

A photograph of a man in a dark long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, carrying a backpack, walking past a wall made of mud bricks and wooden posts. The background shows a rural setting with a thatched roof and a blue building. A large red semi-transparent box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing white text.

Supporting locally led violence monitoring and community peacebuilding in Burundi

Burundi has experienced sporadic bouts of violence for more than 40 years since gaining independence in 1962. The most recent violence, which began in April 2015, started following the president's decision to run for a contested third consecutive term. Since then, the security situation has deteriorated, with almost 1,000 people killed and 200,000 fleeing to neighbouring countries.

This learning summary highlights the main successes, challenges and lessons learnt from a project delivered by Peace Direct and INAMA, a network of 23 civil society organisations in Burundi, from 2014-2016. The aim of the project is to strengthen a national network of civil society organisations who use trained 'Citizen Reporters' (CRs) to monitor and respond to violence and human rights abuses as well as to share information about human rights violations with key international stakeholders.

The following is based on an outcome mapping exercise conducted in July 2015 and two independent evaluations conducted in 2015 and 2016.



Evaluation of Efficiency and Effectiveness

- **National coverage:** INAMA has successfully achieved national coverage with a total of 198 trained Citizen Reporters (CRs) reporting and responding to human rights violations in all 18 provinces of Burundi. No similar national network is thought to exist in Burundi.
- **Cost effective:** For a national network, the initiative is cost effective with a small secretariat supporting a network of CRs reporting in real-time using free and/or open source technology.
- **Usefulness of information:** In a survey of over 300 high level international stakeholders who receive INAMA reports (UN agencies, Governments, INGOs etc) 68% reported these to be highly valuable due to the lack of information on insecurity on the ground in Burundi. 44% said that they use reports for internal analysis of the context while 38% use them for decision-making.
- **Effectiveness of response:** From November 2015 to April 2016 (the period covered by the evaluations) INAMA responded to insecurity and human rights violations through the holding of five Peace and Security Meetings (which brought together civil society groups, police, local leaders and other stakeholders to discuss sources of violence in the community), 40 Community Dialogues and 483 direct interventions by CRs to specific incidents. Out



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of a sample of 30 reports on interventions submitted by 10% of CRs, seventeen were successfully resolved, ten were still in progress, while only three were unresolved.

- **Ability to operate:** INAMA has managed to maintain working relationships with the administration and police, which has enabled them to continue operating in a very difficult political climate. Some members of the administration and police have even joined in the Peace and Security Meetings and INAMA has been permitted to visit and negotiate the release of some prisoners.
- **Local credibility:** CRs are seen as credible and trustworthy by the population who share information about incidents to them despite the risks involved. This is exceptional given the general fear in Burundi of speaking about human rights violations.

Challenges

- **Political climate:** The political climate has continued to deteriorate, with high levels of suspicion, tight government control, interference and oversight of all civil society activities and often harsh repercussions for any persons or activities deemed critical of the government. While the monitoring of violence and human rights abuses has not been affected, response activities (which are more visible) have been severely curtailed.



Total number of reports from Citizen Reporters, verified by INAMA, until 15 August 2016.

- **Responding to police brutality:** INAMA and its CRs have been largely unable to respond to incidents of violence committed by the police or administration for fear of coming under suspicion of belonging to the opposition.
- **Limited advocacy in-country:** INAMA's ability to conduct advocacy in-country has been severely limited due to the government crackdown on civil society. To protect the safety of CRs, INAMA maintains anonymity in country, and public activities such as the Peace and Security Dialogues were conducted in the name of INAMA's member organisations.
- **Difficulties in response strategy:** While INAMA's reporting capability was found to be excellent, INAMA has struggled to make the link between the reporting of incidents and the response to these incidents. It has not been clear whether INAMA member organisations or CRs respond to the same incidents or what the timeline is for reporting and responding. To what extent CRs managed to resolve conflicts and whether interventions were durable is also unclear.

Impact

Whilst it is difficult to assess the extent to which INAMA's response activities have had an impact on the wider security situation, the evaluation identified the following areas of impact:

- **Increased international attention:** In terms of reporting, the survey of international stakeholders suggests that INAMA has

contributed to an increased awareness and understanding of the nature and dynamics of the conflict in Burundi.

- **Increased security:** The high number of responses and the trust placed in them by community members suggest that INAMA has contributed to a greater sense of security in communities. In particular, 60 out of 80 respondents reported that the Community Dialogue and Peace and Security meetings convened by INAMA had contributed to improved relations between supporters of different political parties, while 64 out of 80 respondents expressed that the meetings had contributed to a significant reduction in conflicts related to ethnicity. Remarkably, 55 out of 80 respondents cited that there was a reduction in intimidation and torture by the Imbonerakure (youth wing allied with the ruling party) in INAMA's project areas.
- **Replicability:** INAMA's network of activists reporting on and responding to human rights violations in their locality is a model that can be adapted and used in a variety of contexts. It is especially valuable where there is a lack of information available from the media, social media and humanitarian networks to inform interventions and prevent the escalation of rumours.
- **Scalability:** The evaluation found that the model has good potential to scale up because, once trained, CRs operate largely autonomously, work on a volunteer basis, and operate without much need for supervision from INAMA.

“ Before the Exchange meetings, I considered all people who were in different political parties from mine (Ruling party) enemies. I considered these people not only as my enemy, but also the source of insecurity. But with the Peace and Security Committee meetings, I have understood finally that a member of the opposition is not a source of insecurity but a contributor to the good security. ”
Member of the ruling party, Bubanza province



Reflections from Peace Direct and INAMA

INAMA

According to INAMA, the evaluations conducted clearly show the impact of their training and various community meetings, but fail to emphasise the risks undertaken by INAMA, their member organisations or CRs and the influence of the challenging political climate on their work. The evaluations also correctly highlight that it has been challenging to get accurate accounts from interviewees on the most significant causes of conflict because of the general climate of fear and suspicion in Burundi.

Peace Direct

These findings show that INAMA's model is contextually appropriate and that it stands out as a valuable network whilst operating in a highly complex and dangerous environment - something that has gained considerable appreciation by members of the international community who receive INAMA's reports.

We also accept the challenges highlighted in the evaluations, particularly around response activities, how to scale these and draw a clearer link between reporting and response. We are now working with the Carter Center and others to ensure that INAMA's reporting and response activities' continue to strengthen in the coming months, as the crisis in Burundi shows no signs of abating.

Recommendations

- **Streamline information:** For any human rights and violence monitoring network such as INAMA, it is important to improve and streamline the amount and quality of information, particularly through training and retraining of Citizen Reporters.
- **Improve reporting-response linkages.** As an early-warning, early response (EWER) network, INAMA must strengthen their system so it can better link reporting activities to response activities. One way could be to map the type of violence reported against key events to understand correlations between the two and better predict outbreaks of violence.
- **Find creative ways of measuring impact.** In hot conflicts it is often very difficult to measure impact. Therefore INAMA needs to explore other ways to understand its impact, for example conducting a comparative analysis in locations where INAMA is not present.
- **Scale up where impact is clear:** The evaluation found that INAMA would benefit from scaling-up with more CRs in selected provinces. Provinces with most CRs were also those found to have experienced the most positive changes because of the initiative.

