Joint evaluation of the cooperation with Burundi of Belgium, the European Commission, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom

- Executive summary –

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The opinions expressed in this document represent the authors’ points of view which are not necessarily shared by the above mentioned donors taking part in the evaluation, or by the authorities of Burundi.
Germany, Belgium, the European Commission, France, the Netherlands, the UK and Sweden have come together to carry out a joint evaluation of their cooperation with Burundi over the 2005-2011 period. The joint evaluation analyses the results of their joint efforts and combined impact on Burundi’s development.

Between 2005 and 2011, Burundi received USD 2.944 billion in assistance. The European Union provided 48% of this amount, with EU Member States providing USD 843 million, and the European Commission providing USD 578 million.

To illustrate the contribution of the seven donors taking part in the evaluation (DPEs) to consolidating peace and national development, the evaluation focuses on four areas: agricultural development, education, democratic governance (police, security, justice, media), and macroeconomic support.

The evaluation covers a wide range of interventions over a long period of time (2005-2011). The contribution analysis method has been chosen: the aim is to identify the contribution of a selection of interventions to peace building, the legitimacy and effectiveness of institutions, and inclusive economic growth, step by step.

**Design of DPE interventions**

*Weak link between analysis and action*

In 2005, the DPEs already had analyses, international engagement principles and field experience that could have served as a basis for designing intervention strategies. However, in general, these analyses did not have the influence that would be expected on the strategies implemented. The strategies of the DPEs rarely mention the conflict. When the conflict is mentioned though, the discourse focuses on its effects, rather than on its root causes and risk factors, which makes it difficult to target interventions.

Over the 2005-2011 period, the main priority of the DPEs was institutional support, especially to strengthen security. Low priority and limited resources were dedicated to support economic growth factors, although economic growth generates optimistic expectations, and is thus conducive to peace.

*A significant shift from a project-based to a more strategic approach*

At the beginning of the period under review, most DPE assistance was provided via non-coordinated projects, concerning agriculture in particular. Strengthened sectoral coordination progressively led the DPEs to adopt more strategic and coherent approaches.

During this period, the DPEs further aligned their strategies. This was enabled by clearer government policy and a change in the tools used by the DPEs. A cause and consequence of this improved coordination amongst DPEs has been a shift of support from a project to a programme approach. The use of basket funds and budget support has been a significant change in this regard. DPEs were instrumental in establishing a basket fund in the education sector. This experience is held up as a model for other sectors.

*Extended strategic commitments, more unstable financial commitments*

Most DPEs have rapid response mechanisms for emergencies, and to take advantage of windows of opportunity to make post-conflict progress. However, these tools are implemented at speeds that vary considerably. DPEs have expressed their determination to remain committed to Burundi. Their development assistance to Burundi doubled between 2005 and 2010.
Over the period under review, the strategic commitments of most of the DPEs were extended over periods of six years, and sometimes of twelve years. However, generally speaking, the financial commitments did not match these strategic commitments. Therefore, aid predictability varies greatly amongst the DPEs.

The impact of aid varies amongst sectors

Security: significant contribution to professionalising defence and police forces, but insufficient to guarantee security.

The program results of the demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants, and of police and army reforms are generally good. Although the police still have some structural weaknesses (weak internal control, a command that still needs to be unified and insufficient material resources), these positive results are correlated with better army and police performance. It is also worth noting that while Burundi has encountered six episodes of mass violence between 1965 and 2003, this has not occurred over the 2005-2011 period.

The transition towards peace is happening. However, it is undermined by the lack of change in the structural causes of the Burundi conflict (extreme poverty, extreme concentration of political and economic power, systemic social exclusion). There are also new and growing risks: increased domestic political tension, the potential spread of regional instability, youth radicalisation.

Democratic governance: limited impact due to the government and the DPEs having diverging goals, and due to the lack of a political approach among the DPEs

The DPEs made significant progress in parliamentary and judicial capacity building. However, there has not been any progress on the action framework for civil society and the media, the independence of the judiciary, or access to justice for the most vulnerable. The political context (the upcoming elections) does not hinder the delivery of aid outputs, but it does limit the way these outputs are transformed into impacts and outcomes.

Technical indicators (effectiveness of the government and judiciary authorities) thus improved over the 2005-2011 period. However, all the other indicators (accountability of institutions, participation, human rights, political stability, and absence of violence) progressed until 2010-11, and then declined.

Food crops agriculture: a project-based approach that has been poorly coordinated, and that has not reversed the deterioration of food security

Over the 2005-2011 period, the DPEs played a major role in the seed sector, in opening up rural areas, and in hydro-agricultural development. Investments in infrastructure and equipment were poorly coordinated. Institutional support was inadequate to complement these investments. The investments thus were limited in their effectiveness and sustainability. Ever since the national agricultural investment programme was established in 2011, the DPEs have shifted towards a more strategic and integrated approach.

Rural road repairs only temporarily opened up rural areas, as maintenance works were not conducted on these roads. Furthermore, the food security impact of the DPEs’ interventions was restricted to just a few zones receiving assistance. On the whole, the growth of subsistence agriculture was less than population growth over the 2005-2011 period. In the absence of alternative income sources, it can be inferred that the food security situation has deteriorated. This is a risk for the country's stability.
Export crops (coffee and tea): financial and technical support, but little strategic engagement

The STABEX fund helped to repair some rural roads for accessing agricultural facilities and to rehabilitate industrial machinery that belonged to government agencies prior to privatisation. Regarding coffee, the lack of actual investment in village plantations caused their productivity and profitability to stagnate at very low levels. Neither the production quality nor quantity of raw material improved. This did not create a favourable environment for private investment, which has focused on processing and export activities. Results and impacts are better for tea, whose quality and quantity are increasing.

Other DPE interventions did not concern cash crops, neither at the sector nor the farming system level, although farmers conduct both subsistence agriculture and cash crop activities. The DPEs also intervened very little in the ongoing privatisation strategy for the tea and coffee sectors, even though they are crucial for the national economy.

Education: significant resources to support reforms, but limited effects due to implementation capacities and human resource management

The DPEs were particularly committed to improving quality: improving access to learning and teaching material for teachers and pupils, French courses for teachers, guidance for pupils via a network whose supporters include the FCE (“Fonds Commun Education”) at the end of the period and, to a lesser extent, construction of facilities.

Over the 2005-2011 period, the FCE contribution was limited due to a very low disbursement rate. Though the FCE has significant resources, it has performed below expectations. Other challenges have also been identified in the sector: local educational supervision and training are still insufficiently supported by an appropriate staff deployment policy, and grade retention practices are a burden to the system.

Although few DPE interventions have been devoted to education programmes specifically aiming at consolidating peace, they have contributed to educational development in a context of reconstruction (i) by supporting the continuity/improvement of educational programmes, (ii) by raising donor awareness about the need to fund education (playing a major role in raising the awareness of the Global Partnership for Education about the FCE joint fund) and (iii) to a lesser extent, by institutional support to the education sector reform.

Macroeconomic support: significant technical and financial support, but whose direct economic governance products must still be strengthened

Over the period under review, the DPEs disbursed EUR 207 million in general budget support, which was accompanied by technical support whose beneficiaries included the Ministry of Finance and the Burundi revenue office (“OBR”). This support to the Burundi revenue office enabled significant progress in tax collection. The technical assistance given to the Ministry of Finance also helped to make progress in budget preparation, improving budget comprehensiveness and transparency. However, the performance assessment of available public funds shows that the government has taken little ownership of budgetary and financial reforms, and that government technical capacity is limited.

Little consideration given to gender

The country strategies of the DPEs have given little consideration to gender, with the exception of the Netherlands and the UK. The implementation of the programmes does not reflect an approach that is systematically gender-specific. In this sense, DPE goals are less ambitious than those of the government, which has enshrined the principle of gender equality in the Constitution and has set gender quotas.
Aid was abundant on the whole, but only partially brought about the expected changes in terms of stability, institution building and growth

In general, the DPE interventions provided the planned outputs, and often produced the expected direct results. However, the contribution of these results to structural country changes has been incomplete, unstable and disappointing in general. While Burundi had much of what would have been needed to succeed in its post-conflict transition in 2005, the conflict’s structural causes persist: extreme poverty, concentration of political and economic power and systemic social exclusion. Why is there a gap between the relatively good direct results of the DPE interventions and the lack of structural changes in the country? Our analysis explains this gap through the factors below.

**Awareness of the structural causes of fragility, but insufficient integration of these causes into bilateral strategies**

Country strategies have only rarely identified or incorporated the structural causes of the conflict, or forecast the risks and opportunities. It has only been the symptoms of the conflict that have been examined. For the interventions that they fund, the DPEs do not have a monitoring system for their potential impact on the structural causes of the conflict.

**Awareness of risk factors, but insufficient integration of these causes into bilateral strategies**

Knowing that the UK and Sweden pulled out, the Netherlands was the only DPE that significantly readjusted its programmes, although the context has significantly changed. Thirteen years after Arusha, stabilisation remains the main objective of the DPEs. The lack of emphasis placed on growth and jobs is particularly striking, as post-conflict transitions usually need to anchor stability in prosperity to be successful. The reduction of violence, security sector reform, and the emergence of a civil society involved in public debate has opened a window of opportunity that could disappear if growth does not take over.

Compared to other forms of post-crisis transitions, DPE support agendas in Burundi have placed little emphasis on emerging risks such as:

- the combination of chronic political violence and a tougher stance from authorities in the run-up to the 2015 elections;
- the combination of strong demographic growth, low economic growth, youth unemployment, and violent political mobilisation;
- the combination of land tenure issues, environmental degradation, strong demographic growth, and the return of 1.2 million war victims.

The analysis of DPEs has also reflected diverging interpretations of the importance of risks (the risk of the resurgence of radicalism in particular).

**Some interventions were not sufficiently comprehensive to instil the expected changes**

Support for justice and security was not included in overall criminal justice reform. In the agricultural sector, the DPE projects were poorly coordinated, and adopted a tunnel vision approach, restricted to specific subsectors. Up until recently, interventions in the agricultural sector have provided little support to strategic considerations regarding privatisation in the coffee and tea industries. Lastly, some sectors were identified as receiving insufficient support from the donor community: support for non-agricultural activities, urban development and secondary education.
Difficulties in aligning objectives, between a government which aims at strengthening its power, and the DPEs which are promoting democratic principles

The DPEs did not draw adequate conclusions from the political conditions, which were sometimes detrimental to their interventions. For instance, the DPEs maintained technical support whilst waiting for the government to open up. It is worth questioning the relevance of this approach. The analysis shows that the objectives of the government and of the DPEs were only partially convergent.

Such divergences are common in fragile states, where societies are divided. This is why the interests at stake, the agents of change, and the obstacles to reform must be analysed in detail.

Main recommendations

International cooperation is often based on convergence of interests between donors and the partner country government that is only partial. The degree of convergence directly impacted the effectiveness of the cooperation between the DPEs and the government of Burundi during the period under review. However, the DPEs did not take stock of obvious divergences in values and objectives in certain areas.

It would be useful to analyse the areas of convergence/divergence between the DPEs and the government’s objectives (what we call the “cooperation area”) to develop realistic strategies for future interventions. Political analysis will help divide this “cooperation area” into three groups of objectives which involve different strategic approaches:

Area in which objectives are shared by the DPEs and the government

The Paris Declaration and the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States are based on the assumption of total convergence of donor and partner interests. This group of objectives is thus a perfect area of application for these commitments. The DPEs can easily align with national strategies here. The DPEs also influence these national strategies through a constructive dialogue.

We have identified the following priorities in this area:

- Investing in growth, a prerequisite for stability, particularly through support for opening up remote areas, and income diversification support (which is difficult to provide, but which is absolutely essential).
- Continuing to invest in social services by strengthening technical assistance at the central level, with respect to financial management, staff management, and programmes management.
- As for security, an integrated support strategy is suggested (police services reform as part of overall criminal justice reform, taking intelligence services into account). Encouraging the non-violent participation of the National Liberation Front in the workings of democracy is also suggested.

Area in which objectives are shared, but have lower priority for the government

This is a group of objectives that the government is open to cooperating on, but for which it shows little leadership. The DPEs must launch initiatives to address them, and coordinate these initiatives as much as possible. Dialogue with local and central authorities must be encouraged, in the hope that they will take over. During the period of transition towards a strategic framework that is adequately formalised (which will eventually enable support via a basket fund or budget support), projects will be the preferred tool. NGOs play an important role in this area. Below are the recommendations:

- Adjust support for agricultural development: support the development of farming models which are resilient and economically profitable, particularly through integrating subsistence agriculture/cash crops/livestock production, and through improving access to
agricultural inputs and to technical support for intensification. Support for producer organisations needs to be continued, as well as investment in hydro-agricultural development.

- Invest in diversifying sources of income. Urban and development hub planning must include reliable access to water, electricity, health services and education of decent quality, technical training, financial markets adapted to very small businesses, and so on.
- Urgently invest in essential initiatives to bring about security in land tenure.

**Area in which DPE objectives converge with the goals of civil society, but diverge from government goals**

In this area of objectives, the approaches favoured in the Paris Declaration and the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (“one vision and one plan”) should be carefully considered. For instance, the evaluation shows that the government does not share a number of DPE democratic governance priorities. The DPEs must draw conclusions from the observed differences in values and general objectives in certain areas. However, this is no reason to give up on these sectors.

- The most common approach to governance issues in Burundi, providing technical support whilst waiting for the government to open up, is not effective. The approaches need to incorporate more political realism in order to understand what is truly at stake, the risks for the various stakeholders, and the sources of resistance.
- It is absolutely essential to establish a clear link between diplomacy and development aid in this area of objectives.
- The European Commission’s new State-Building Contract tool should make this approach easier, as this tool places special emphasis on dialogue on good governance/human rights, justice, and security sector reform.

**Suggested modalities to consolidate the transition**

We recommend continuing capacity building for national government organisations, which should benefit from budget support or basket funds. We also recommend continuing to provide significant aid to civil society and local institutions, particularly through NGOs, provided that the coherence of this aid with the country strategy of the DPEs is strengthened.

Risks related to channelling financial resources must be assessed. Sharing the same forum for dialogue does not necessarily mean that all funding has to be channelled through this forum.

**Complete the assignment of tasks by sectors amongst DPEs**

We recommend that the DPEs define common mechanisms for monitoring the structural causes of fragility in Burundi and adopt a more forward-looking approach to risks and opportunities.

Considerations on task sharing could extend beyond a strictly sectoral distribution, to a distribution based on “intervention capacities” (e.g., long-term and foreseeable/fast and flexible intervention tools), on the fields of interventions, (defence/diplomacy/direct and indirect cooperation…), on resources (technical assistance/financial resources) and/or on zones (positioning in the sub region).

As part of an approach that assigns tasks per sector, we recommend that the DPEs at least harmonise the definitions of support sectors and areas, and settle on them as time goes on.

**At the DPE headquarters: lighten sectoral concentration in fragile states**

Each DPE headquarters has its own doctrine for applying the principle of support concentration/specialisation. Both country concentration (which led DFID to disengage from Burundi in favour of other priority countries) and sector concentration are used. As a result, the
DPE delegations have varying degrees of flexibility to commit to sectors beyond those set in their bilateral strategies.

We believe there are two main factors that argue in favour of flexibility in applying this doctrine:

- Few European countries cooperate with Burundi. As such, donors should have the possibility of compensating for the sudden disengagement of other donors (DFID and SIDA).
- In a fragile country, one must be able to respond to issues that are complex, interlinked, and multi-sectoral (e.g., integrated justice-security support, land tenure-agricultural-infrastructure support, support for non-agricultural activities in rural areas...). Interventions limited to two or three sectors cannot address these types of issues.