

Stabilizing rural **Burundi**





Agriculture to bolster peace

Peace in Burundi can be consolidated by stabilizing the country's rural communities, according to FAO. The UN's food agency advocates continued support to the most vulnerable farmers, while stressing the need to develop agriculture's economic potential.

Currently, FAO is carrying out agricultural rehabilitation activities valued at around \$60 million and targeting 1 250 000 people over a period of two years.

Their objective is to increase food production, for instance by making quality seeds of high-yielding crops available. FAO promotes income-generating activities and encourages farmers to join forces, because working together not only helps to produce marketable surpluses, but also strengthen peaceful relations.

"We support farmers in moving away from subsistence farming," says Hubert Chauvet, FAO's Representative (a.i.) in Burundi.

Burundi under pressure

Burundi's population is expected to rise from around 8.5 million today to 13 million in 2025. Demographic pressure is exacerbated by a massive return of refugees, while climatic vagaries, crop pests and rising food prices pose additional threats to food security.

Since 1993, when civil war broke out, per capita agricultural production has more than halved. Meanwhile, undernourishment has risen to 62 percent of the population in 2005-07.



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Hubert Chauvet

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Marie-Claire Barakamfitye

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Bosco Nzambimana



Getting more out of Burundi's fragmented smallholdings

With population density reaching peaks of 500 persons per square kilometre, the average landholding of a family of five is now less than 0.3 hectare, yielding just three months of food per year.

And it is not only land hunger that drives people into the wetlands, down from the hills where they traditionally farm. The climate too has changed. Droughts now alternate with torrential rains.

In the wetland of Nyamuswanga in northern Burundi, FAO is working with 1,500 farmers to rehabilitate 100 hectares for rice production. One harvest would provide all the farmers and their families with enough rice for one month.

Another way to boost agricultural outputs is by working together, says Marie-Claire Barakamfiye, a local FAO partner. It helps farmers to generate income. Cooperation also fosters strengthened relations – a powerful instrument to avoid conflict.

Marie-Claire still remembers the days when the war broke out, in 1993. She was there when the displaced arrived, working to overcome the worst of the crisis. It took many years until they could move from dependency to self-reliance by restarting agricultural activities. "My pride is to see someone coming out of vulnerability," she says.



In support of reintegration

"If people in Burundi have enough to eat, war will not come back," says Bosco Nzambimana, concluding a long account of his life as a refugee. Three years ago he came back to his natal city of Rumonge on the shores of Lake Tanganyika in southern Burundi.

Since 2005 peace is taking root in Burundi, and people return home. But their numbers – over 500 000 between 2002 and 2009, according to UNHCR estimates – are overwhelming for one of Africa's most densely-populated countries.

Many returnees have difficulty in getting back the land they have left behind. For those who can't be resettled, the government builds 'integrated rural villages'.

Bosco has found a place in one of four such settlements in Rumonge. FAO helps him grow food, for example in providing training.

Today, it's all about tomatoes. Bosco and his fellow students learn about plant diseases and how to treat them. Then, at the end of the session, they all come together and sing.

"We sing about what we do," says Bosco, who wrote the songs. Singing lifts the spirits, he says. He doesn't complain. So many people are worse off than him. He is still young. His first goal is to get resettled.

The EU is **FAO's major donor** in Burundi



In 2010, the European Union (EU) donated US\$ 13 million to FAO's emergency and rehabilitation programme's in Burundi. Other key donors include Belgium (US\$ 1.9 million), Japan (US\$ 1.9 million), Spain (US\$ 683,000), the African Development Bank (US\$ 988,000) and IFAD (US\$ 279,000). In total, the donations for 2010 amounted to **US\$ 18.8 million.**



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