

A TRANSITIONAL LOCAL GOVERNANCE SUPPORT PROGRAM DRAFT SYNTHESIS PROPOSAL TO DFID

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Background

At the core of Burundi's political and economic problems is a deeply institutionalized system of lack of accountability, social exclusion, impunity, unpredictability, and clientelism, which has gorged itself for decades on aid money. Burundians are well aware this system is *the* key cause of misery and war. Donors have also come to understand this. The new government says it is committed to dismantling it.

This long-standing, deeply ingrained system is not new. It does not result from "la crise," (although the latter increased its rapacity and brutality) and will not disappear automatically with the end of the war, nor with the organization of elections. Both of these will help. But they are insufficient to break the mental, social and economic weight of decades of accumulated exclusion, top-down behavior, and lack of accountability.

Donors have tended to follow either of two approaches towards local state institutions: either channeling their support (training, TA, investment funds) through the government machinery down to the commune structure and the local technical services; or bypassing most of the public structures and directly interacting with the population, typically through the creation of committees or associations. Both of these approaches have their merits. But they also fail directly to address the interactions, the governance relations, between local state institutions and citizens. In so doing, they may unintentionally maintain the status quo consisting of top-down, unaccountable, corrupt communal institutions. The lack of coordination between donors, and their lack of transparency, often strengthen this same result.

Like everywhere, the creation of better institutions cannot be imported or imposed from the outside; it can but be the result of internal politics, bargaining, and social learning. This will take a lot of time, but it can be supported by donors. The main question for donors is how they can build on current opportunities and promote change without controlling it.

The Strategy

Key features of the local governance support strategy we propose are:

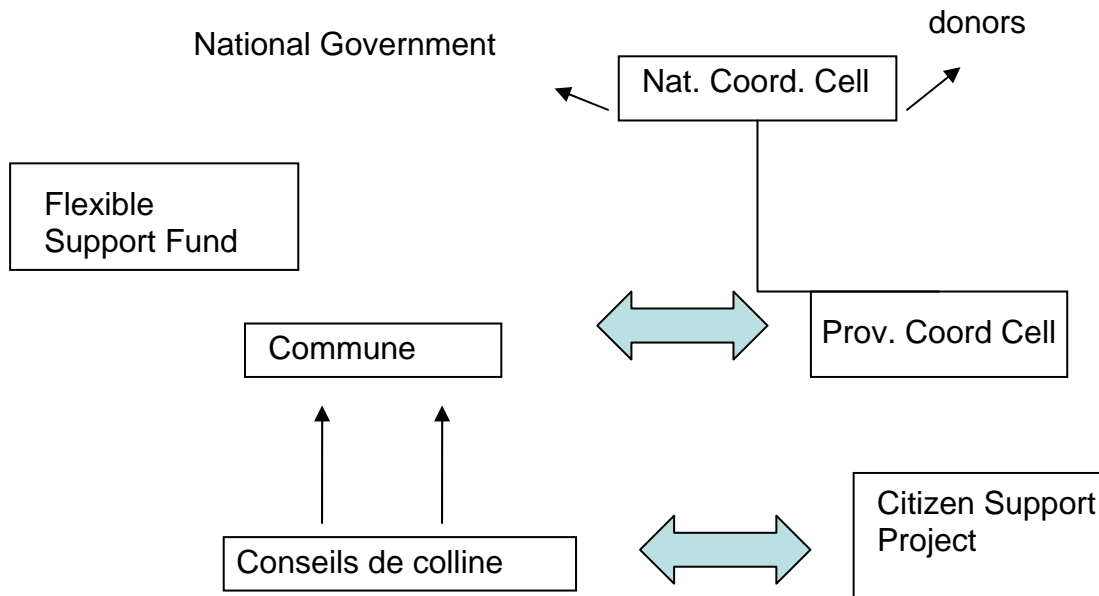
- *create opportunities for people to lead, to bargain, to organize, to learn:* such opportunities are matters of program design, of attention to process; they can be mainstreamed in all sectors –not just in civil society building or governance programs.
- *anchor projects in citizens' representative institutions:* it would be a waste *not* to grasp the opportunities provided by Burundi's ongoing democratization and decentralization. Working with the *conseils de colline*, the representative institutions that are closest to the citizens is important here, as is working with the *conseil communal*.
- *promote bottom-up planning*, which runs counter to the long-standing top-down and clientelist nature of Burundi's governance processes.
- *dramatically improve on the ground coordination*, in function of people's expressed needs and initiatives, and in close collaboration with the communal and provincial structures in charge.
- *mainstream personal transformation and conflict resolution approaches*, focusing not only on ethnicity but also on power differentials, the rural-urban gap, a restoration of community, etc.
- *work with utmost transparency towards all players* (public and private) in order to empower them; do so by improving the behavior of aid agencies themselves and by building on Burundi's free press.

The Program

Concretely, the program would consist of 3 interlinked projects.

- A Citizen Support Project, which provides training and advice to the *conseils de colline*, helping them to be active participants, based on good conflict analysis and widespread and informed local participation, in the elaboration of the *programme de développement communautaire*. This project will be executed by an NGO with significant experience in this sort of grassroots work.
- A light Coordination Facilitation Cell (national and provincial) whose aim is to improve local coordination of all actors intervening in the commune in line with the demands from the communes. This is mainly done through facilitation, sharing of information, and negotiation at both the national and the provincial level. This cell will be placed under the authority of the UN Resident-Coordinator.
- A small Flexible Support Fund to rapidly support key aspects of the *programme de développement communautaire* that have been elaborated with significant citizen involvement and that are well thought through. This Fund would be contracted out to an agency that has experience with this work, is willing to shares the program's approach at the communal level, and is present in the provinces chosen.

All three these projects work closely together and receive support from DfID's Governance Advisor.



The Detail

1. CITIZEN SUPPORT PROJECT

The soon to be elected *conseils de colline* are sufficiently close to the population to be reachable and controllable by the latter, and for the sanction of elections five years down the road to have some meaning. They can learn to become the bodies that interact with the *conseil communal* and the communal administrator. This project will help them to become places for citizenship engagement in local development, *i.e.*, by assuring that their voices will be heard in the elaboration of the *programme de développement communautaire*.

The project will have one “*animateur des citoyens*,” well trained and convinced of the vision of the project, living in the commune, who will support the *conseils de colline* in their work. Support can take different forms:

- training:
 - o conflict resolution and personal transformation

- the functioning of the commune and basic civic education
- some basic management knowledge
- advice, upon request

In short, this project supports the official decentralization policy, by helping the members of the lowest elected level in Burundi to become active participants, based on good conflict analysis and widespread and informed local participation, in the elaboration of the *programme de développement communautaire*. Methodologically, its work is of the well-known grassroots “*animation et encadrement*” type; its main originalities are that it targets elected bodies and not its own preferred committees or associations, and that it puts personal transformation and conflict resolution methodologies at the heart of its approach.

2. COORDINATION CELL

This cell promotes commune-level coordination on the basis of the *programme de développement communautaire*.

It is composed of a small, one-person, Bujumbura-based office under the authority of the UN Resident-Coordinator, and one representative (“coordination agent”) per province. This cell is at the very heart of the program: it is the key innovative aspect of the program.

The Bujumbura-level presence is essential to:

- negotiate the approach –and its continued maintenance-- at the central level, with both the government of Burundi and donor community
- learn lessons from the experience and feed them into policy

The province-based coordination agents are independent of the province and the commune; yet, they are mandatorily and scrupulously transparent and inclusive to both the governor and the administrators, inviting them to every meeting, sharing with them all information so they know what is happening in their territory both in terms of the demands of the people and the offer of aid funds.

Their foremost task is to facilitate the harmonization of the programming of the agencies working in the commune (the “supply” of resources) with the *programme de développement communautaire*. This will happen through public meetings in which representatives of all the development actors intervening in the territory of the commune react to the *programme de développement communautaire*, explain how their projects and budgets relate to the demands of the people, and, if possible, undertaken certain commitments both in terms of investments and methodologies (the Flexible Support Fund exists to set the example in this regard). In strategic terms, this means that other development actors will be encouraged to abandon, to the extent possible, their various committees and other structures they have created for their own purposes, working instead on the basis of the plans negotiated between the representatives of the citizens and the commune. It also means that citizens will be able to understand and influence how these development actors work, where their funds are invested and why, etc. The coordination agents will help prepare these meetings, assure that development actors do participate in them, and monitor and follow up on the commitments taken afterwards.

The second task of the coordination agents is to work on harmonizing the intervention modalities of different actors so as to bring them to work with much greater transparency. The ways to do this shall include:

- Advertising all project interventions incl. budget relevant budget lines in local language at school, market, communal office
- All investments –whether by projects directly or by community-based structures- to be done through public tenders as above, with both tenders and all offers publicly advertised in local language
- Efficient and tough control systems for project employees and clear disciplinary procedures to be applied rigorously for any transgressions

- Contracting Burundian journalists to make X number of visits to the field at project expense to report on developments (paid for by the project, but acting independently)

These transparency rules will be applied by the Flexible Support Fund (again, setting the example), but the aim is clearly that as many development actors as possible take on this approach. This should provide opportunities for all stakeholders to learn about agencies' resource allocations, costs, management, etc – and, eventually, to compare different interventions (incl. those of the commune and the government), to ask questions, to propose fresh approaches –i.e., to act as critical and informed citizens.

3. FLEXIBLE SUPPORT FUND

This fund allows for rapid response to the demands and plans set out in the *programme de développement communautaire*, focusing mainly on those areas to which other agencies cannot respond (to avoid duplication). The presence of such a flexible fund, and its willingness to support the process, will lend credibility to the above projects and improve their overall quality.

The concrete investment decisions will be made for each commune by a team composed of the *animateur des citoyens* of that commune, the coordination agent, and the person in charge of the Fund. Criteria guiding project selection will be developed later, but may include; a) the quality of the participatory process (as attested by the *animateur des citoyens*), b) a measure of need (proportion of *sinistrés*, for ex.), etc. The activities funded by this Fund are executed (subcontracted) through other agencies –private companies or development actors already working in the area. Oversight of project execution will be done by the Fund manager. The Fund requires subcontractors to apply the methodology of transparency described above.

INSTITUTIONAL SET-UP

The three projects are independently contracted by DfID. They are contractually obliged to work together, along specific modalities to be developed (e.g., such as those outlined for the Flexible Support Fund). The project directors will meet regularly together with DfID's Governance Advisor for discussion and fine-tuning.

The Citizen Support Project will be executed by an NGO with significant experience in this sort of grassroots work –there are a number of these in Burundi, and discussions shall start soon. The specific methodologies to be used need to be developed with them. It is likely that this project will require a major input from a specialized conflict resolution NGO: the UK supports a number of these in Burundi, with lots of experience and local knowledge. Their support will be necessary for a) the initial in-depth training of the project employees (especially the *animateurs des citoyens*); possibly, b) support for the initial training of the members of the *conseils de colline*, and c) support for ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

The Coordination Facilitation Cell will in all likelihood be placed under the authority of the UN Resident-Coordinator. Budget-wise it may be part of UNDP, but it will sit under the “resident Coordinator” hat. Essentially, it consists of one person at the national level and one per province, plus secretarial assistance. It is important to have negotiated serious commitments from both a government sponsor and a number of key donors before the program ought to take off.

The Flexible Support Fund will be managed by an agency that has experience with this sort of funds (technical and financial control especially) and is present in the provinces chosen. Ideally, this agency's own approach to work in the Province fits squarely with the one of this program, so the two mutually reinforce each other. There are a number of agencies that could do this job.

The program could run for two years (although more would be better, to allow for local learning, which rarely takes place at once); during the last few months, a serious, scientific, and comparative study ought to be undertaken about its impact on citizenship, corruption, project quality, etc., comparing its results with those in other provinces where no such approach was adopted. This will allow for well-informed decisions about scaling up.