evaluation was commissioned to the Agency for Peacebuilding (AP) and took place between December 2021 and February 2022. AP was able to implement the planned methodology, almost without deviation. The evaluation consisted of a review of project documents, as shared by Search, and the completion of a literature review that used a wide range of external resources. In-depth interviews, focus group discussions and a survey were also conducted, reaching different stakeholders: project staff, youth influencers and champions, police representatives, journalists and other stakeholders (for more information, see the methodology section below). The evaluation was designed to ensure that most data collection activities could be done in presence with project participants in Burundi. This was indeed the case, even though, in the end, not all intended informants were reachable to be interviewed, in particular among police representatives, something that represents a limitation.

The overall goal of the evaluation was to provide an external and independent assessment of the “*Tubiri Tuvurana Ubupfu*” project as a whole, with the particular aim of measuring the extent to which the project was successful at achieving its outcomes and why and where improvements for the future can be made.

In general, the focus of the assignment was, as such, on learning—that is, in understanding why and how change occurred. Elements of accountability were not, however, sacrificed, as the evaluation also assessed whether expected outputs and results were achieved.

The report is structured in six sections. After this introduction, the next section gives an overview of the project, which is followed by the section on methodology. Then a context analysis outlines the main issues and dynamics that constituted the object of the project. This is followed by the evaluation’s findings, which are presented by criteria (effectiveness, impact, and sustainability). The report finally presents lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations for future programming.

Project description

The “*Tubiri Tuvurana Ubupfu*” project’s main aim was to strengthen trust and positive relationships between youth and police to prevent violence during the 2020 electoral cycle in Burundi. The project had three interconnected objectives:

1. To increase the capacity of police officers, mixed security committee and youth to peacefully address tensions and conflict in their communities;
2. To foster the dialogue between communities and police on sensitive issues, including security and the electoral process; and
3. To strengthen alternative, positive narratives of collaboration between police forces and youth.

As the aforementioned objectives make clear, much of the attention of the project was on elections. Specifically, the project was designed to defuse conflicts that were likely to explode before, during and after the elections held in May 2020. Elections in Burundi are, in fact, considered as a particularly sensitive moment, based on the experience of the previous electoral cycle when the country witnessed intense political violence. Indeed, in April 2015, the announcement that President Pierre Nkurunziza would be running for a third term sparked protests that were repressed by the police. The project sought indeed to address this history head-on, and the locations for activities were chosen specifically because of their record of past electoral violence. They included the provinces of Bubanza, Bujumbura, Bururi, Cibitoke, Gitega, Kayanza, Kirundo and Makamba.

To attain its objectives, the project set out to transform the relationship between the police and youth, who have often been at the forefront of political clashes, by encouraging constructive and humanizing interactions between them and with other members of the community. The project intended, in particular, to harness dispute resolution structures, the mixed security committees, which have been set up in several Burundian communities, and to strengthen them to become vehicles where the community, police and local authorities can safely interact and de-escalate tensions.

In line with the three above-mentioned objectives, project activities covered topics of conflict transformation, consensus building, and conflict and gender-sensitive community outreach. The groups targeted were young people from different socio-economic backgrounds and political affiliations, police officers and mixed security committee members. Activities included:

- Training for youth influencers, police and mixed security committee members on the Common Ground Approach (CGA);
- Support and coaching to community-based youth champions, in order to enable them to mobilise participants, help organise community activities and co-facilitate dialogue sessions;
- Youth-to-youth dialogue sessions to deepen the relationship among diverse youth groups;
- Reflection sessions for trained police officers and mixed security committee members to discuss their respective roles in promoting non-violence and gain a shared understanding of sensitive issues;
- Youth-led community dialogue roundtables as safe spaces allowing youth, local authorities, police and community leaders to debate on sensitive issues;
- Joint peace initiatives to provide youth, police and mixed security committees with the opportunity to jointly design and implement small-scale initiatives that responded to some of the issues identified in the dialogues and reflection sessions;
- Participatory theatre performances aimed to portray real-life situations related to police-civilian relations and encourage communities to act out different endings; and
- Production and broadcast of radio programmes, radio panel discussions and radio and TV spots to foster discussion and highlight stories of collaboration towards security, tolerance, and inclusion.

Notably, the “*Tubiri Tuvurana Ubupfu*” project built on the results delivered by a previous pilot project, called “*Duteramire Umutekano*”, which Search implemented in 2017 and 2018. Funded by the Bosch Foundation, that initiative contributed to increasing trust and positive interactions between youth and police in Bujumbura Rural and Bujumbura Mairie. Similarly to the current project, “*Duteramire Umutekano*” wanted to provide targeted youth and police representatives with opportunities for interaction and dialogue in safe spaces and thereby to increase mutual understanding and collaboration. The previous project’s activities were also similar to the ones under “*Tubiri Tuvurana Ubupfu*”, and included roundtables and reflection sessions, radio programmes and participatory theatre, but also solidarity events such as soccer tournaments. Besides this pilot initiative, Search has been supporting the process of peace and reconciliation in Burundi since 1995 and has implemented actions specifically addressing the issue of electoral-related violence in the last three electoral cycles held in the country.

Methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to measure the extent to which the “*Tubiri Tuvurana Ubupfu*” project has been successful at achieving its outcomes, and why and where improvements for the future can be made. The evaluation’s specific objectives were:

- To understand the project's contribution to strengthened trust and positive relationships between youth and police officers, and also among youth from different political affiliations
- To validate the project's theory of change and related assumptions;
- To measure project indicators and compare them with data from the baseline; and
- To provide recommendations for current and future programming

The evaluation focused on assessing the project in relation to seven lines of inquiry under three criteria, as summarized in the following table:

Criterion	Lines of inquiry
Effectiveness	Are the capacities of young men, young women and mixed security committees, including police forces, strengthened with respect to conflict transformation? Do they have opportunities to engage constructively? Do communities have access to examples of positive relationships between civilians and police? Do communities have access to platforms to engage in meaningful and inclusive discussions on sensitive issues?
Impact	Have the changes under the previous points prevented violence during and after the election period? Have activities been successful in achieving the expected results? What is the level of achievement of the indicators? Were there any unexpected results (positive or negative)? What are the project stories of change?
Sustainability	What are the elements of sustainability of the project? What are the project achievements and lessons learned? What are the recommendations to adjust/improve the implementation of future projects?

The approach developed for the evaluation was participative, based on mixed methods and on principles of action research. Participatory refers to how the methodology was developed in collaboration with Search, to ensure that it addressed its priorities and concerns. The evaluation was also based on mixed methods, meaning that it used both qualitative and quantitative data to draw its findings. More in general, the evaluation relied on an approach based on principles of action research, namely, for each identified criterion, the key lines of inquiry informed all data collection and analysis (see Annex 1 for more information).

The evaluation took into account both primary and secondary data sources. Evaluation activities included a document review, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and a survey. The document review consisted of around 40 documents, both internal and external to the project. In particular, to carry out an adequate contextual analysis and to best assess the project, it was considered important to complete a literature review on the causes of electoral violence in Burundi, the findings from which are presented in the context analysis section. In terms of interviews, a total of 16 people were individually interviewed, including 5 project staff members and collaborators, three youth champions, three police officers, two media partners, and two stakeholders. Then, nine FGDs were conducted—one with young male participants, one with young female participants, and one with members of mixed security committees in three locations: Cibitoke, Kayanza and Makamba. A total of 45 people were engaged through these discussions. Lastly, a survey was developed and conducted, which engaged a total of 394 respondents in five different locations: Bujumbura, Cibitoke, Gitega, Kayanza and Makamba. Respondents represented a purposive sample made up of project participants, including 130 youth, 54 police officers, 39 members of mixed security committees, and 171 community members. Among total respondents, 60% were men (237) and 40% women (157). The survey measured participants' knowledge, attitudes and practices, and it served mainly to measure project indicators.

Data collection and analysis took place between January and February 2022. Evaluation activities were completed in line with agreed protocols, but some challenges need to be highlighted. First and foremost, the evaluation was conducted in a short timeframe, reducing the space for a more organic reflection on the overall data. Secondly, some informants proved to be difficult to reach: this was in particular the case with police officers, who as such are underrepresented compared to the original sample. Lastly, the baseline and endline surveys differ in both design and sample composition: while some questions remained the same, and thus allow direct comparisons between data, some did not. This resulted in the inability to provide quantitative measurements for several project indicators.

Overall, these challenges did not impede AP from providing full and rich answers to all the lines of inquiry. Yet, they have created some limitations for what the evaluation could say on some aspects of the project. Suggestions on how these can be overcome in the future are included in the recommendations section.

Context analysis

Burundi was long marked by violent clashes between its two largest ethnic groups, Hutu and Tutsi, and related political factions. In particular, after the independence in 1962 the country experienced several cycles of interethnic violence as well as clashes along shifting regional divides and clan alliances or cleavages.¹ Such political and ethnical polarization caused huge human losses and produced severe humanitarian and economic crises: more than 110.000 people are currently internally displaced² and about 270.000 are refugees abroad³; a total of 74% of the population is affected by multidimensional poverty⁴ and the Human Development Index positions Burundi at 185 out of 189 countries.⁵

In August 2000, following years of negotiations, the signature of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement by the Burundian Government, the National Assembly and some political parties laid down the basis for a peace process that is still unfolding to this day. In the years following the agreement, ceasefires were also signed with the two main political and armed groups of the opposition, the *Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie – Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie* (CNDD-FDD) in 2003 and the *Parti pour la Libération du Peuple Hutu – Forces de Libération Nationale* (Palipehutu-FNL) in 2006. In 2005, the elections saw the victory of the CNDD-FDD, bringing its candidate, Pierre Nkurunziza, to the Presidency of the country.

The Arusha Agreement made the reform of defence and security forces one of its priorities. It provided for the equal inclusion of ethnic groups and the integration of former fighters of political parties and movements active at the time of ceasefires, except for those responsible of human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Agreement also specified that state institutions must protect “the inalienable rights of the human person, starting with the right to life and including the rights to freedom, security, work, education and freedom of expression” (Protocol III to the Arusha Agreement). On these premises, the new Burundian National Police (*Police nationale du Burundi*, or PNB) was established in 2004. According to some estimates, over a third of the new police force is made up of former armed movement combatants with no formal police or military training.⁶ Furthermore, and

¹ Vandeginste S., *Transitional Justice for Burundi: A Long and Winding Road*, in Ambos K., Large J. and Wierda M. (ed.) *Building a Future on Peace and Justice*, 2009.

² IOM Burundi, *Internal Displacement Report*, September 2021.

³ UNHCR, *Burundian refugees head home but face reintegration challenges*, October 2021.

⁴ Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), introduced in the 2010 Human Development Report, identifies multiple overlapping deprivations suffered by individuals in 3 dimensions: health, education and standard of living.

⁵ UNDP Human Development Report, 2020.

⁶ Human Rights Watch, *“Every Morning They Beat Me” Police Abuses in Burundi*, 2008.

notwithstanding the Arusha Agreement's provisions, no mechanism to ascertain the responsibility of police officers for crimes related to the armed conflict was ever set up.

In the following years, and especially since 2005, several programmes, mostly within bilateral and multilateral cooperation frameworks, have been enacted with the aim to professionalise police forces. Training sessions in topics such as the legal use of force, the ethics of policing during election polls, inquiry techniques and gender-based violence have been delivered with the assistance of donors like the Belgian, Dutch and German cooperation agencies, as well as under the UN Integrated Office in Burundi (*Bureau intégré des Nations Unies au Burundi*).⁷ Despite these efforts, however, national and international observers have continued to document human rights violations.

The Arusha Agreement also introduced, and fostered, the concept of community policing, which was based on a new understanding of security that, owing to the equal inclusion of Burundian ethnic groups, aimed at promoting social cohesion after protracted violent clashes. To this effect, many donor-funded initiatives, including the above-mentioned training programmes, worked to make police officers closer to citizens and strengthen their mutual collaboration. It is in this framework that the institution of mixed security committees (*comités mixtes de sécurité*) was first conceived of, and then formally recognised and regulated in 2014.

These committees were not the first attempt to strengthen community participation on peace and security. Building on the customary institution of the *Bashingantahe* that traditionally played a key role in resolving local disputes, peace and security structures with similar tasks were set up at the local level in Burundi since the 1990's. They emerged in some areas as spontaneous initiatives of the population and were later supported by non-government organisations (NGOs), especially since 2000 when the return and reintegration of refugees and displaced people increased the need to peacefully settle community conflicts.⁸ In this spirit, mixed security committees were established in provinces and communes within a broader security sector reform programme funded by the German cooperation agency, the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ).⁹

The government gradually established these committees in all provinces, including at the *colline* level, and finally endorsed them with the joint decree of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Public Security regulating the *Comités mixtes de sécurité humaine*.¹⁰ The decree identified the members of the committees as representatives of the local administration, the police, the justice system, the population and civil society organisations (CSOs). However, it assigned them a wide range of different tasks, some overlapping the duties of local authorities and security forces, such as protecting the population against political and economic threats, promoting human rights and patriotic education, as well as ensuring food security and reinforcing family planning. This resulted, in some cases, in the entanglement of roles among the members of the committees.¹¹

Now turning to youth, the phenomenon of politically active young people involved in violent confrontations in Burundi dates back to the 1960's. Over the years, and especially since the 1990's, political parties created their own youth branches: the *Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi* (FRODEBU) created the *Jeunes Démocratiques du Burundi* (JEDEBU); the CNDD-FDD created the *Imbonerakure* (literally translated as "those who see far afar"); and the Palipehutu-FNL established the *Jeunesse Patriotique Hutu* (JPH).

⁷ Nindorera W., *La police nationale, le renforcement démocratique et la consolidation de la paix au Burundi*, in Canadian Journal of Development Studies, Vol. 32, No. 1, March 2011.

⁸ Van Leeuwen M., Nindorera J., Kambale Nzweve J.-L. and Corbijn C., *The 'local turn' and notions of conflict and peacebuilding – Reflections on local peace committees in Burundi and eastern DR Congo*, in *Peacebuilding*, 2020, vol. 8, no. 3.

⁹ Hirblinger A. T., Simons C., *The good, the bad, and the powerful: Representations of the 'local' in peacebuilding*, in *Security Dialogue*, 2015, Vol. 46, no. 5.

¹⁰ *Ordonnance conjointe du 4 février 2014 portant cahier de charge des Comités Mixtes de Sécurité Humaine*.

¹¹ Nibigira N., *Les Comités mixtes de sécurité humaine (CMSH) au Burundi: un régime de sécurité communautaire dans un contexte politique critique*, in *Afrique et développement*, 2017, vol. XLII, no. 3.

Research into this phenomenon has singled out different drivers of youth engagement in political violence: material and non-material incentives, ideological motivations, inadequate education and skills, delayed transition to adulthood, socio-economic and political exclusion, and a legacy of violence.¹² Overall, one aspect seems clear: political activism, including the involvement in political violence, emerges as one of the few ways in which young people can connect to influential political leaders and exert influence on society.¹³

Given the above, it is unsurprising to note how, aimed at gaining and keeping political influence, violence has often erupted on the occasion of electoral polls. The presidential elections held in 2015 are a particular case in point. The decision of President Pierre Nkurunziza, who had been in office since 2005, to run for a third mandate sparked protests and violent confrontations particularly between security forces and young demonstrators.¹⁴

Regional and international institutions¹⁵ have since looked into these events and consistently pointed to the responsibility of security forces and non-state actors under the orders of state agents. In this respect, attention was particularly drawn to the involvement of *Imbonerakure* in wrongful acts, often used as auxiliaries or substitutes for law enforcement officers. In fact, some analysts indicated how this was in part facilitated by the participation of *Imbonerakure* as civil society representatives in mixed security committees, which they used to legitimise their implication in law enforcement activities such as patrolling, arrests and detentions.

Among these institutions, in September 2016, the UN Human Rights Council established the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi with the task of conducting a thorough investigation into human rights violations and abuses conducted in Burundi since April 2015. Its mandate, renewed several times, is still ongoing and was extended to cover other unlawful acts, which makes it the only remaining independent international mechanism to document, monitor, and report on violations in Burundi. The four reports produced by the Commission to date have documented that human rights have continued to be violated in the country, especially in the wake of the May 2018 constitutional referendum and in the context of the 2020 elections.

This is indeed the last and most recent round of elections. Held in May, they saw the victory of the CNDD-FDD and its candidate for the presidency, Évariste Ndayishimiye, who was then sworn in June, right after the death of his predecessor. Despite the new President's stance against corruption and his commitment to promoting the rule of law, there is evidence that little progress has been made thus far. Most importantly, human rights violations continue to be documented, mostly targeting opposition parties and individuals suspected of being involved in armed attacks or of collaborating with armed groups.¹⁶

Evaluation findings

Effectiveness

Under this criterion, the evaluation sought to assess whether and to what extent the project's expected results have been achieved. The general assessment is positive: all intended results—capacity building, dialogue and the creation of positive narratives were achieved, with clear benefits for all target groups. However, challenges were also recorded, which affected in particular the inclusion of women and the media activities. Findings are presented under each of the project's three objectives.

¹² Paducel A.H., Entry Points for Preventing Youth Engagement in Political Violence: Lessons from Burundi's 2015 Elections, Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, Paper no. 23, 2016.

¹³ Berckmoes L. H., *Youth, politics and violence in Burundi: gullible followers or tactics actors?*, in *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs: Annuaire 2014-2015*.

¹⁴ Amnesty International, *Braving Bullets. Excessive force in policing demonstrations in Burundi*, 2015.

¹⁵ The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Human Rights Council.

¹⁶ Fourth report of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, 2021.

Findings under Objective 1

The project's first objective was about capacity building, and the following table provides the measurements of relevant project indicators at baseline and endline.

Indicator	Baseline value	Endline value
Objective 1: Increased police, mixed security committee, and youth capacity to peacefully address tensions and conflict in their communities.		
% of youth who can mention at least 2 incentives in engaging in regular dialogue as a way to prevent violence ¹⁷	66%	99%
% of police officers who can mention at least 2 incentives in engaging in regular dialogue as a way to prevent violence	61%	98%
% of community members who report that trained youth deal with tensions and conflict in their communities peacefully	83% (Youth) 75% (Leaders) 73% (Authorities) 61% (Police)	98%
% of community members who report that trained police deal with tensions and conflict in their communities peacefully	93% (Youth) 95% (Leaders) 98% (Authorities) 100% (Police)	98%
Result 1.1. Targeted youth, police and mixed security committee members have increased knowledge of nonviolent conflict resolution techniques and human rights		
% of participants who demonstrate knowledge of key concepts related to the training modules ¹⁸	66%	98%
Result 1.2. Targeted youth have access to a network of peer youth to support each other in confidence building and problem-solving		
% youth who report having access to peers they can turn to for advice on how to solve conflict peacefully	67%	95%
% of youth who can cite at least one tool to deal with conflict peacefully	93%	99%

In general, the measurements show a positive trend, as all indicators have improved from baseline to endline. Quantitative findings should be taken with caution, on account of the limitations mentioned in the methodology, but it is important to also note that qualitative data (from all other sources) confirm the positive trend.

In relation to the first result specifically (increased knowledge), the project clearly delivered significant positive changes. Youth leaders (young men and women), police officers and mixed security committee members followed three-day training sessions on the CGA that included modules on defining, analysing and collaboratively addressing conflicts. Tests administered to trainees before and after the training show that they increased their knowledge on conflict transformation. For police officers, trainings were carried out only after the May 2020 elections. However, they remained relevant because they represented an opportunity to analyse together all factors that contribute to misunderstandings of one another.

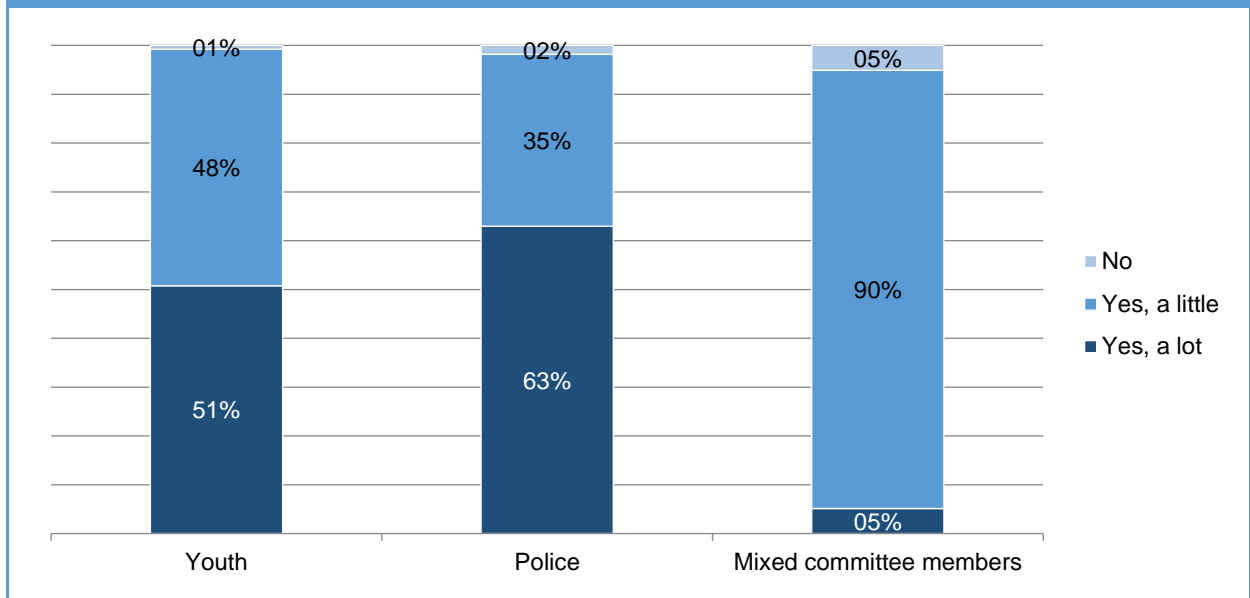
The survey confirms the positive effects of training activities, and also helps to identify differences in perspectives, which have been similarly recorded under other indicators. As the table below shows, asked about whether they felt that they had, after the project, enough

¹⁷ The questions used to measure this indicator in the baseline and endline surveys were phrased in slightly different terms.

¹⁸ Baseline measurement comes from pre-training questionnaire forms.

information on non-violent conflict resolution, nearly all respondents answered positively. This said, the most positive outlook comes from police officers (with 63% answering “yes, a lot”), while members of mixed security committees are the most cautious (with 90% answering “yes, a little”), and youth in between the two. Across other indicators, police officers have indeed provided overwhelmingly positive answers, possibly suggesting a high level of bias on the part of this group.

Table 1: Answers to the question, “Do you think that you have enough information on non-violent conflict resolution techniques to play an active role to support peacebuilding initiatives in your community?”



Since training sessions for youth leaders began in some municipalities in March 2020, when the political campaign for the elections was ongoing, Search decided to resort to political parties and CSOs to identify and invite young people, rather than turning to young people previously engaged in Search’s projects, as had originally been planned. This resulted in inclusiveness, as the lists of young participants indicate that the project managed to involve people from different political parties as well as from several CSOs, including youth and women-led ones. The same applies to the identification of youth champions supported and coached by the project: documents show their different political affiliation and background. However, while the tutoring provided by the project to youth champions appears appropriate, some raised concerns for the suspension of monthly stipends before the end of the intervention. Indeed, according to project documentation, the financial support for the majority of youth champions stopped between June and September 2021, due to budget constraints.

Trainings produced very positive changes for those young people that took part. Indeed they created awareness among young participants on the fact that not all issues need to be taken to court. Many came out of these events realizing that minor conflicts could be sorted in other, peaceful ways, for example by Local Peace Committees (LPCs), or directly by the two parties in conflict. For many young people, this realization also had the positive aspect that it would avoid spending a lot of money in the judiciary system, which most people continued to see as corrupt, and that the same money could then be used to cover other family needs. Not forgetting as well that the formal system settles cases, but does not provide reconciliation between the two parties, and that therefore it might not be sufficient to break the cycles of violent conflict. Several youth engaged in the evaluation indicated how, for them and their peers, self-defence had been replaced by reporting conflict cases to either the judiciary system, police officers or LPCs, which, in their views, has decreased negative outcomes that would be brought up by some of the actions done by the victims without reading what the law said. Importantly, police officers shared this same impression: in one locations, for example,

the interviewed officer even said that community members used not to contact them when a conflict arose, but that they now kept the police's contact numbers, and that they called them when something happens.

Trainings to police officers also produced positive changes. The project left them informed of different laws on which they could tap on when it came to reconciling parties in conflict. They have understood the rights and duties of any stakeholders involved in peacebuilding and are holding one another more accountable to his or her duty since then. According to those interviewed, most conflicts were triggered by people "like motorcyclists", who were reluctant to abide by the laws that govern the transportation sector. Police officers used to be in constant disputes with motorcyclists who would trespass the laws, intentionally and unintentionally. The trainings were an opportunity to introduce to them some of those laws.

Importantly, several informants confirmed that the trainings organized by Search for the benefit of mixed security committee members were one of a kind, as they were the first capacity building opportunities that targeted those institutions' members. And they were effective: the trainings helped committee members to know the laws they should abide by. This gave them a clearer idea of what kind of conflict cases they should deal with, and what they should refer to the justice sector. They learned listening techniques and have come to understand that both parties need to be listened, and that the listener should put himself or herself in the shoes of the one speaking.

Training for police officers and mixed security committee members were generally appreciated, but it is again important to note that they were organised only starting from September 2020, namely when the signing of the protocol with the General Inspection of the Police allowed the delivery of this activity (more on this below). These sessions and other project activities were organised, in some municipalities, in collaboration with the police-led project "*Police modèle*", which aims to improve policing services for communities across the country. The CGA capacity building was particularly appreciated by the General Inspection of the Police, which is now discussing with Search its inclusion in the official police officer training programme.

Most young people and security mixed committees interviewed for the evaluation were able to list some good examples of how trainings helped them. For instance, youth from opposition parties used to see people involved in fraudulent activities, but would not dare informing police officers because they worked for the government. Thanks to the project, this has changed and many confirmed that there now exists a space for Information sharing between youth and mixed security committees on one side, and these and the police on the other. On the side of the police, however, while officers who took part in trainings can now narrate several new tactics acquired during these activities, they also cannot articulate well instances in which they have applied some of the knowledge acquired.

Now turning to the second result, this has also been successfully achieved. Indeed, there is a consensus from all sources that this project came as a bridge that connected people with different perceptions and opinions. When speaking to young participants in particular, the view is that there used to be divergent ideas that made youth not live in harmony. These were related to how young people belong to different political parties, ethnicities and religious affiliations, and also to how they harboured a strong resentment towards police officers. Yet, they have now come to understand each other better. This also applies to understanding the differences between them, which can lead at times to different perceptions. As of now, young participants have come to understand that differences among human beings should not be an issue. As one young women who took part to the project said,

"One hand alone cannot help scratching all the parts of the body; it must be helped. One person can run mad on his own, but will never achieve self-fulfilment if not helped."

The above quote is the way in which most of the youth interviewed during the evaluation now testify the change that the project engendered. Many say that some people who used to be their enemies have become friends, ready to give their shoulders to lean on.

There are indications that this result has also affected young people beyond those trained under the project. As many of the latter saw that the sole way of deterring a conflict's negative impacts was not by fleeing it, but by acknowledging its existence and looking at its root causes, they also started to disseminate this information on different *collines*. Trained young people also started offering to freely settle conflicts without asking any payment in return.

Findings under Objective 2

The project's second objective was about dialogue and the creation of safe spaces for interaction, and the following table provides the measurements of relevant project indicators at baseline and endline.

Indicator	Baseline value	Endline value
Objective 2: Dialogue fostered between communities and police on sensitive topics, including security and the electoral process.		
% community members who report having a safe space for discussing sensitive issues with police and local officials	Not available	67%
% of community members who report that they feel comfortable interacting with the police	Not available	96%
Result 2.1. Communities (in particular young women and men) have access to inclusive, safe platforms to interact across dividing lines.		
% community members who accessed at least one platform where they safely debated on sensitive issues with other members of the community in the past 6 months	34% (Youth) 49% (Leaders) 76% (Authorities) 50% (Police)	84%
% of community members who have discussed sensitive topics with the police in a safe space in the last 6 months	40% (Youth) 51% (Leaders) 76% (Authorities) 54% (Police)	96%

Again, the measurements tend to provide a snapshot of positive change, which is corroborated by qualitative data.

The project effectively provided target groups with opportunities to meet and discuss sensitive topics by organising youth-to-youth sessions, police-mixed security committee reflection sessions and youth-led community dialogue roundtables. These represented important moments for groups that had had, until that point, limited opportunities to engage with each other. Indeed, mixed security committees have thus far proved to be lacking in ensuring the inclusion of individuals from different community groups. Interviews conducted for the project baseline study, the context analysis outlined above, and radio programmes produced within the project indicated that there was, at least at the start of the project and during its implementation, still little understanding of the mission of these committees and widespread criticism towards the conduct of some of their members, including an overrepresentation of the party in government. The project contributed to reinforcing the capacities of mixed security committees as well as to creating community awareness about their role. This is an important positive change, although not one that can still be generalized, as several observers, among them the aforementioned Commission of Inquiry (see section on context analysis) have documented the misconduct of some committee members also after the 2020 elections.

To provide further information on the positive contributions of the project, several interviews mentioned that in some areas, community members now meet weekly or monthly to discuss peace related matters, and that this has been initiated by Search's efforts. Unfortunately, it is

hard to track those actions, as groups do not have records of what they discuss or what they do. Yet, in Mabayi, members of the mixed committee shared that they used to see that bars hired teenagers (mostly girls), and therefore decided to convene a meeting together with the local administration where they took a decision that anyone below the age of 18 should not work, but rather return to school. Their decision to engage came as they saw the negative consequences of this practice, and how it contributed to gender-based violence.

Overall, the fact that committees convene to discuss security issues with a clearer understanding of what they can and cannot do, is a clear success, which is directly tied to what the project did. There are also indications that the project improved the quality of dialogue and interactions. A review of the topics raised during these meetings, for example, showed that participants have not refrained from addressing quite sensitive issues such as recent clashes between political party youth leagues and corruption of public servants.

Both members of the mixed security committees and police representatives have indicated that good collaboration currently prevails between them, and that this has served to establish a favourable environment to fight problems like drug consumption and theft. Several of the police officers interviewed for the evaluation saluted the way information sharing has improved because of the project, adding that they felt that they were not the only ones playing the role of 'watchmen, but that this was shared between different stakeholders.

According to both observers and participants, mixed security committees also used to be dominated by people from the ruling party, but attending the project activities was an opportunity for people affiliated to opposition parties to understand what the roles and responsibilities of the latter were and to request to join the committee, which previously they had not done. They now have also lobbied for obtaining a clear document that describes what the committees can and cannot do even though, according to those interviewed, this has been yet provided. In a nutshell, the mixed security committees have become inclusive by opening their doors to outsiders and people affiliated to different political parties. This said, this may vary from location to location, as in some cases the evaluation also recorded statements by others who claimed that committees were still mostly made by people from one party. In this context, the role of the local administration appears particularly important, and should be investigated further in the planning of future projects.

Findings under Objective 3

The project's third and last objective was about positive narratives of collaboration between police forces and youth, and the following table provides the measurements of relevant project indicators at baseline and endline.

Indicator	Baseline value	Endline value
Objective 3: Alternative, positive narratives of collaboration between police forces and youth are strengthened		
% of community members who perceive that police collaborates with the youth to peacefully address security issues	78%	88%
% of police members who perceive that police collaborates with youth to peacefully address security issues	93%	Indicator measured qualitatively
Result 3.1. Increased access to stories of collaboration between youth and police, challenging prevailing stereotypes and transforming mutual negative perceptions		

% of community members who can mention at least 2 stories of collaboration between police and the youth	Not available	88%
% of youth who report having a positive opinion of the police role	54%	87%

Once more, the quantitative data is generally positive, even though the picture in relation to this objective is much less complete. This is aligned with information from other sources, which confirm the high number of outputs realized by the project, but provide a more ambiguous view in relation to results.

On the positive side, the media production and broadcast and the participatory theatre offered examples of constructive interactions between different stakeholders. Speakers who intervened in the radio programme “*Iteka n’ijambo*” and the radio panel discussions “*Dusangire Ikiyago*” represented a diverse range of political affiliations and professional backgrounds and addressed a number of sensitive issues: the exclusion of opposition political parties from mixed security committees, intimidations committed by *Imbonerakure*, drug consumption and its threat to social cohesion. This was not achieved without difficulties since, in some municipalities, local authorities tried to influence the list of speakers to limit the participation of individuals from opposition political parties. Eventually journalists producing the programmes managed to avoid interferences thanks to the intervention of Search, who met with authorities and secured their collaboration.

In general, the different awareness raising activities carried out helped those who listened or participated to acknowledge that if root causes of conflicts are not deterred, they can attract issues that affect a whole community. In some instances, discussions focused for example on cases of theft, and how these were in some instances caused by drug addicts: through the activities of the project, listeners and participants were allowed to dig deeper into the issue, and look for different factors that engendered insecurity. This, in turn, dictated the choice of topics to discuss in the different formats, and in particular during the theatre performances, which were indeed attended by a large number of people.

Internal and external data suggest that the audience for both the radio programmes and the theatre performances was large. In the endline survey, for instance, respondents were asked if they had listened to “*Iteka n’ijambo*” or “*Dusangire Ikiyago*”: 52% said yes, and 48% no. This number is likely high because of the nature of the survey sample, which mostly included project participants—that is, people who are likely to have known about the radio programmes simply on account of the engagement in other project activities. This said, even accounting for a lower rate, this would remain generally positive.

On the less positive side, monitoring visits carried out by Search during the implementation of the project highlighted that the radio programmes were reaching fewer listeners than expected. In order to increase the audience, radio programmes were also shared on social networks (Facebook et Twitter) and via the WhatsApp groups gathering youth champions. Furthermore, other local radios, in addition to the ones partnering on the project, were engaged to broadcast programmes and spots as they found them interesting for their listeners. The evaluation could not, however, assess the full reach of these efforts.

Challenges

While the results were largely achieved, the project also encountered several challenges, which affected its implementation. The main among these are related to the engagement of police officers and women’s participation in project activities.

Due to the electoral period, the signature of the protocol with the General Inspection of the Police took much more time than expected. Although Search staff tried to formalise the collaboration with the police since the project’s inception phase, they were informed that this would be possible only after the elections. Eventually, the protocol was finally signed in mid-September 2020, almost one year after the project started. As a result, activities involving

police officers were postponed until after that time. Similarly, in some provinces and municipalities, local authorities proved reluctant to cooperate with Search in the initial stage of the project because elections were approaching and they wanted to avoid any interference.

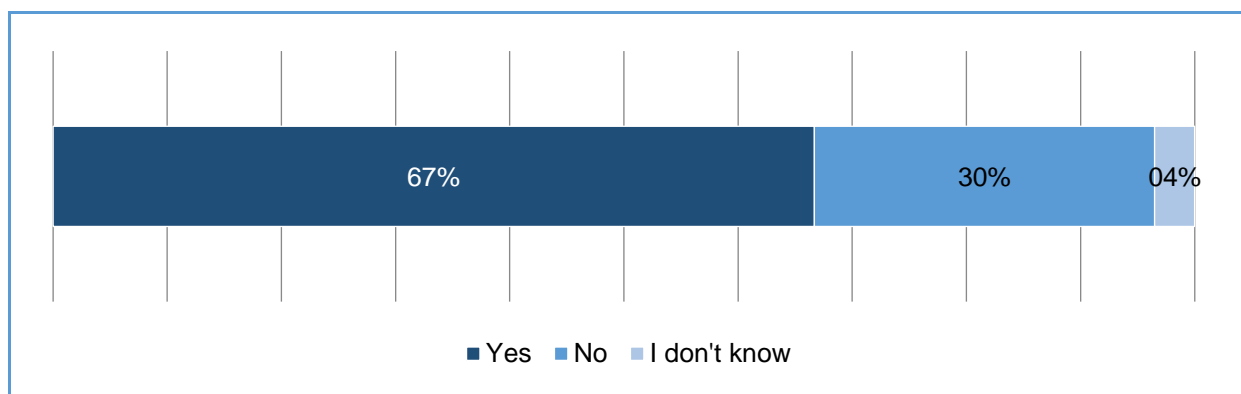
Engaging police officers remained a difficult aspect of the project even after the signing of the protocol. This appears to have been due to the nature of the police force, which has a very hierarchical and centralized structure that required several authorizations before individual police officers could commit to taking part in project activities. For instance, the presence of police officers during theatre performances was extremely limited. According to some informants, this was also due to the fact that the reimbursement of transportation fee was not provided. Furthermore, while young participants interviewed for the evaluation have been quick to offer many instances of collaboration among youth of different political affiliations, police representatives have aired much fewer.

Moving to the participation of women in the project, this is an aspect that warrants further investigation. On the one side, in fact, it is clear that women's participation was low, particularly among police officers and mixed security committee members, which is definitely connected to the limited representation of women in these groups. There were also shortcomings in other project activities: for instance, the evaluation found that among women only, those who responded yes to having listened to "*Iteka n'ijambo*" or "*Dusangire Ikiyago*" were only 33%, while 67% said that they had not listened. Similarly, the inclusion of women was also limited among the programmes' speakers.

This said, data collected during the evaluation suggest that, on the contrary, the attention to women's voices was not a problem. In the survey, for example, in most questions, the answers provided by men and women are about the same. For example, asked whether they felt that they had become successful at influencing decisions (related to peace and security) in their community during the past six months, 87% of young male respondents said yes, compared to 89% for young female respondents. The discrepancy in the data suggests that, while there are specific gender dynamics at play (as indicated by the difficulty in achieving gender parity), the evaluation was not able to fully capture them. Search should definitely invest in this as it plans future projects.

A challenge was also recorded in relation to how the project sought to promote inclusion. As mentioned above, in general this was done successfully, but there are indications that there were also several blind spots. For instance, different activities carried out in the project have tried to bring together different target groups, with divergent political affiliations and ideas, to acknowledge that what they had in common was far more than what they did not have. However, some informants noted that the training events in particular were attended by a majority of people from the ruling party, whereas individuals coming from opposition parties were less represented. This was confirmed also through the survey, where respondents were asked whether they felt that youth from all political backgrounds were included and involved in initiatives relating to peace and security. The table below shows the responses to this question, highlighting how, while overall responses were positive, there can still be room for improvement.

Table 2: Answers to the question, "Do you feel that youths from all political backgrounds are included and involved in initiatives relating to peace and security?"



There were also challenges around media dissemination. First, Search relied on Humuriza FM as an entry point to reach a large audience in the project’s geographical scope. There are indications, however, that broadcasting many different radio outputs that targeted different stakeholders was not effective, since these were at times aired when the targeted audience was not available to listen in. Additionally, some informants indicated that those who listened found that the subject discussed was not relevant to them. In the future, there could be a way to develop different programmes that accommodate different subjects, then keenly choose the time slots that suit the target groups. Still on this front, the evaluation noted how, while Search normally collects feedback on their programmes, so that they can know where to improve, other radio partners do not do this, perhaps out of fear that, should they find programmes not to be relevant to the communities, their contract will be terminated. This makes it difficult to have reliable information about reach.

Lastly, more efforts could have been done to share information about decisions made under the project. In particular, according to informants, there have been complaints on the identification process for participants—something that can indeed be expected, given the animosity that exists among political parties in the country. Yet, the project did not set up a complaints and feedback mechanisms (CFM), which would have helped to collect some of these complaints and to provide appropriate answers in due time and with transparency. This is something that needs to be changed, and is further elaborated in the recommendations section.

Impact

Under this criterion, the evaluation sought to assess, first, whether there was evidence of the project contributing to the state goal, which was to strengthen trust and positive relationships between youth and police to prevent violence during the 2020 electoral cycle in Burundi; and, secondly, if the project’s theory of change, as described in the project’s original proposal, can be validated.

To begin with, we provide a table summarizing the measurements of goal-level indicators at baseline and endline.

Indicator	Baseline value	Endline value
Overall objective: Strengthen trust and positive relationships between youth and police to prevent violence during the 2020 electoral cycle in Burundi		
% of young women and young men who report that young people trust the police	55%	90%
% of community members who agree or strongly agree with the statement: “the relationship between the police and young people is positive”	79%	93% (all) 84% (youth)

% of police officers who report that the cooperation between police and young people is good or very good	93%	Indicator measured qualitatively
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These data, broad as they may be, suggest a positive change also at this level, which is further supported by both internal data collected by the Search staff during monitoring missions carried out in September 2021 in some provinces—where young people, police officers and mixed security committee members affirmed that their relations improved as a result of the project—and by the data collected for the evaluation.

Community dialogues appear in particular to have helped some people to open their minds and change their behaviour. Several people interviewed claimed, in fact, that the dialogues were an opportunity of self-evaluation and decision-making, as they led some people to “divorce with their bad habits.” Moments where people could even apologise in the public were experienced. As one individual, a youth participant said,

“Nothing was more rewarding in the community dialogues than to see some local authorities who used to be corrupt deciding to speak the truth while settling conflict cases.”

Clearly, those who took part in the project offer a very positive appraisal of the change in the relationship between youth and police. All data confirm that, as young people increased their understanding of police officers’ role, they started to collaborate by informing them of any threat to security at the local level. This shift, which is clearly visible in the survey data, was particularly prominent for young people and perhaps less so—albeit still positive—for police officers. Although securing the collaboration with the latter was at first challenging, participating police officers have shown great interest in the project. This is exemplified by the joint organisation of some activities within the framework of the “*Police modèle*” project. It is also reflected in the following quote:

“Acquiring knowledge on human rights and roles and duties of one another has made us not flee when we see police officers coming to arrest one of us, but we rather ask for the official paper that describes the reason of the arrest.”

The project positively shifted some patterns of collaboration between different groups of people, which opened up a space for information sharing, in particular between youth and the mixed security committees on one side, and mixed security committees and the police on the other. For instance, young participants from opposition parties used to see people involved in fraudulent activities, but could not dare informing police officers because they felt that they worked for the government—a government that they were not part of. As noted by one young person, a member of the party in government, youth members of the ruling party used indeed to see themselves above the law, but he and his peers now understood that every person must pay for his fault.

This change is likely also the result of positive factors external to the project. This is aligned with the survey results, already quite positive at baseline, and also with the context analysis—both of which suggest that positive shifts, in the relationships between different groups, had already started to take place in the years after the 2015 elections and the start of the project. During this time, for instance, the government has of its own contributed towards investing in youth as agents of change, rather than seeing them only as troublemakers. This said, the evidence also suggests that the project made its contribution to this trend, as reflected in the following quote by a young participant:

“I used to be the leader of the Imbonerakure. I was perceived as a terror to people affiliated to other political parties who could not dare stepping where I am. When the project started, I was targeted among youth, whereby I got the opportunity to have a frank discussion with those who used to fear me. They understood that I had gotten a very bad reputation from people who kept on disseminating false information on what I was capable of in terms of atrocities. I am thankful to the project as it has contributed to my re-integration in the community as I regained trust from those who used to fear me.”

At this level there were also several challenges recorded, in particular with the implementation of the joint peace initiatives and also in the collaboration with the police.

First, the actual implementation of joint peace initiatives appears loosely connected to the result they aimed to achieve. At project design, these initiatives were conceived as a way to involve youth, police and mixed security committees in the planning and realisation of cooperative actions responding to issues emerged during roundtables. During the implementation phase, these initiatives then turned into income generating activities (mostly farming and livestock activities) to be realised by young people under the supervision of *comités de pilotage* gathering police and security committee members, notably local authorities. As a result, the original collaborative and dialogue-oriented nature of such initiatives appears overshadowed by the main focus on youth and economic empowerment. These initiatives provide young people with opportunities to meet and cooperate around shared economic interests. However, such collaboration is meant to focus on income generating activities, rather than directly on community sensitive issues, and police and security committee members are involved only to a limited extent. Furthermore, these economic initiatives raise questions about their sustainability as they were initiated in the last quarter of the project and are expected to continue after its conclusion.

Secondly, engaging police officers was significantly delayed because of the elections, as indeed this has already been discussed. At the level of effectiveness, also as already discussed, this did not stop the project from successfully engaging police officers. At the level of impact, however, this means that the changes witnessed among police are qualitatively different than those seen among young people.

Indeed, to better understand the findings under impact, it is useful to turn to the project's theory of change, which the evaluation indeed sought to assess. The theory of change for the "*Tubiri Tuvurana Ubupfu*" project is the following:

"IF young men and women, and police officers have the capacities and the opportunities to engage each other in a constructive manner; and IF communities have access to examples of positive relations between civilians and the police, and to platforms where they can engage in significant and inclusive discussions on sensitive issues; THEN communities will be more resistant to violence during the electoral period, BECAUSE young people and police officers will have developed the necessary confidence to resolve tensions through dialogue".

As stated above, and as indicated in the interviews with programme staff, the project was indeed based on a clear logic, which is also reflected in its logical framework. Yet, it is useful, to better understand how and why the project's success and limitations, to run a closer inspection, looking, first, at the results' domains of change and then at its main causal mechanisms.

The domains of change are the levels at which intended changes are being promoted, and in the case of the "*Tubiri Tuvurana Ubupfu*" project these can be defined as three: individual, relational and community. The individual domain refers to changes to people's knowledge and competencies. Interestingly, these were, at one level, the same across all target groups: young people, participating police officers and members of the mixed security committees were all expected to learn how to dialogue effectively, through the trainings on the CGA approach. Then, on a second, level, changes also differed, with youth in particular being expected to gain more skills, for example around leadership and community engagement. The relational domain then refers to how young people and police officers were brought together with the expectations that these meetings would strengthen their relations, and thus positively affect the tensions between them. Changes at the community level refer, instead, to the specific attitudes and practices of members of the security committees and how they engaged youth, police and community members. The analysis of project documents and interviews suggests that there is a clear relation between these three levels: namely, the project saw individual changes as a necessary precondition to trigger and sustain relational and then community-

level changes.

Turning now to an analysis of causal mechanisms, these are combinations of agents, actions and results, which are assumed to be necessary and sufficient to move towards an agreed goal. Based on all information collected, the project's logic can be said to feature three main mechanisms.

First, thanks to the project, youth claim agency on peace and security. Trained young people occupy, in very concrete (i.e. physical) terms, spaces where they had not been present before, including in the community (by organizing meetings, campaigns and events) and in specific decision-making bodies, like the mixed security committees.

Secondly, police officers adopt more inclusive practices in the implementation of their assigned duties and tasks. This change is very simply about how police officers do their work, as measured in the number of times they engage specific groups, namely young people, and take part in community-based bodies like the mixed security committees.

Thirdly, communities embrace more inclusive approaches to peace and security. This mechanism is in part seen as resulting from the previous two, and also from the media components of the project, whereby thanks to the alternative and more positive narratives, community members are also expected to become less confrontational and more able to use dialogue.

This logic is coherent with Search's overall approach to peacebuilding, which starts with the engagement of different groups separately, and then focuses on bringing them together, with media acting as a catalyst for positive models. This is an approach that Search has used in the past, in Burundi and other countries, and it has proven effective. Indeed, the findings of this evaluation also suggest that it is an effective approach. Yet, there is also evidence that suggests that the theory of change needs to be reviewed, in particular around the second causal mechanism.

Starting with the first causal mechanism, it is clear that the project successfully increased young people's agency and that this in turn led to tangible impact—in line, indeed, with what the project's theory of change expected. All data, quantitative and qualitative, indicate that those young people who took part in trainings gained skills, which they put in use to re-shape their role in communities. Young people have increased their confidence and leadership, and this led to benefits both at the relational level, with other young people, and with police officers, and, albeit perhaps to a lesser extent, also at the community level. This first causal mechanism can, as such, be validated.

The second mechanism has also produced positive changes, but its contribution to impact is less clear. Here, the evidence suggests that while Search's efforts have been successful at the individual level—that is, in engaging individual police officers—success has yet to be achieved at the institutional level. Indeed, the evaluation has produced evidence of closer ties with the police force, but not of changes to the latter's policies or practices. Seeing these changes might just be a matter of time, but it is also worth noting how, in the project's current theory of change, there is little attention given to changes at the institutional level. Logically, however, it makes sense to think that, given the hierarchical and centralized nature of the police force, changes in how individual police officers work can come about only after changes in the general rules and guidelines, at the level of the Police department if not even the Ministry of the Interior. These changes should be included in the theories of change for future projects.

Lastly, the third mechanism has also produced some positive changes, yet there is currently not enough data to assess its contribution to impact. Positive models have been disseminated and there is evidence to suggest that some mixed security committees are now working more effectively thanks to the project. However, the evidence remains limited on account of the limitations of scope and time. In the future it could be useful to conduct a study focusing specifically on how the committees are operating, and what factors contribute to more

inclusive practices towards security.

Sustainability

Lastly, under this criterion the evaluation looked at the extent to which achieved results will continue to remain in place after the end of the project. The project presents several elements of sustainability.

First of all, the project appears to have secured the increased capacity of police and youth to address conflicts in their communities through the support to youth champions and the training of police trainers on CGA, though with some limitations.

Interviews highlighted that youth champions are continuing to act as mediators within their communities and their behaviour is seen as a good example to their peers. In some localities, youth's contribution to peacebuilding did not go unnoticed by the local administration that involves them whenever community members are called for a meeting. Furthermore, in some municipalities, the national institution of the ombudsman chose some youth champions as community leaders to support its duty to investigate violations of civil rights by state officials at the local level. This recognition of the role of youth champions occurred despite the financial support provided to them by the project stopped before the end of the intervention. Indeed, due to budget constraints, the monthly stipends were suspended for the majority of youth champions between June and September 2021.

The delivery of Training of Trainers (ToT) on the CGA to police officers was found to be conducive to strengthening the capacities of the police force in this field through the replication of training sessions. While for training for youth leaders, the ToT targeted professionals with prior experience in conflict transformation, for CGA sessions for police and mixed security committees it was decided to deliver the ToT to 12 police officers, 10 men and 2 women. Moreover, as mentioned above, the police are currently considering integrating the CGA modules in their training programme for police officers and are discussing the issue with Search. This appears even very appropriate since police officers are moved every year to new duty stations and new ones are brought into their former locations for replacement. This means that the newcomers come with their own attitudes and chances are high that they were not trained, which would compromise the peaceful collaboration between young people and police officers achieved by the project.

By strengthening the police's abilities on conflict transformation, the project also contributed to the institutionalisation of community policing, a model that has been promoted in the country since the Arusha Agreement. Indeed, trainings on CGA and roundtables made the police force closer to communities and laid the ground for their increased collaboration on security issues. This is well exemplified by the already mentioned improvement related to information sharing between police and community members, which is key in ensuring mutual accountability and respect.

Elements related to the creation of positive narratives of collaboration between police forces and youth are likely to remain in place after the end of the project. The partnership of Search with partner radio stations covered only a certain period with an agreement of broadcasting several programmes: with the end of the project, these have now stopped. However, some of the programmes that partner radios are developing for future broadcasting have been inspired from some of those aired under the project. This means that the project leaves a legacy in terms of contents. That said, an exit plan would help define how to scale up some of the premises brought by the project. As an instance, some people asked that programmes be re-broadcast: an exit plan would give orientation on how some of these demands could be met at (and beyond) the end of the project.

Participatory theatre performances were highly appreciated by the public who consistently confirmed that they portrayed real life problems. In the wake of this success, theatre groups were created by young people in some communities with the aim of scripting and performing

other plays on topics relevant to communities. This will ensure that constructive results achieved by the participatory theatre in terms of alternative narratives and awareness raising are maintained also when the project comes to an end.

More problematic appears the sustainability of results related to dialogues on sensitive issues between youth, police, mixed security committee members and communities at large. Indeed, spaces for dialogue provided by the project—such as reflection sessions and roundtables—will not remain in place after the intervention, while the ability of mixed security committees to take over this legacy is questionable. Although the project has worked to strengthen the capacities of committee members, as well as the community understanding of their role, the committees present in fact some shortcomings in terms of inclusiveness of stakeholders from different political affiliations since the government party is overrepresented.

In this respect, moreover, it is important to note that joint peace initiatives do not offer significant spaces for community debate and collaboration involving all the groups targeted by the project, since their implementation is primarily assigned to young people. Though members of local authorities and the police force are expected to supervise and support these actions, notably through their involvement in the *comités de pilotage*, there are no indications that these will provide actual opportunities for dialogue. Additionally, joint peace initiatives were launched at the end of project implementation and are supposed to continue after its conclusion without any form of accompaniment from the project.

Lessons learned

On the basis of the findings described in the previous section, a number of lessons learned can be identified, some of which will undoubtedly confirm that many in the organization already know, or sense, and others that are perhaps new and can lead to further reflections. These include the following:

- Work with the media is important, but their capacity needs to be strengthened. The collaboration with partner radios exposed the limited capacity of journalists to cover sensitive issues and chair debates involving speakers addressing topics from opposite standpoints.
- Projects must account for resistance from authorities. Collaborating with local authorities was difficult in a few cases, particularly during the electoral period. In some cases, representatives of provincial and municipal administrations tried to interfere with project activities especially when it came to identifying participants in training sessions and radio programmes. This highlights the reluctance existing among politicians towards the democratisation of the political arena, although important improvements took place since the 2020 elections as regards media and the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, and expression.¹⁹
- Youth champions, as defined by the project, can be counted on to act as multipliers. Compared to other youths, champions can be a powerful weapon ready to air their thinking without worrying on who will hear about it.
- A ToT model cannot be expected to work with authorities as with other target groups. While effective with youth participants, this approach has not proved to be working as effectively as reported by police and security committee members.
- Gender mainstreaming starts with equal representation. Search was not strict on equal representation of women and men, which led the local administration to mostly target men as for them security matters concerned mostly men. This limited the contributions of women to project activities, although it should be acknowledged that the project's

¹⁹ Fourth report of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, 2021.

target institutions are generally male-dominated to begin with. In the future, there should be modules customized to women's specific needs and situations.

- Intervening on local sources of conflict, acknowledging that these may vary, is an effective and quick way to build trust. By localizing activities, the project was able to promote discussions around issues to which community members could easily relate. These were not only related to electoral violence, but also to theft and drug consumption, for example. Yet, this strategy was effective and important in ensuring buy-in from communities, and could still be improved. In some locations in Burundi, in fact, addressing violent conflict means addressing displacement, and in the future this could be a topic of particular resonance for young and old Burundians alike.
- Harness the power of volunteerism. In some areas, youths have understood that to cement the social cohesiveness initiated by the project they need to give back to their communities by doing some voluntary actions, like visiting jailed people, buying insurance cards to the most vulnerable, assisting people admitted in hospitals, etc.

Conclusions and recommendations

The “*Tubiri Tuvurana Ubupfu*” project was specifically designed to address dynamics—related to youth grievances around the electoral process—which had been a source of violence in the past. Indeed, what happened in Burundi on the occasion of the 2015 elections remains a stark reminder of how marginalization, human rights violations and violent narratives, if left unchecked, can lead to unimaginable suffering. Responding to clearly identified needs on the part of young people made the project, as such, extremely relevant, something to be noted even through relevance was not a focus criterion for the evaluation. This is something worth highlighting also because the needs continue to be there, which justifies continuous engagement on the part of donors, Search, its partners and other civil society organizations working for sustainable peace in the country.

Starting from this point, the evaluation confirms the effectiveness of the project, and also identifies positive elements relating to its impact and sustainability. On effectiveness, the highlight remains the work with young people, which led not just to increases in skills and knowledge, but also in confidence and community participation. At the impact level, relationships between participating youth and police officers clearly improved, as did those between youth from different political affiliations. And under sustainability, the evaluation once again identified positive findings in relation to youth specifically, whereby the mobilization engendered by the project will likely continue after the end of the project.

This said, there are two challenges worth highlighting. The first relates to the engagement of police officers, which was different than that of young people, for reasons outside of Search's control, but nonetheless significant for impact and sustainability. Work with the police started late and remained difficult in terms of their buy-in, throughout the project's implementation period. The second challenge relates to the participation of women. The project was not able to reach gender parity across several activities, primarily because the institutions it targeted, the mixed security committees and the police force, are male-dominated. Yet, data about the gendered dynamics of youth participation are complex, and more should be done on this front to build a more effective gender-sensitive approach.

On the basis of the evaluation's findings, the following recommendations are therefore offered:

To the donor:

- **Continue supporting work advancing community-based security approaches.** The project's experience is that these approaches respond to a clear need. It will be important to ensure that they are as inclusive as possible, and that they respond to communities' priorities and concerns, including around peace and justice, and from

this point of view efforts can be improved. Yet, first and foremost, there should be resources, both financial and political, to continue this work. In this respect, the involvement of police and local authorities in conflict transformation endeavours may play a crucial role and should be further supported.

- **Facilitate engagement with central institutions.** The project could have benefitted from closer buy-in from the Ministry of Interior and the Police Force, yet organizations like Search can find it difficult to overcome resistance to engagement. Donors, however, can provide some leverage and, always in the spirit of mutual cooperation, could support efforts to engage high-level officials.

To Search:

- **Extend the action to other municipalities and provinces across the country.** Several project participants and stakeholders suggested to extend the action to other municipalities and provinces where the need for improving dialogue and collaboration between the police force, youth and local authorities is huge. The interest in the project is confirmed also by the request expressed from certain local radios not partnering on the action to broadcast radio programmes produced by the project because of the relevance of topics therein addressed.
- **Keep engaging police and mixed security committees in capacity building and dialogue.** The “*Tubiri Tuvurana Ubupfu*” project is the first intervention addressing police and mixed security committee members as target groups together with young people. Different sources indicate that the existing safe places for dialogue and reconciliation need to be reinforced and made more inclusive. To do this, Search should focus on increasing the participation of women and of young people from parties in opposition, but focusing less on trainings and dialogue opportunities (which are about engaging those already engaged), and more on advocacy and networking. Search could, for instance, work more formally with political parties, engaging not only their members, but also their leaders and pushing them to issue joint declarations on sensitive issues. Bringing together different CSOs working on community policing—or peace and justice more broadly—in the country might also be a way to create a stronger constituency for change.
- **Support the capacity building of media professionals.** Journalists and media professionals continue to lack the competencies to tackle sensitive issues, to conduct interviews and debates involving different stakeholders, and to identify topics of interest. Listeners, it was noted, often found that subjects discussed during radio programs were not relevant to them. More work could be done to increase their skills especially in a context like the Burundian one where media outlets have been highly affected by restrictions to the democratic public space but have also played a role in political polarisation. Search has expressed its intention to involve some of the professionals targeted by this project in another action they are currently implementing, the “Let’s talk” project, that aims at fostering an enriched information landscape in Burundi. This is certainly a positive initiative, but more steps appear to be needed in this respect.
- **Strengthen gender-mainstreaming actions.** More should be done to ensure equal participation of women, and also their empowerment. However, the data on this is ambiguous, and for this reason the main recommendation is that Search invests in an in-depth study of the gendered dynamics of political participation, with a focus on the local and community levels. Such a study could look at the question of why are women less represented in mixed security committees; and what are the specific barriers that prevent young women to participate in party politics the same way that they male counterparts do. This is essential information for all future endeavours.

- **Increase consultations and feedback mechanisms.** Search should establish formal channels to collect feedback (including complaints) on their intervention, which can serve for strengthening their accountability work and also constitute a rich source of learning for the organization. Also, to promote transparency and inclusion, future projects should include validation sessions together with community members, which can help to inform different stakeholders about the nature of activities and how decision-making processes, for example around the selection of participants, will be managed. The combination of the feedback mechanisms and consultations should strengthen community ownership and participation.
- **Review and make more use of the theory of change.** The evaluation found that the theory of change can be improved, especially in addressing the need to engage police officers differently (at both local and central levels). For the next iteration of the project, Search should plan to hold a theory of change development workshop, or a similar event that can allow staff and key stakeholders to engage on defining an accurate logic of change, which can also take into account the external factors that might affect implementation. Monitoring and evaluation efforts should then be built to use this theory of change. This could be done by ensuring that, in regular reflection sessions, monitoring data is discussed in direct relation to the different causal mechanisms behind the theory. This could also help to make timely adaptations to the implementation of future activities.