



Integrated Country Strategy

Burundi

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

The United States has maintained relations with Burundi, a small, densely populated, and chronically impoverished country in Central Africa, since shortly after its independence in 1962. Today, we remain committed to supporting sustainable peace, economic development, and improved governance for all Burundians.

For most of its post-independence history, Burundi has experienced authoritarian rule, political transitions via military coup, ethnic-based mass killings, discriminatory educational and opportunity policies, and large-scale population displacements. These and other historical factors, including pervasive social, criminal and political violence, have created and exacerbated divisions within Burundian society. In addition, the gap between urbanized Burundians with Westernized educations and the 90 percent who live day to day as marginally subsisting farmers, largely isolated from international influence, remains vast.

Burundi's emergence in 2005, with regional and international support, from over a decade of bloody civil war, inaugurated a period of increased political freedoms, and the development of a small but vocal civil society. However, tensions and violence related to the 2010 and especially the 2015 elections reversed Burundi's positive trajectory. The opposition's withdrawal from 2010 elections opened the door to overwhelming parliamentary dominance by the ruling party; the President's decision to stand for a controversial third term in 2015, and the attempted coup that followed, led to the severe political and security crisis, as well as the mass exodus of political and economic refugees, from which Burundi continues to recover.

Even as Burundi's security landscape has stabilized significantly since 2016, Burundi remains a divided society with zero-sum political calculations. The lack of a private sector of any significance has meant the political party in power largely monopolizes patronage and rent-seeking opportunities, public sector jobs, and corruption. Lack of economic opportunity combined with rapid demographic growth and insufficient, increasingly degraded plots of land have increased land conflicts (the largest cause of murder in Burundi) and contributed to high levels of youth unemployment and increased participation in violent political and criminal activities. Many of Burundi's governmental institutions, including those in support of the rule of law, remain weak and politicized, while structural violence and human rights violations have contributed to grievances. Burundi's planned national and local elections in 2020 provide an opportunity to consolidate democratic institutions and improve space for political competition, while President Nkurunziza's declared intention to step down in 2020 would create a positive example of the peaceful transfer of power.

Breaking Burundi's cycles of violence requires attention to underlying economic and governance deficits that contribute to them, through diplomatic engagement and programs

alike. In order to expand access to resources and create opportunity, we will support Burundi's efforts to transition from subsistence farming to a market economy, strengthen public sector institutions, develop a broad-based private sector, and develop strong economic linkages with its neighbors. We will also work to help create conditions that enable free and fair political competition and address human rights shortcomings to help break the link between violence and politics.

We will also continue to collaborate with Burundians to address critical development needs. To help facilitate nutritional sufficiency and adequate health for the vast, undernourished majority of Burundians, we will continue to provide emergency nutritional assistance while seeking long-term solutions, including helping to improve agricultural productivity, supporting the development of a market economy, and working with young Burundians in particular to build a culture and practice of entrepreneurship. We will also continue our partnership with Burundi to combat HIV/AIDS and malaria, while supporting the development of Burundi's health systems. Through these efforts, we seek not just to provide assistance for basic needs but to develop the country's capacity and resilience to address health challenges.

Burundi lies at the heart of the Great Lakes region, leaving it vulnerable to the transit of armed groups, extremist organizations, and illicit goods. Prudent responses to these issues must include carefully modulated efforts to increase the capacity and professionalism of Burundian institutions to address these threats. The country has also been a contributor to peacekeeping missions, including the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). We will support Burundi's capacity to continue engaging in peace stabilization missions in full compliance with international standards, particularly regarding human rights.

Burundi's turbulent history underscores the need for flexibility, adaptability, and resilience. We will regularly review our efforts and conditions in the country, tailoring our efforts to the opportunities and challenges that arise. As we work in the short term to advance our goals, we must also acknowledge that Burundi's development and redressing the economic and governance factors that have contributed to conflict are long term projects. We may face setbacks that would limit our ability to make progress in the short term: an increase in tension and violence; natural disasters that disrupt agricultural productivity and displace Burundians; and pandemic diseases that could worsen health and impact economic productivity. Such risks may affect how we pursue our goals, but we will remain focused on supporting a Burundi in which citizens benefit from stability, good governance, and economic opportunity.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Address underlying drivers of conflict that make Burundi vulnerable to instability, including lack of economic opportunity as well as social divisions, governance and human rights challenges.

Mission Objective 1.1: Burundi takes steps to develop a broad-based private sector and complementary measures to promote youth employment and alternatives to subsistence agriculture.

Mission Objective 1.2: Elections in 2020 feature peaceful, free, fair, inclusive, and transparent political competition.

Mission Objective 1.3: Burundian understanding of and transparent adherence to international human rights standards and the rule of law increases.

Mission Objective 1.4: Burundi remains a welcoming host for refugees and creates an enabling environment for the successful reintegration of returning Burundian refugees and internally displaced persons.

Mission Goal 2: Advance a level of sustainable development that places Burundi on the path to self-reliance while continuing to address its people's urgent humanitarian needs.

Mission Objective 2.1: The nutritional status of Burundians is improved by raising agricultural productivity and strengthening agricultural and other markets.

Mission Objective 2.2 : The health of Burundians and refugees is improved as Burundi's health system makes demonstrable and measurable progress towards self-reliance.

Mission Goal 3: Develop Burundi's capacity to contribute to peace and security in the Great Lakes region and East Africa.

Mission Objective 3.1: The capacity of Burundian institutions to contribute to peacekeeping missions, combat regional terrorist groups, and address other transnational threats is increased.

Management Objective 1: The Embassy's staffing is adequate for assessed policy, program, and security requirements.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1: Address underlying drivers of conflict that make Burundi vulnerable to instability, including lack of economic opportunity as well as social divisions, governance, and human rights challenges.

Description and Linkages: Since independence, Burundi has been vulnerable to cyclical outbreaks of violence that contribute to humanitarian crises and delay the country's developments. This vulnerability is underpinned by a wide array of economic, political, and social factors that drive risks of conflict recurrence in the future. The Burundian people must take the lead in meeting these challenges, but the United States and other international partners can assist in this effort. A reduction in conflict risks is necessary to provide the stability and confidence necessary for Burundians and their partners to advance the country's development. This goal directly contributes to achieving the Department of State/USAID Africa Joint Regional Strategy's Goal 3, "Strengthen Democracy, Human Rights, and Good Governance," as well as Goal 1, "Advance Mutual Peace and Security Interests."

Mission Objective 1.1: Burundi takes steps to develop a broad-based private sector and complementary measures to promote youth employment and alternatives to subsistence agriculture.

Justification: One of the main drivers of conflict and instability in Burundi is the lack of economic opportunity, especially for youth, the result of the chronic underdevelopment compounded by an economic downturn and investor flight that followed the 2015 political crisis. Unemployed and desperately poor youth are easily manipulated by political actors and others to become involved in conflict and violence. Also, as long as the government remains virtually the only source of employment or hard currency, access to governmental power and connections to the ruling party will remain life-and-death issues for many Burundians.

MO 1.1 will address the economic drivers of this cycle on three levels. First, using public and private media, it will promote open discussion of the fundamental economic problems facing Burundi. Key interventions will include the professionalization of the media sector, focusing on more and better reporting on local economic issues, coupled with policy engagement with the Government of Burundi. Second, sectoral programs in coffee will aim to increase the country's export earnings while increasing the welfare of the 3,000,000 Burundians that derive all or part of their income from coffee production. Regional trade programs will support the development of other value chains for export, such as palm oil, fruit, and fish. Finally, we will continue to support entrepreneurial and job training for youth from all backgrounds, incorporating reconciliation and dialogue, and continue to facilitate the provision of secure land titles to rural households -- encouraging farm-level investment and reducing conflict over land ownership. Risks to achieving this objective include continued stagnant economic growth and macroeconomic policies that are not favorable to investment.

Mission Objective 1.2: Elections in 2020 feature peaceful, free, fair, inclusive, and transparent political competition.

Justification: Burundi has experienced increased tensions and election-related violence repeatedly throughout its history. A run-up to 2020 elections and the vote itself that are peaceful, free, fair, inclusive, and transparent in 2020 would set a positive precedent to reduce the drivers of conflict in Burundi. USG efforts will focus on empowering citizens to focus on policy issues rather than historically rooted fears and enhancing access to unbiased economic information through media professionalization. By supporting Burundian efforts to ensure peaceful, free, and fair 2020 elections, we enhance local capacity to maintain peace and stability. Up to now, the media environment has often featured ad hominem attacks and mutually contradictory political narratives rather than focusing readers on pragmatic, concrete issues at stake in elections. Improving media professionalization and raising understanding and expectations regarding Burundi's economy can contribute to reduced tension during the election period. Risks to achieving this objective include the possibility for failure of Burundian parties to agree to the conditions under which elections should take place and the potential for election-related violence and human rights violations to undermine the electoral process.

Mission Objective 1.3: Burundian understanding of and transparent adherence to international human rights standards and the rule of law increases.

Justification: Human rights violations in Burundi extend back decades and grievances related to abuses contribute to recurrent violence and increase divisions within society. These challenges both contribute to and reflect instability and lack of economic opportunity in the country. The U.S. government will support efforts to address these issues by continuing diplomatic engagement on human rights issues and by supporting the operationalization of Burundi's framework for combating trafficking in persons. We will also support local efforts to reduce the use of violence as a means of advancing political interests or addressing societal divisions. Risks to achieving this objective include the continued mistrust between the Government of Burundi and international partners, as well as the potential for lack of will by the Government of Burundi to take necessary steps to re-engage with international institutions on human rights or to implement the country's counter-TIP law.

Mission Objective 1.4: Burundi remains a welcoming host for refugees and creates an enabling environment for the successful voluntary return and reintegration of Burundian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Justification: Addressing Burundi's food insecurity and strengthening the economy will help reduce conflict and enhance the reintegration of returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Burundi currently hosts over 63,000 Congolese refugees and has 176,000 IDPs, exacerbating the availability of scarce food, land, and water resources. Existing refugee camps are at full capacity and struggling to meet the basic needs of their inhabitants. More than 430,000 Burundian refugees have fled to neighboring countries in response to recurring cycles of violence and natural disaster dating back to independence. In response to increased domestic stability and diminishing food rations in Tanzania camps, nearly 24,000 refugees returned in 2017, with 72,000 more planned for 2018. The Burundian government is woefully unequipped to meet the needs of returning refugees, and an increase in the influx of returnees could further exacerbate land-based conflicts and political tensions. Moreover, continuing political unrest in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is likely to increase the refugee population in Burundi.

The Mission will continue to improve, mainstream, and sustain critical services into local systems, enabling the Burundian government and international partners to support crisis-affected households and communities in targeted areas to meet their basic food, shelter, and protection needs. Activities under this objective will focus on emergency food and non-food item assistance, and strengthening Burundi's community management of acute malnutrition. Risks to achieving this objective include the potential for a recurrence of violence or poor harvests to increase refugee flows and the potential for tensions between returnees and their communities.

Mission Goal 2: Advance a level of sustainable development that places Burundi on the path to self-reliance while continuing to address its urgent humanitarian needs.

Description and Linkages: The Mission's policy priorities are centered on reducing poverty—one of the main drivers of conflict, instability, and violence. Burundi's ability to achieve stability and economic growth is dependent upon improving the lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable Burundians. Specifically, food security and health status are paramount to sustainable development. While Mission Goal 1 lays the foundation for economic growth and development, Mission Goal 2 will address important development gaps and ensure that the country's urgent humanitarian and health needs are met. The Mission's approach will focus on the interdependent factors driving poverty and strive for increased sustainability of development outcomes, thereby aligning it with USAID's goal of achieving self-reliance. This goal and its objectives directly contribute to achieving the Department of State/USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa's Goal 4, "Promote Inclusive Country-led Development," as well as its objectives 4.3, "Sustainably Reduce Hunger, Malnutrition, and Poverty in sub-Saharan Africa," and 4.1, "Transform African Health Systems to Accelerate Reductions in Mortality."

Mission Objective 2.1: The nutritional status of Burundians is improved by raising agricultural productivity and strengthening agricultural and other markets.

Justification: The childhood stunting rate in Burundi is 56%, the highest in world. With rapid population growth, increasing land scarcity, and poor agricultural practices and production, food and nutrition insecurity continue to worsen. Burundi ranked last in the 2014 IFPRI Global Hunger Index; since then, data limitations have precluded ranking, but the situation has certainly deteriorated. Ninety percent of Burundi's population subsists on agriculture, with the average family of five living on little more than an acre.

Despite these challenges, Burundi has fertile soils and a favorable agricultural climate. Recognizing that food aid by itself will not prevent conflict, improving nutrition by raising agricultural productivity and diversity is a Mission priority. By assisting the poorest rural families to grow more, more nutritious, and more exportable food and food stuffs, the Mission aims to improve nutritional status and to reduce dependence on imported food aid; much of it from the United States. Risks to achieving this objective include climactic factors that could depress harvests.

Mission Objective 2.2: The health of Burundians and refugees is improved as Burundi's health system makes demonstrable and measurable progress towards self-reliance.

Justification: In the Burundian context, the daily lives of the majority of the population are shaped by access to basic necessities, such as food and health care. While important gains were realized in the health sector a decade ago, the national health system remains fragile, heavily donor reliant, and inadequate in its response to health crises. The epidemiological profile of Burundi continues to be dominated by communicable, maternal, neonatal/childhood, and nutritional causes of illness, and the related health indicators are among the lowest in the region and in sub-Saharan Africa. Burundi has one of the highest prevalence rates of chronic malnutrition and malaria; high maternal, child, and infant morbidity and mortality rates; and a high total fertility rate and low modern contraceptive prevalence. These factors put a burden on an already under-performing health system as does decentralization without sufficient healthcare staff, under-funding of the sector despite significant donor financing, weak epidemiological surveillance and health information systems, and poor access to drugs at affordable prices. The health system is also woefully unprepared and under-capacitated to respond to priority emerging infectious disease outbreaks and epidemics.

Achievement of this objective will contribute to advancing development goals for Burundi because access to basic quality health services is essential to protect lives and livelihoods and represents a key development building block. Improved health status is also linked with enhanced access to education and reduction of gender disparities, which are considered drivers of development and economic growth. The sub-objectives of health assistance aim to increase the use of, and access to, quality health services at the community and district level, accelerated by targeted assistance for national systems and data-driven decision-making. Health assistance will include cross-cutting interventions to impact gender norms that are detrimental to health outcomes, with a particular emphasis on prevention of gender-based violence and access to related services. This MO also includes key activities to improve the health and livelihoods of

refugees and IDPs in Burundi. Refugees and IDPs are among the most vulnerable to health threats and food insecurity due to marginalization and unmet funding and program needs.

The MO will be achieved through technical assistance and capacity building activities at the central, district, facility, and community levels. Achievement of this ambitious objective will advance Burundi's progress towards self-reliance. However, health assistance in Burundi is based on the fundamental assumption that the country will continue to be heavily donor-reliant beyond the duration of this Integrated Country Strategy. Risks to achieving this objective include the weak state of Burundi's public health system.

Mission Goal 3: Develop Burundi's capacity to contribute to peace and security in the Great Lakes region and East Africa.

Description and Linkages: Burundi's stability is intertwined with that of the Great Lakes region and East Africa. Since 2008, a contingent of the Burundian National Defense Forces (BNDF) has been an integral part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the disruption of the terrorist group al-Shabaab. Burundi has also contributed to other peacekeeping missions, including the UN's Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Ensuring that BNDF soldiers have the capacity to execute fully their duties, while continuing the scrupulous observance of international human rights standards expected of peacekeepers, is critical to the success of their missions. Moreover, Burundian participation in these missions, and especially professionalization and human rights training, helps stabilize Burundi by strengthening its most neutral and professional security force. Meanwhile, Burundi sits at a crossroads in the Great Lakes region and is vulnerable to the transit of armed groups, extremist groups, and illicit goods. Carefully modulated efforts to increase the capacity and professionalism of Burundian institutions addressing these threats support U.S. security interests. This goal directly contributes to the Department of State/USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa's goal 1, "Advance Mutual Peace and Security Interests," and Objective 1.1, "Disrupt State-Sponsored and Regional Terrorist Groups in Sub-Saharan Africa in order to Limit their Ability to Attack U.S. Interests both Inside and Outside Africa."

Mission Objective 3.1: The capacity of Burundian institutions to contribute to peacekeeping missions, combat regional terrorist groups, and address other transnational threats is increased.

Justification: Since 2008, Burundi has been the largest troop contributor to AMISOM. Supporting the ability of its peacekeepers to contribute successfully to the mission is important to advance U.S. interest in a secure and stable Somalia. While there is a continuous threat from regional terrorist groups, including al-Shabaab, against U.S. and Burundian interests, the threat thus far remains low and no attacks have been executed to date in Burundi. In the absence of Western capacity building efforts, these institutions' professionalism, access to Western values including human rights, capacity to contribute to peacekeeping missions, and ability respond to transnational threats has been impacted and risks degrading, which will constrain the ability of the U.S. government to meet its regional security objectives. Risks to achieving this objective include weak institutional capacity.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1: Ensure that the Embassy's staffing is adequate for assessed policy, program, and security requirements.

Justification: The political crisis in 2015 created a wide range of challenges for mission management, particularly affecting human resources. Bujumbura has long been designated a "difficult to staff (HDS)" post due to its isolation and repeated ordered departures following political violence and upheaval. Two ordered departures in 2015 and early 2016 resulted in a significant number of officer curtailments, followed by several key positions being filled by individuals with one-year assignments. The decision to go from a post with full accompaniment by families to one for which, currently, only adult spouses are permitted has also had a negative impact on the ability to recruit State officers. Meanwhile, changing requirements for staff positions, including security, require steps to ensure that staffing levels and position descriptions are consistent with assessed needs. Risks to achieving this objective including the potential for changing security requirements to require reconsideration of some measures.