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**PROJECT MONITORING VISIT TO BURUNDI:  
“Building a Caring Environment for Children in Burundi”  
and “New Generation”**

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**“Building a Caring Environment for Children in Burundi”**  
**and “New Generation”**



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# MAP OF BURUNDI



## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASCA	Accumulating Savings and Credit Association
BCN	Better Care Network
DCOF	Displaced Children and Orphans Fund
CDFC	<i>Centres de Développement Familial et Communautaires</i>
CPC	Child Protection Committee
FVS-AMADE	Union of FVS: Famille pour Vaincre le SIDA (Family to End AIDS) and AMADE Burundi, Association Burundaise des Amis de l'Enfance (Burundian Association of Children's Friends)
FTR	Family Tracing and Reunification
GoB	Government of Burundi
HFC	Healing Families and Communities
CPIMS	Interagency Child Protection Information Management System
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MoNSHRG	Ministry of National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RCT	Randomized Control Trial
ROSCA	Rotating Savings and Credit Association
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

From August 13-19, 2013, Martin Hayes and John Williamson, technical advisors for the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF), carried out a visit to Burundi to review the progress and planned activities of two projects, “Building a Caring Environment for Children in Burundi,” which is managed by UNICEF, and “New Generation,” which is implemented by the International Rescue Committee (IRC). The recently initiated UNICEF project is addressing child care reform, and the IRC project is addressing household economic strengthening and building parenting skills. The DCOF team met with the Ministry of National Solidarity’s director generals and an advisor, UNICEF and IRC leadership, and visited project sites in Bujumbura Marie, Bujumbura Rurale and Gitega. They made the following observations and recommendations regarding the two projects:

### **UNICEF’s Building Caring Environment for Children Project**

- The Government of Burundi is demonstrating commitment to child care reform.
- The government’s child protection structures have clear vertical linkages between the colline, commune, and province; however, capacity building and resources are limited, particularly concerning their ability to manage cases of children outside of family care.
- The Child Protection Committee (CPC) and the Solidarity Groups visited in Rweza Colline, Gitega seemed to complement each other. This relationship may assist with the effectiveness and sustainability of the CPC.
- The approach taken to mobilize and strengthen the capacities of CPCs should be carefully considered as it will influence their potential sustainability.
- Household poverty is a key factor underlying the separation of children from their families.
- The effectiveness of UNICEF’s proposed training of CPCs and parents seems questionable, given the large number of proposed beneficiaries.
- Gatekeeping mechanisms to prevent children from entering residential child care centers are not yet in place. While CPCs may play an important role in preventing children from separating from their parents, a formal role by the government will be essential because it has the authority to establish uniform criteria and ensure that local mechanisms are in place to enforce decisions. The team understands that the Ministry of Solidarity and the Ministry of Interior plan to establish such criteria.

### **IRC’s New Generation Project**

- The VSLA group visited appeared to be functioning well.
- The potential effectiveness of the 10-week Healing Families and Communities process for changing negative parental behavior remains uncertain, and while the project team has made some changes to its approach, additional changes might also be considered.

## Recommendations

1. UNICEF should work with the Ministry of National Solidarity to ensure that effective gatekeeping measures are put in place.
2. The government, UNICEF, and implementing NGOs should carefully consider the implications for the sustainability of the CPCs and the approaches and methods used for mobilizing and strengthening them.
3. UNICEF should explore with the MoNSRSR whether it would be feasible over time to shift governmental resources being provided to orphanages to support family care.
4. The Building a Caring Environment for Children in Burundi project should employ a capacity strengthening strategy with MoNSRSR and CDFCs that involves in-service training, mentoring and coaching.
5. The project's technical staff should work closely with the MoNSRSR and assist them to establish, manage, and maintain the Child Protection Information Management System at the ministry. UNICEF does plan to have the database established at the ministry. DCOF supports this plan.
6. UNICEF should work with MoNSRSR to institutionalize the training and capacity building of social assistants through ministry trainers or institutions of higher learning to sustain training and to maintain a pool of qualified social assistants.
7. The IRC's New Generation project should explore additional measures to increase and sustain behavior change of parents.

## INTRODUCTION

USAID/DCOF is currently supporting two projects in Burundi:

1. “New Generation Project,” implemented by the International Rescue Committee (IRC)
2. “Building a Caring Environment for Children in Burundi” project, implemented by UNICEF

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) was initially supported to implement the four-year “New Generation” project during the period October 1, 2009 to September 30, 2012, at a cost of \$2,384,010. The project was subsequently extended, at an additional cost of \$725,000, through March 31, 2014. The project’s aim is to strengthen families’ capacities to protect their children through using a combination of household economic strengthening and parenting skills education. The economic strengthening methodology used includes the mobilization of Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs). A methodology developed by the IRC, Healing Families and Communities (HFC), is integrated into the initial stage of mobilizing VSLAs. The project is using rigorous evaluation methods to measure the results of these interventions separately and in combination. Through the project extension, the IRC is expanding the number of beneficiaries receiving the combined VSLA and HFC interventions, first by providing the parenting skills discussion groups, measuring changes, and then initiating VSLA training. The aim is to measure the effects of HFC by itself, which was not done during the initial project period. Also during the extension, VSLA groups that did not receive HFC training during the initial project period are receiving that training

USAID/DCOF is also supporting UNICEF to implement “Building a Caring Environment for Children in Burundi” for the period June 2013 to July 2015. This project aims to enable 2,500 girls and boys to live in a protective environment, including 500 children who are to be deinstitutionalized and 2,000 for whom unnecessary family separation is to be prevented.

In 2011, with UNICEF support, the IRC assisted the Government of Burundi to develop minimum standards for residential care centers and used the standards to assess conditions in 98 residential care centers for children throughout the country. The standards were adapted from the “Standards for the Quality of Care: East and Central Africa,” published by Save the Children in 2005. These standards, 85 in total after additions from the Burundi assessment team, were used to collect information for each center. In 2012, the minimum standards assessment of Burundi’s residential care centers (RCC) was completed and found that the large majority of the RCCs are sub-standard. The assessment found that only three centers met at least 80 percent of the standards set by the government and that nine centers met less than 20 percent of the standards. In response to these findings, USAID/DCOF provided support to UNICEF to assist the Government of Burundi to expand and strengthen its care reform process. UNICEF is partnered with IRC and other international and local NGOs to assist with the project’s implementation. The aim of the project is to reduce the number of children living in institutions and prevent family separation, abandonment, and relinquishment. Some specific targets of this project include:

- 500 children deinstitutionalized;

- 2,000 children at risk protected from violence, exploitation, and abuse through the strengthened capacity of their families and communities; and
- The capacities of 800 Child Protection Committees strengthened.

From August 13-19, 2013, Martin Hayes and John Williamson, DCOF technical advisors, carried out a visit to Burundi to assess the current situation of vulnerable children and to review the ongoing and planned progress of both the IRC and UNICEF supported projects. The specific objectives of the trip were to

1. Meet with IRC and other relevant partners associated with the New Generation project, visit project sites, and review project plans. The purpose of which was to 1) develop a better understanding of the progress made in implementing the project and the challenges that have been faced, and 2) to also gain and understanding of the prospects for both outcomes and learning from the project.
2. Meet with relevant program staff from UNICEF, the Ministry of National Solidarity, Repatriation and Social Reintegration, and the IRC and develop a better understanding of the Government of Burundi's strategy and plans for national care reform, the technical approaches to be used, and how additional support from DCOF could help strengthen these efforts.

The scope of work for this visit is included as Appendix 1.

## COUNTRY BACKGROUND

Burundi's population is listed as 8.6 million in UNICEF's *State of the World's Children* (2013) and 10.6 million in the *CIA World Factbook*. The population is predominately rural, with an urban population in 2011 of 11 percent (*State of the World's Children*). However, the growth rate of the capital is extremely high. A total of 81 percent of the population lives below the poverty line of \$1.25/day (*State of the World's Children*). The country's gross domestic product actually fell 1.4 percent from 1990 to 2011 (*State of the World's Children*). The enrollment rate for primary school age children is very high, around 97 percent, but the completion rate is only 51 percent.

Burundi's population density in the context of its poverty, predominantly rural population, and limited economic opportunities is a starkly important factor shaping its children's future. Depending on which population figure is used, the density of the population is 308 or 379 per square kilometer. In Africa, only Rwanda has a higher population density. The population growth rate is indicated as 2 percent (1990-2011) in *State of the Worlds' Children* and 3.1 percent in the *CIA World Factbook*. These documents respectively list the national fertility rate as 4.4 percent (*State of the World's Children*) and 6.08 percent (*CIA World Factbook*).



Figure 1: Plots on steep hills in Muhuta Commune illustrate the population density and demand for arable land

The extremely high population density has contributed to greater food and resource scarcity in rural areas. About 90 percent of Burundi's population is engaged in subsistence agriculture.<sup>1</sup> More than 60 percent of households are at risk of food insecurity.<sup>2</sup> Some 58 percent of children are chronically malnourished.<sup>3</sup>

The 2011 assessment of residential care centers in Burundi found that there were 5,520 children living in residential care at that time. This indicates a rate of institutionalization of the country's children as relatively high, at 148/100,000. The rates of national population density and rate of increase, which vary considerably according to the source consulted, are highly relevant to the outcomes that the Ministry of National Solidarity, Repatriation and Social Reintegration (MoNSHRG), UNICEF, and the IRC hope to achieve in terms of deinstitutionalization and family reintegration and other family placements. Land is a precious commodity in Burundi, and it is subdivided among heirs. With a continuing increase in the population, progressively smaller agricultural plots are being inherited. The pressure on the land is also being intensified by the return of Burundian refugees from Tanzania, some of whom seek to reclaim land. The land is being cultivated very intensively, as Figure 1 suggests. Given these realities, families may be reluctant to accept the return of a child from an orphanage, but they are reported to be almost universally unwilling to adopt a child whose inheritance claim will reduce the claims of his or her siblings.<sup>4</sup>

In May 2011, the Ministry of Solidarity and IRC conducted a national assessment of residential care for children. A total of 98 facilities housing 5,520 children (2,619 girls and 2,901 boys) were assessed. Of these centers, three were managed directly by the government, 47 by churches, 25 by Burundian NGOs or associations, five by international NGOs, and 18 by individuals. Only 78 percent of the centers were registered with local or national governmental authorities. The quality of care in these facilities was assessed in relation to standards adapted from "Standards for the Quality of Care: East and Central Africa," (Save the Children, 2005). Only three centers met more than 80 percent of the standards of care. Only 35 centers met 50 percent of the standards, and 63 met less than 50 percent of the standards. Of the latter group nine met less than 20 percent of the standards, and the children in those centers were considered to be in an extremely precarious situation. UNICEF has indicated that since 2012, one of those nine centers was closed, two have been transitioned to become day centers, and a total of 73 children were reintegrated into families. UNICEF has also indicated that the government would like to phase out residential care for children in favor of family-based care, starting with the centers operating at the lowest standard of care.

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<sup>1</sup> FAO "Transboundary Agro-ecosystem Management Programme for the Kagera River Basin", (2009)

<sup>2</sup> IFAD "Enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty in Burundi", (2012)

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF "A Strike against chronic malnutrition in Burundi", (2013)

<sup>4</sup> Based on information provided by UNICEF and Kezakimana residential care center in Gitega, which has lengthy experience reintegrating children into families.

## OBSERVATIONS

The team's trip observations focused on the two projects: UNICEF's child care reform project (Building a Caring Environment of Children in Burundi), and IRC's household economic and parenting skills strengthening project (New Generation).

### UNICEF's Building a Caring Environment for Children in Burundi

#### *Government Relations*

UNICEF reports having a close working relationship with MoNSHRG, and what the team observed was consistent with that perspective. The team met with Joseph Ndayisenga, director general of MoNSRSR; Etienne Gashamura, advisor, Ministry of National Solidarity; and Ignace Ntawembarira, director of the Department of Children and Families. All three expressed their commitment to working in partnership with UNICEF and others on the child care reform process.

#### *National Commitment to Child Care Reform*

The Government of Burundi demonstrates an ongoing commitment to child care reform. This is evidenced through relevant legislation being adopted (e.g., the "Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children," 2008; the "Child Protection Policy," 2013). The MoNSRSR established Family and Community Development Centers ([CDFC] *Centres de Développement Familial et Communautaires*) at the provincial level, and in every commune one social assistant is being appointed with the eventual aim of having at least two social assistants in each commune.

#### *Child Protection Structures*

The government's child protection structures seem to have clear vertical linkages with Child Protection Committees (CPCs) being established at the colline level with the *chefs de colline* serving as *ex officio* members in each CPC. The *chefs de colline* are also represented on the commune-level committees, and the commune-level membership is also represented at the provincial level. However, it is unclear what, if any resources or support is being provided to the CPCs by the commune and the province, as the capacities of social assistants and CDFC's in some locations are quite limited. The commune-level social assistants are reported to lack ready access to transportation. Mobility constraint appears to be a major impediment to their doing effective reintegration work or responding to protection issues that CPCs refer to them. In the short term during the life of the project, NGOs can facilitate their transportation to visit households to facilitate reintegration, but it will be important to seek longer-term solutions.

#### *Case Management*

Communal social assistants currently use registers to document cases of vulnerable children, including children without appropriate family care. No registers were available for the DCOF team to review, and its concern is whether sufficiently detailed information on children's circumstances is included in these registers—information necessary for family tracing and

reunification and follow-up monitoring. The project plans are to establish a case-file system with identification, documentation, follow-up, verification, and reunification forms. Social assistants and CDFO coordinators will be trained to establish case files for each child, and information from these case files will be entered into the centralized interagency Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS). However, the team was informed that the IRC plans initially to base the data center at its office, and then to hand it over to the Ministry of Solidarity at a later stage. This was a concern because the likelihood of successfully handing over and re-establishing a functioning database system at a new location with new personnel seems extremely low. UNICEF has confirmed that they do plan to have the database established at the ministry and DCOF supports this plan.

### *Implementation Details*

UNICEF's Building a Caring Environment for Children in Burundi proposal did not provide details on implementing partners. Through the trip it was learned that there will be a number of implementing partners responsible for training community members in the five different targeted provinces. This will include IRC in Muyinga, FVS Amade in Gitega, AVSI in Kayanza, Terre des Hommes in Kirundu, and MNSRSR in Bujumbura Rurale. IRC will also support the application of the minimum standards and train social workers in all five provinces. Health Net TPO will provide a training of trainers for all of the implementing partners on psychosocial support and on the identification of vulnerable children.

However, implementation details on some of the project's capacity building activities remain somewhat unclear. In particular, the training of 5,000 CPC members and 5,000 parents seems challenging and the effectiveness of such trainings at the proposed scale is questionable. The issue is not whether this number of individuals will be able to participate in training through a train-the-trainers approach, but whether those trained will be able to demonstrate the skills and changed behavior necessary to measurably improve the safety and well-being of children in the communities and families concerned.

### *Challenges Related to Demographics*

The high population density and increasing population rate is intensifying pressure on the land. This has significant implications for the willingness of families to reintegrate children and makes domestic adoption an extremely limited option for children who cannot be reintegrated into their own families.

### *Minimum Standards*

On August 28, further orphanage assessments were due to begin in Gitega, with the aim of deciding whether they should remain open or not. If the decision is to close a given institution, the children will be placed with foster families, reintegrated into families, or placed in better institutions. The composition and functioning of best interests determination teams was somewhat unclear to the DCOF team. For example, who will be represented on the team? Will there be more than one team? Who will chair it, and how will best interests determination decisions be made both during the project and after it ends? Will the team have legal authority to place children?

#### *Effectiveness and Sustainability of CPCs*

The DCOF team had a positive impression of the CPC and the Solidarity Groups in Rweza Colline, Gitega. The fact that the CPC members also have leadership positions on the Solidarity Groups and that the functions of the two groups seemed to complement each other may assist with the effectiveness and sustainability of the CPCs (See the following section, *Financial Resources to Help Preserve Families*, for details on this relationship).

#### **A Typology of Approaches for Engaging with Communities**

**Category 1:** Direct implementation by agency: The agency is a service provider, and community members are beneficiaries.

**Category 2:** Community involvement in agency initiative: The agency is a promoter of its own initiative, a planner and a trainer, and community members are volunteers and beneficiaries.

**Category 3:** Community owned and managed activities mobilized by external agency: The agency is a catalyst, capacity builder, a facilitator of linkages, and a funder after community ownership has developed. The community members are analysts, planners, implementers, assessors, and also beneficiaries.

**Category 4:** Community owned and managed activities initiated from within the community: The agency is a capacity builder and funder, and community members are analysts, planners, implementers, assessors, and also beneficiaries.

[From: *Agencies, Communities, and Children, A Report of the Interagency Learning Initiative: Engaging Communities for Children's Wellbeing*, Benham, Nicole, August 2008.]

However, the process through which CPCs are mobilized and supported over time will significantly affect the issues that they address and their sustainability. Research has shown that the approaches used for engaging community members to address local child protection issues have implications both for their sustainability and the kinds of issues which they are likely to address. An overview of four different approaches is presented in the accompanying box. The most likely approach in the context of this project appears to involve a Category 2 approach (e.g., CPCs are partners of the government in identifying children who are at risk of separation or are otherwise vulnerable). USAID/DCOF's experience and research have shown that community involvement mobilized in this way tends not to be sustained over the long term, after the initial project ends.<sup>5</sup> It is difficult and unlikely for a community to sustain an activity that was begun on

<sup>5</sup> Mike Wessells, *What Are We Learning About Protecting Children in the Community? An inter-agency review of the evidence on community-based child protection mechanisms in humanitarian and development settings*, Save the Children Fund and an inter-agency reference group, November 2009. [See especially pages 49 - 53.] [http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/What\\_We\\_Are\\_Learning\\_About\\_Protecting\\_Children\\_in\\_the\\_Community\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/What_We_Are_Learning_About_Protecting_Children_in_the_Community_Full_Report.pdf)

the basis of partnership with an outside body if funding and the outside partnership ends. If CPCs are mobilized with a Category 2 approach, the key to their continuing to function over time will likely be ensuring ongoing support of some kind. The external support does not necessarily have to be exclusively financial. Ongoing engagement on the part of a commune CDFC and its social assistant(s) could help to sustain a CPC over time, if these external actors regularly provide it with valuable information, recognition, and responsive action to cases referred by the CPC. The link between solidarity groups and the CPC that the team observed in the Rweza Colline, Gitega, may also provide support that can sustain the motivation and participation of these groups.

The alternative approach is a Category 3 approach, in which CPCs are mobilized through a catalytic approach, where the mobilizing body makes clear from the outset that its role is short term and helps the community and the CPC members it selects to decide what issues they are most concerned about and how they can use locally available capacities and resources to address these. Such an approach has been shown to be more sustainable, but a limitation of this approach is that the issues that a community decides to address cannot be externally determined.<sup>6</sup> Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages, and it is important that UNICEF, MoNSRSR, and the NGOs involved in mobilizing and training CPCs understand what these are and use an approach to community engagement that is likely to produce ongoing results for children after the project ends.

### *Financial Resources to Help Preserve Families*

Household poverty is often a key factor underlying the separation of children from their families. One of the responses to be used in UNICEF's Building a Caring Environment for Children is cash transfers. Cash transfers are a direct way to address the causes of separation, but it remains to be seen how much "fiscal space" the Government of Burundi has to provide and sustain this kind of approach. However, with donor support, this approach may be viable, at least in the short term. A less direct approach, but one that appears to have greater promise of sustainability, is savings-led microfinance. The village savings and loan associations (VSLA) that the IRC has mobilized in Makamba and Bujumbura Rurale, have been shown to be effective in raising the income of participating households.<sup>7</sup> The groups that IRC has mobilized are not only sustaining themselves, but other community members are spontaneously replicating the approach. The Solidarity Groups organized by FVS/Amade that the team observed in Rweze Colline in Getga

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[rt.pdf](#) Jill Donahue and Louis Mwewa, *Community Action and the Test of Time: Learning from Community Experiences and Perceptions, Case Studies of Mobilization and Capacity Building to Benefit Vulnerable Children in Malawi and Zambia*, The Displaced Children and Orphans Fund of USAID with the support and participation of the Africa's Health in 2010 Project of the Academy for Educational Development, USAID's Africa Bureau, Office of Sustainable Development, Save the Children US, CARE International, and Project Concern International, December 2006. [See especially pages 55-59] <http://www.crin.org/docs/testoftime.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> The Journey of Life; Community Workshops to Support Children, Manuals 1 and 2 provide the examples of the kinds of methods that can be used to mobilize a category 3 approach. Manual 1:

<http://childprotectionforum.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/11/Journey-of-Life-1-Community-Workshop.pdf> Manual 2:

[http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=8&ved=0CFcQFjAH&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ovcsupport.net%2Flibs%2FAdmin%2Fd%2FDocumentHandler.ashx%3Fid%3D693&ei=s9wwUpCJHqv4APav4DABw&usg=AFQjCNEJ34uzkWiTCdEuIMqqK6V\\_Qt6diQ&sig2=cFMUKOpotDao\\_9W-chBu1g](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=8&ved=0CFcQFjAH&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ovcsupport.net%2Flibs%2FAdmin%2Fd%2FDocumentHandler.ashx%3Fid%3D693&ei=s9wwUpCJHqv4APav4DABw&usg=AFQjCNEJ34uzkWiTCdEuIMqqK6V_Qt6diQ&sig2=cFMUKOpotDao_9W-chBu1g)

<sup>7</sup> Jeannie Annan, et al, *A Randomized Impact Evaluation of Village Savings and Loans Associations and Family-Based Interventions in Burundi*, the International Rescue Committee, March 2013.

Province involve a similar approach to savings-led microfinance, but with some differences that will be important to study over time. For example, while the VSLA methodology incorporates a social fund that enables *group members* to take out interest-free loans to meet urgent expenses (e.g., medical or school-related costs), the Solidarity Groups each have an “Orphans and Vulnerable Children Fund,” which was described as being a resource to address specific needs among *vulnerable children in the community*. This is more ambitious, and if it proves sustainable, could enable CPCs to have a small local source of funds on which to draw in responding to urgent needs. Moreover, the 5 percent interest rates charged by the Solidarity Groups on loans are half of what VSLAs typically charge. Whether this is an advantage or disadvantage over time should be carefully assessed, with attention to such issues as how it affects the continuity of the Solidarity Groups, who participates in them, the earnings of participants, and uses of the Orphans and Vulnerable Children Funds.

Both the VSLAs and Solidarity Groups are examples of Accumulating Savings and Credit Associations (ASCAs). ASCAs evolved out of traditional Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs). Child Protection Expert Jill Donahue described ROSCAs as follows:

a traditional means by which a group of ordinary people (rich or poor) can mobilize and pool savings. These traditional savings mechanisms exist in one form or another all over the world. In Africa, there are *tontines* in Francophone countries, *susus* in Ghana, merry-go-rounds in Kenya, *chilembas* in Zambia, and *stockveldt* in South Africa.<sup>8</sup>

The team was informed by UNICEF that there are ASCAs in areas where the project will function and that these may help provide resources to address needs among vulnerable children. This seems very unlikely, since there are significant differences in the ways that ROSCAs and ASCAs function and in the outcomes that can be expected from them. It will be important for UNICEF and its partners to be aware of these and assess their respective advantages and disadvantages over time in terms of enabling communities (CPCs and other mechanisms) to address household crises and prevent the unnecessary separation of children from families.

While it was not possible to obtain specific details, the team was informed that about half the residential centers for children receive some amount of at least periodic government subsidy. The facility that the team visited in Bujumbura had recently received several stalks of bananas that had been provided by the government. It may be possible for some of these resources to be re-directed to supporting the reintegration into families of institutionalized children or enabling CDFCs and social assistants to respond to crises at the household level that, if not adequately addressed, can lead to children’s separation or harm.

### *Gatekeeping*

UNICEF’s proposal for “Building a Caring Environment for Children in Burundi” indicates that 500 children are to be deinstitutionalized, but it does not address the crucial issue of gatekeeping to prevent orphanages unnecessarily taking in new children to fill places vacated by reintegrated children. While CPCs may play an important role in preventing children from separating from

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<sup>8</sup> “Children, HIV/AIDS and Poverty in Southern Africa,” SARPN APRIL 2003, Catholic Relief Services. Her description was based on an essay by Stuart Rutherford, “The Poor and their Money,” 1998.

their parents, a formal role by the government will be essential because it has the authority to establish uniform criteria and ensure that local mechanisms are in place to enforce decisions. The team understands that the Ministry of Solidarity and the Ministry of Interior plan to establish such criteria.

It should be emphasized that the issue is not a numbers game of simply reducing the number of children in residential care. The fundamental issue is reforming the system to ensure that children who are in residential care in fact need to be there, and that an effective system is in place to ensure that no child is taken into residential care unnecessarily; this is the essence of gatekeeping. The team has provided some relevant resource documents, and encourages MoNSRSR, UNICEF, and their partners to make use of additional resources available through the website of the Better Care Network (BCN)—[www.bettercarenetwork.org](http://www.bettercarenetwork.org)—as well as technical support that the BCN can provide on request.

The process of gatekeeping is one component of the system of best interest determinations and case management to be developed in the UNICEF proposal. At present many of the country's residential institutions for children can take in children whenever they wish to do so. This is neither appropriate nor legally sound. The primary responsibility to care for a child rests with the child's family. If the family is unable or unwilling to provide care or is absent, the State has the ultimate responsibility to ensure the child's adequate care. Article 20 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Burundi has ratified, specifies this responsibility.

A national government has the responsibility to ensure that an appropriate and effective system is in place to make placement decisions. It can designate who should consider the facts and make a decision, but it has the responsibility to ensure that this is done appropriately and effectively. In many countries, placement decisions are made by courts, but it is also possible to establish a mechanism through which other designated local officials and technically competent actors consider all relevant information to make placement decisions.

### **IRC's New Generation Project**

The VSLA group that the team visited, which had been mobilized by the IRC, appears to be functioning well. We were informed that in some communities where the IRC has mobilized VSLAs other community residents have sought the assistance of members of the initial groups to start their own VSLAs. The spontaneous replication of this methodology is a positive sign that participants are benefitting.

The team also had a positive impression of the group visited that was in its third session of the Healing Families and



Communities (HFC) process. HFC involves a series of in-depth discussions among group members on parenting issues. These discussions are facilitated by an IRC staff member.

In the initial New Generation project that the IRC implemented in Burundi, the HFC process was integrated with the training for VSLA participation and management, so it was not possible to measure the extent to which HFC participation, by itself, might be effective in changing parenting practices. The extension of New Generation provides such an opportunity, by carrying out the 10-week HFC process before a group begins to function as a VSLA, to evaluate its stand-alone effects on parenting. Through a series of structured discussions, HFC participants consider the safety, development, discipline, and well-being of the children in their care.

During a discussion with the New Generation Project team, it was mentioned that they are exploring whether some changes to the HFC process might help increase positive behavior change. For example, one idea discussed was more extensive involvement of spouses and children in the HFC process. A member of the HFC group visited by the team suggested that couples should participate together in HFC. Another issue for the IRC to consider is whether the 10 weeks of participation in HFC is sufficient to produce significant, sustained changes in harmful parenting practices. For example, it could be appropriate to revisit parenting issues during the entire initial year of VSLA training and support, rather than limiting it to an initial 10-week period.

A constraint to trying such changes in the HCF process is that this could negatively affect the evaluation research that the IRC is carrying out regarding the effectiveness of VSLA and HFC. One possibility could be to introduce some changes into the 20 groups that were mobilized, but subsequently dropped from the research process because they had started HFC before the baseline was done. While the evaluation of such a change would necessarily be less rigorous than the research that is already in progress, it still might produce qualitative findings that could inform future programming.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**1. Ensure effective gatekeeping.** UNICEF should work with the MoNSHRG to help ensure that appropriate and effective gatekeeping mechanisms are established to make sure that children are only placed in residential care when it is in their best interests.

**2. Carefully consider mobilization methods.** In consultation with the MoNSRSR, UNICEF, and implementing NGOs should carefully consider the implications for the sustainability of the CPCs and of the approaches and methods used for mobilizing and strengthening them. Links to relevant research are provided in this report, and DCOF can provide additional consultation, if requested. The link between solidarity groups and the CPC that the team observed in the Rweza Colline, Gitega, may be an approach that can help sustain the motivation and participation of a CPC.

**3. Explore the feasibility of shifting government resources to support family care.** UNICEF should explore with the MoNSHRG whether it would be feasible over time to shift governmental resources being provided to orphanages to facilitate family reintegration or placements of children who are outside of family care and to help strengthen families to prevent unnecessary separation.

**4. Strengthen the MoNSHRG capacity building approach,** The Building a Caring Environment for Children in Burundi project should employ a capacity strengthening strategy with MoNSRSR and CDFCs that involves in-service training, mentoring and coaching. A system of case-files should be established at CDFCs at the beginning of the project and project social work trainers should shadow ministry social assistants to effectively strengthen their capacities.

**5. Establish the CPIMS at the Ministry.** The project's technical staff should work closely with the MoNSHRG and assist them to establish, manage, and maintain the CPIMS at the ministry, rather than initially basing it at the IRC office.

**6. Institutionalize the training of Social Assistants.** UNICEF should work with MoNSRSR to institutionalize the training and capacity building of social assistants through ministry trainers or institutions of higher learning to sustain training and to maintain a pool of qualified social assistants.

**7. In New Generation, consider additional measures to sustain parents' behavior change.** The IRC's New Generation project should explore additional measures to increase and sustain behavior change of parents. For example, this might include more extensive involvement of spouses and children in HFC, and regularly revisiting during the life of a VSLA the issues addressed during the initial HFC training.

## APPENDIX 1: DCOF BURUNDI TRIP SCOPE OF WORK

7/10/13

**Goal:** To assess the implementation of the DCOF-funded New Generation Project and plans for a UNICEF Burundi child care reform project.

**Locations:** Bujumbura City, Bujumbura Rurale, Gitega, Kayanza,

**Travel Dates:** August 12-20, 2013

**Travelers:** Martin Hayes & John Williamson USAID/Washington, D.C.

### Background

USAID/DCOF awarded funding to the International Rescue Committee (IRC) for a one-year costed extension that started April 1, 2013 and will end March 31, 2014. This is an extension of the four-year “New Generations” project that started October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009. The project’s aim is to strengthen families’ capacities to protect their children through using a combination of household economic strengthening and parenting skills education. The project is also using rigorous evaluation methods to measure the potential value of this combined approach.

In 2011, UNICEF supported the IRC and the Government of Burundi to assess throughout the country conditions in 98 residential care centers for children. It found that only three centers met at least 80 percent of the standards set by the government and that nine centers met less than 20 percent of the standards. UNICEF, in partnership with IRC and the Ministry of Solidarity, has recently completed an assessment of Burundi’s orphanages and have found that a significant proportion of them are sub-standard.

USAID/DCOF will be supporting UNICEF’s plans in Burundi to support the Government of Burundi to expand and strengthen a major care reform process. UNICEF has proposed that the IRC play significant roles in implementing this process and that local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will have significant implementation roles, as well. The aim of these activities is to reduce the number of children living in institutions and prevent family separation, abandonment and relinquishment. Some specific targets include:

- 500 children are to be deinstitutionalized,
- 2,000 children at risk are protected from violence, exploitation and abuse through the strengthened capacity of their families and communities, and
- The capacities of 800 Child Protection Committees are strengthened.

### Trip Objectives

- a) **To meet with IRC and other relevant partners associated with the New Generation project, visit project sites, review project plans to develop a better understanding of progress and challenges for project implementation and the prospects for both project outcomes and learning from the project.**
- b) **To meet with relevant program staff from UNICEF, Ministry of Solidarity, Repatriation and Social Reintegration, and the IRC and to develop a better understanding of the Government of Burundi’s strategy and plans for national care**

**reform, the technical approaches to be used, and how additional support from DCOF could help strengthen these efforts.**

**Tentative Travel Itinerary**

1. **Monday, August 12<sup>th</sup>:** Arrive in Bujumbura
2. **Tuesday, August 13<sup>th</sup>:** Meet with US Embassy staff for a briefing in the morning; Meet UNICEF program staff in Bujumbura; Meet with Ministry of Solidarity officials associated with UNICEF's deinstitutionalization project.
3. **Wednesday, August 14<sup>th</sup>:** Drive to Gitega with UNICEF to meet with deinstitutionalization project stakeholders.
4. **Thursday, August 15<sup>th</sup>:** Meet with project stakeholders in Gitega
5. **Friday, August 16<sup>th</sup>:** Drive to Kayanza with UNICEF to meet with deinstitutionalization project stakeholders.
6. **Saturday, August 17<sup>th</sup>:** Travel back to Bujumbura and provide debrief to UNICEF.
7. **Sunday, August 18<sup>th</sup>:** Rest
8. **Monday, August 19<sup>th</sup>:** Meet with IRC's Deputy Director and travel to Bujumbura Rurale to visit New Generation Project sites
9. **Tuesday, August 20<sup>th</sup>:** Fly to Nairobi; debrief USAID Regional Office in Nairobi; Fly back to the US.

**Deliverables:**

Debriefing power-point presentation

Trip report (draft to be provided to USAID regional focal point, UNICEF and IRC within two weeks of the Mission's completion.

## APPENDIX 2: TRIP SCHEDULE



### USAID/DCOF MISSION TO BURUNDI



**13 – 19 August 2013**

DAY 1	TIME	ACTIVITY	COMMENTS	LOCATION	UNICEF FOCAL POINT / PARTICIPANTS
<b>Tuesday</b> <b>August 13, 2013</b>	12:00 p.m.	Working lunch with UNICEF Representative and Child Protection team	Presentation of UNICEF Child Protection programme in Burundi and more specifically on supporting deinstitutionalization and alternative care	Bujumbura, restaurant tbc	Aissa Sow, Chief Child Protection/ Natasha Paddison, Deputy Representative UNICEF Burundi
	02:00 p.m.	Meeting with DG Ministry of National Solidarity	Presentation of results of the report on care residential care centers, the adoption of the Minimum Standards and way forward	Bujumbura	Aissa Sow, Chief Child Protection/  Joseph Ndayisenga, DG Ministry National Solidarity  Etienne Gashamura, Advisor Ministry National Solidarity
	03.00 p.m.	Visit of residential care center (Orphelinat de l'Amour de Dieu Nezerwa)	See conditions of a center that does not respect the Minimum Standards and Ministry decided to target for deinstitutionalization	Bujumbura mairie, Près de l'EP Kinama IV	Aissa Sow, Chief Child Protection/  Anastasie, government Social worker

DAY 2	TIME	ACTIVITY	COMMENTS	LOCATION	UNICEF FOCAL POINT / PARTICIPANTS
<b>Wednesday</b> <b>August 14, 2013</b>	08:00 a.m.	Visit of child formerly living in an orphanage reintegrated with his family	Learn about a case of a child who was living in a residential care center not respecting the standards and was reunified with his family by government social worker (with UNICEF/IRC support)	Muhuta, Bujumbura rural	Aissa Sow, Chief Child Protection/ Anastasie, government Social worker  Lenite Sombogoro, Social worker, IRC (78 578229)
	04:00 p.m.	Return to Bujumbura		Gitega	Aissa Sow, Chief Child Protection
DAY 3	TIME	ACTIVITY	COMMENTS	LOCATION	UNICEF FOCAL POINT / PARTICIPANTS
<b>Thursday</b> <b>August 15, 2013</b>	08:30 a.m.	Travel to Bujumbura rural	Departure from the IRC Office	IRC, Bujumbura	Priscillia Tisserand, Child and Youth Protection and Development Coordinator  Fidele Ndikumagenge, New Generation project Coordinator  Edgar Cizero, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager
	09:00 a.m.	Visit of the New Generation project in Bujumbura Rural	Visit of older groups from New Generation 1 and new groups from New Generation 2	Bujumbura rural	
	12:00 p.m.	Lunch		Bujumbura	
	02:00 p.m.	Travel to Gitega	Departure from UNICEF	UNICEF, Bujumbura	Aissa Sow, Chief Child Protection

4:00 p.m.	Arrival in Gitega and installation in the hotel	office	Gitega, Hotel Helena	Aissa Sow, Chief Child Protection/
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DAY 4	TIME	ACTIVITY	COMMENTS	LOCATION	UNICEF FOCAL POINT / PARTICIPANTS
<b>Friday</b> <b>August 16, 2013</b>	08:30 a.m.	Meeting with CDFC provincial coordinator of Gitega	Learn about the role of CDFC in general and about the implementation of the Minimum Standards in particular	Gitega, CDFC office	Aissa Sow, Chief Child Protection  Priscillia Tisserand, CYPD coordinator, IRC  Tharcisse Mushengezi, Child Protection coordinator, IRC
	09:30 a.m.	Visit of orphanage Kezakimana	See condition of a residential care center with small children but with a programme of reintegration of children in the community	Gitega, orphanage Kezakimana	Aissa Sow, Chief Child Protection  Priscillia Tisserand, CYPD coordinator, IRC  Tharcisse Mushengezi, Child Protection coordinator, IRC
	11:00	Break (snack)		Gitega	
	12:00 p.m.	Visit with Child Protection Committee	Learn about the role of Child Protection Committees	Gitega, colline tbc	Aissa Sow, Chief Child Protection  Leonidas Nzojibwami, Chef bureau Gitega FVS-Amade (79944260)
	01:00 p.m.	Visit of orphans taken care by his/her extended family or foster family	Learn about the community care support to avoid placement of children in institutions	Gitega, colline tbc	Aissa Sow, Chief Child Protection/  Leonidas Nzojibwami, Chef bureau Gitega FVS-Amade

	03:00 p.m.	Visit of Solidarity Group	Learn about how Solidarity groups work and how it collaborates with the Child Protection Committees to support socio-economic situation of vulnerable families and prevent and respond to child protection issues at community level	Gitega, colline tbc	Aissa Sow, Chief Child Protection/  Leonidas Nzojibwami, Chef bureau Gitega FVS-Amade
	05:00	Return to hotel in Gitega		Helena hotel, Gitega	
<b>DAY 5</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>UNICEF FOCAL POINT / PARTICIPANTS</b>
<b>Saturday August 17, 2013</b>	08:30 a.m.	Travel from Bujumbura to Gitega	UNICEF car		Aissa Sow, Chief Child Protection
	Afternoon	Optional discussions with the IRC		Bujumbura	Priscillia Tisserand, IRC
<b>DAY 7</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>UNICEF FOCAL POINT / PARTICIPANTS</b>
<b>Monday August 19, 2013</b>	09:30 a.m.	Meeting with IRC	IRC office	Bujumbura	Felix Sarrazin, Director of Programs, IRC

## APPENDIX 3: CONTACT LIST

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Email Address</b>
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Felix Sarrazin	Deputy Director	IRC-Burundi	Felix.sarrazin@rescue.org
Lucia Soleti	Child Protection Officer	UNICEF-Burundi	lsoleti@unicef.org
Aissa Sow	Chief, Child Protection	UNICEF-Burundi	asow@unicef.org
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