

USAID/OTI Burundi Field Report

April - June 2006

Program Description

The Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) has supported the ongoing peace process in Burundi as outlined in the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement (APRA) by strengthening local capacities to benefit from and contribute to the peace process. PADCO has implemented OTI's Community-based Peace and Reconciliation Initiative (CPRI) and managed CPRI's field offices in the provinces of Gitega and Ruyigi. Through CPRI's three components - the vocational skills training (VST), community initiatives (CI) and media - the organization has strengthened local-level cooperation for conflict mitigation, helped diverse groups generate non-farm income, and increased knowledge and participation in public dialogue on current issues.

The program has worked closely with community groups, government entities, media outlets, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations and other USAID offices to maximize the positive outcomes of their efforts. Since February 2004, OTI has invested \$ 6,318,937 in these activities through 312 small grants. The OTI program in Burundi transitioned to USAID/EA (East Africa) on June 30, 2006.

Country Situation

Peace Talks Continue with FNL - After several months of negotiation during which the National Liberation Forces (FNL), the remaining rebel group, has twice launched mortar attacks on Bujumbura and on civilians in western provinces of Burundi, the Government of Burundi and the PALIPEHUTU-FNL movement have reached preliminary agreement on a number of issues. The especially critical issues are: acknowledging the FNL as a political party; and ensuring immunity from prosecution for the FNL rebels. In mid-June in Dar-es-Salaam, the two parties signed an agreement focused on lasting peace, security and stability in Burundi with plans to continue negotiations on June 28, 2006 in Pretoria, South Africa. The parties initially set this two-week deadline to sign a comprehensive cease-fire agreement but, recently, the FNL has indicated that talks may be suspended. According to the spokesperson of the Burundian President, there are still disagreements in the areas of army and police reform.

Freedom of Expression Under Threat - The National Council for Defense of Democracy - Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) held its party congress on June 3, to alert international and national observers of its intent to unify the party. It also warned journalists, civil society associations and opposition parties against speculating about the involvement of the CNDD-FDD president in governmental affairs and the corruption of party members. The stern statements by the President of CNDD-FDD, Hon. Hussein Radjabu, came after recent incidences of government harassment of the media and the imprisonment of both a journalist, Aloys Kabura, as well as a prominent civic activist, Térence Nahimana, (see below) on charges of speaking against the government. According to the Observatory of Government Action (OAG), the CNDD-FDD party has no right to issue warnings against civil society associations or the media.

Prominent Civic Activist Jailed - The former parliamentarian and civic activist, Térence Nahimana, was jailed on May 10, and, after being detained for five days, was formally charged with threatening state security. He is still in detention at this time. The charges arose from a letter Nahimana sent to Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza, in which Nahimana dismissed several explanations for the government's delay in starting peace talks with the FNL. He suggested that Burundi intended to join Rwanda and Uganda in invading neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo. The charges are said to be based on legislative provisions that make it a crime to expose Burundi to foreign hostility or to excite the population against the government or incitement to civil war. However, there is no evidence that the issues Nahimana raised have

evoked any hostility from a neighboring country or have given rise to any form of public disorder. Human Rights Watch has called for Nahimana's immediate release, adding that his imprisonment raises questions about freedom of expression in Burundi.

UNOB moves towards an integrated mission – On May 24, the Government of Burundi and the United Nations Mission in Burundi (UNOB) reached an agreement on the future of the UN mission in Burundi, as the actual UNOB mandate will end on December 31, 2006. Burundi requested that UNOB create an Integrated Office that will concentrate efforts on strengthening peace, social and economic reconstruction and help Burundi to complete the Millennium Development Goals. This also includes pursuing reforms in the security, judiciary and penitentiary sectors; establishing transitional justice mechanisms; disarming civilians; and, supporting the information and communications sectors.

Tri-Partite Plus One Commission Meets – On April 20, the "Tripartite Plus One" commission, which includes Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda, was launched. The U.S., which played the role of facilitator, sponsored the proceedings. The United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) and the French-based United Nations Mission in Burundi (ONUB) were observers. The objective of the Tri-Partite Plus One meeting was to assist in the efforts to stabilize the Great Lakes region. The meeting ended on April 21 with a resolution to pursue the leaders of the armed groups that operate in the Great Lakes region.

Thirty-Four Year Curfew Lifted - In a sign of increasing security in the capital city, the Council of Ministers decided to lift the curfew in Bujumbura that has been in place for 34 years. The curfew was established after the inter-ethnic violence of 1972 and has been strictly enforced since 1993.

USAID/OTI Highlights

A. Narrative Summary

OTI Team Visits Burundi - OTI Acting Director, Robert Jenkins, OTI Program Manager for Burundi, Karen Kaplan, and Contracting Officer, Amanda Downing, completed a successful visit to Burundi from June 18-22. They were joined by Limited Presence Country Office Director, Andy Karas, from USAID/East Africa. The team visited projects in Gitega and Ruyigi provinces; met with government officials and local partners to express appreciation for their close collaboration and partnership during the OTI program and to introduce USAID/East Africa (EA) to key OTI partners. Their visit generated national media coverage for the OTI program, USAID and the U.S. government.

Fourth Session of VST Graduates Receive Diplomas - In mid-June, 708 students graduated from the eight vocational skills training (VST) schools in Gitega and Ruyigi Province, bringing the total number of VST graduates from all four sessions to 3,304. Out of the 708 graduates, approximately 35% are women, 20% are ex-combatants and 17% are internally displaced persons (IDP). Ninety-seven small-business associations were formed by the graduates after having received their start-up kits. Follow-up assistance to new associations will continue under the new USAID/EA program.

Communal Council Training - OTI-supported training took place between the end of May and the beginning of June for all communal council members and five key communal administration personnel. Themes covered in the workshops included conflict management, effective communication, communal finance and efficient filing and archiving practices. The training is intended to help create cohesion amongst the communal council members, and strengthen the capacity of the local leaders and communal employees to fulfill their jobs and better serve their communities. To assist local government, technical kits comprised of office supplies and equipment were given to all communal offices in both provinces. Local authorities have asked that similar training take place for hillside council members and Heads of Zones.

Reconciliation Through Sport - Representatives from all seven communes of the Province of Ruyigi participated in the OTI-supported Sports Days. The activities took place on May 27 and 28. The first activity of its kind since the beginning of armed conflict 13 years ago, the goal of Sports Day was to promote reconciliation through sports. Each of Ruyigi's seven communes brought six female and six male athletes to participate in a track and field competition. More than a thousand spectators watched as 250 athletes from all communes competed in track and field events and in volleyball and soccer matches. For the first time, young women and girls were given the opportunity to compete in sports.

Uniforms and equipment were given as prizes, hoping that it will encourage continued participation in sporting activities. The Governor of Ruyigi, Mr. Bucumi, stated "These games are a great way for people of diverse backgrounds to come together in an effort to reconcile their differences." A similar event took place in Gitega Province.

B. Grant Activity Summary

Program Category	# of Grants, 2nd Quarter 2006	Funds Obligated, 2nd Quarter 2006	Total # of Grants to Date	Total Funds Obligated to Date
Strengthened local-level cooperation for conflict mitigation	2	\$24,271	142	\$3,339,059
Diverse groups generate non-farm income	0		96	\$1,908,304
Increased knowledge and participation in public dialogue on current issues	2	\$17,066	60	\$1,071,844
Total	4	\$41,337	298	\$6,318,937



Burundian President of the Senate, Mr. Gervais Rufyikiri, addresses the community of Nyarusange in front of the completed Nyarusange communal offices (left). OTI Acting Director, Robert Jenkins, OTI Country Representative, Melissa Rosser, and PADCO Chief of Party, Leanne Bayer, visiting the Burundian President of the National Assembly, Immaculée Nahayo (center). Governor of Ruyigi, Mr. Moise Bucumi, assists OTI Acting Director, Robert Jenkins, in the cutting of the inauguration ribbon for the newly-built Kayongozi market (right).

C. Indicators of Success

High-level Representation at Community Inaugurations - The last community initiatives were completed in Gitega and Ruyigi provinces. Several community inauguration ceremonies attracted the support of many high-level Burundian government officials praising the impact the projects have had on peace and reconciliation. On April 12, the President of the National Assembly, along with the Governor of Gitega and several members of Parliament, inaugurated a new primary school in Nyarusange, Gitega Province.

In the month of June, there were several notable events: the President of the National Assembly attended the ceremonies for the Mutaho Communal Council offices in Gitega Province; the President of the Senate participated in the handover of the Nyarusange Communal Council Offices; the Minister of Good Governance was the guest speaker at the inauguration of the Kyangozi Market in Ruyigi Province; and the First Vice-President of the National Assembly and the Minister of Public Works joined U.S. Ambassador, Patricia Moller, to celebrate the rehabilitation of the Gitega Town Center. The high quality work and, more importantly, the conflict resolution objectives of the OTI program are well-known and supported by Burundian government officials. Moreover, the participation of the local communities is cited as a unique and a very important aspect of the program.

USAID/EA and Ministry of Education take over the VST program - As a part of the OTI close-out and handover plan, USAID/EA will continue the VST component of the Community-based Peace and Reconciliation Initiative (CPRI) program for an additional two years -- funds permitting. Its goal is to enable the Government of Burundi to fund and manage the VST schools at the end of the program. A joint commission including government representatives from the Ministry of National Education and Culture, USAID, and implementing partner staff has developed a joint management strategy for the next VST session, beginning July 10. OTI and USAID/EA have designed the handover to avoid a gap in programming, maintaining the VST schools' momentum and results.

Visit to the President of the National Assembly - The President of the National Assembly, Immaculée Nahayo, invited OTI Acting Director, Robert Jenkins, OTI Country Representative, Melissa Rosser, and PADCO Chief of Party, Leanne Bayer, to visit her at the National Assembly. She expressed her thanks for the work that OTI has done in Gitega and Ruyigi and offered her personal support for the way in which OTI works to empower local communities to resolve conflicts and become involved with their local authorities.

NEXT STEPS/IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

- Final handover the VST program to REDSO
- Close out OTI offices