



Transforming Communities for Peace:

"Documentation of Inclusive Peacebuilding Experiences in Burundi"



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Executive Summary

The Women's International Peace Centre (WIPC), in partnership with AFRABU, implemented a series of interventions in Burundi to promote inclusive governance, women's leadership, and peacebuilding. The initiative responded to persistent gender and structural inequalities that continue to limit the participation of women, youth, and marginalized groups in governance and decision-making processes. Although these groups represent the majority of Burundi's population women constituting over half and youth nearly a quarter, they remain underrepresented in public leadership and excluded from key peace and development processes.

To address these challenges, WIPC and AFRABU adopted an integrated approach combining capacity building, advocacy, policy engagement, and community dialogue. The interventions were designed to strengthen leadership and advocacy skills, promote gender-responsive governance, and enhance civic participation. Central to these efforts was the dissemination and implementation of international and national frameworks, including the United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 1325 and 2250, and the National Youth, Peace and Security Strategy (SN/JPS).

Key activities included a series of training workshops on leadership, responsibility, lobbying, and advocacy; youth empowerment sessions on Resolution 2250; and capacity-building trainings for community-based organizations and networks on accountability and the African Union's peace and security architecture. Additionally, South–South learning exchanges in Rwanda, Casamance (Senegal) and Uganda provided opportunities for peer learning, experience sharing, and the adoption of good practices in inclusive peacebuilding.

Community engagement was strengthened through radio debates, press cafés and dialogue forums which served as platforms for civic education, electoral participation, and accountability. Furthermore, WIPC and AFRABU conducted targeted studies on youth participation in peace committees and the implementation of CEDAW 30 years after its ratification in Burundi. These studies generated disaggregated data and evidence to inform advocacy, policy formulation, and the design of inclusive interventions.

The interventions yielded tangible outcomes. Women, youth, and marginalized groups enhanced their leadership capacities and confidence to participate actively in governance and peace processes. Collaboration among civil society organizations, local authorities, and the media was strengthened, creating synergies for inclusive advocacy and evidence-based policy engagement. Importantly, the targeted studies drew national attention to the need for renewed commitment to gender equality and inclusive governance, contributing to the ongoing implementation of the National Youth, Peace and Security Strategy.

Lessons learnt underscore that inclusive participation fosters ownership and sustainability; that partnerships between civil society, government, and media actors amplify advocacy impact; and that culturally sensitive communication enhances effectiveness. The use of community radio and participatory dialogue proved particularly powerful in promoting peace, civic engagement and social cohesion.

The report recommends strengthening institutional mechanisms for inclusive participation, scaling up civic education and leadership training for women and youth, sustaining youth engagement in peace and security agendas, and institutionalizing evidence-based programming through regular targeted studies. Additionally, fostering coordination among CSOs, local authorities, and the media, as well as promoting peaceful and informed electoral participation, will be key to ensuring lasting impact.

Overall, the WIPC–AFRABU partnership demonstrates that inclusive, collaborative and evidence-driven approaches are instrumental in addressing structural inequalities, amplifying marginalized voices and advancing sustainable peace and democratic governance in Burundi.

1. Introduction

The Women’s International Peace Centre (The Peace Centre) continues to advance its commitment to promoting gender equality, inclusive governance and sustainable peace across fragile and conflict-affected settings in Africa. In Burundi, the Peace Centre’s work has focused on strengthening the leadership, participation, and influence of women, youth and marginalized groups in governance and peacebuilding processes. These efforts have been implemented in collaboration with local partners, including the Association des Femmes Recherchant la Paix au Burundi (AFRABU) and other stakeholders who share a vision of inclusive and resilient communities.

This report presents a documentation of best practices, success stories and lessons learned from interventions implemented in Burundi over a multi-year period. Operating in a context marked by a shrinking civic space, regional security volatility and limited community access to economic and social resources, the interventions sought to empower civil society actors and strengthen local capacities for peace and justice.

The documentation highlights how inclusive and gender-responsive approaches can transform governance and peacebuilding landscapes even in constrained environments. It captures the voices of women, youth and other marginalized groups that have often been excluded from formal decision-making spaces yet remain essential for building equitable and sustainable peace.

This report is intended to serve as both a learning and advocacy tool. It offers evidence-based insights into what works in fostering inclusion and civic participation and provides a foundation for replicating and scaling up successful models in Burundi and beyond. By documenting these experiences, the Peace Centre affirms its dedication to ensuring that the knowledge, innovations, and resilience of local actors continue to shape policy and practice in the pursuit of justice, peace, and equality.

1.1 The Burundi Context

The Women’s International Peace Centre (WIPC) implemented its interventions in Burundi within a complex and evolving socio-political environment marked by fragility, limited civic space and persistent gender inequalities. Over the past decade, Burundi has experienced recurring cycles of political tension and instability that have deeply affected governance structures, social cohesion and the overall security landscape. For example, the country’s Human Development Index stood at 0.42 in 2022, placing it among the lowest globally, and the Gender Inequality Index was 0.50 (UN Women). Civic space has remained constrained, with limited avenues for civil society organizations and community actors to meaningfully engage in governance or influence decision-making processes.

At the community level, severe socio-economic hardship has further compounded these challenges. According to a 2024 census, Burundi’s population was estimated at about 12.3 million, of which approximately 52% are women, and around 72.5% of the population live in rural areas. While rurality remains high, access to productive resources, infrastructure and services remains severely limited. Although the internationally quoted youth unemployment rate for ages 15-24 is low at about 1.62% in 2024, this figure masks the fact

that the economy is overwhelmingly informal, agriculture-dependent and poverty remains extremely high around 65% of the population live below the national poverty line.

The labour force participation rate stood at approximately 53% in 2024, underscoring the challenge of labour market absorption and meaningful employment. These conditions have reinforced patterns of exclusion and vulnerability, particularly for women, youth and minority groups.

Gender inequality continues to be a cross-cutting concern. Despite the presence of progressive legal and policy frameworks supporting women's rights and participation (for instance, a constitutional minimum quota of 30% women in decision-making positions) entrenched social norms and institutional barriers have hindered the full realisation of gender equality. For example, women held 38.2% of parliamentary seats as of February 2024. At the same time, statistics show that men continue to dominate senior public sector roles: for example, women made up only 12% of the National Security Council in 2023.

Furthermore, among young women aged 20-24, 19% had been married or in union before age 18, indicating early marriage remains a factor limiting young women's access to education and participation. Incidents of gender-based violence persist; in 2018, 22.1% of women aged 15-49 reported physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months.

Regionally, Burundi's proximity to conflict-affected neighbours and its integration within the Great Lakes region have also shaped the security context. Cross-border tensions, population movements, and regional instability present additional risks to peacebuilding and community resilience. In this environment, WIPC's interventions aimed to provide safe and inclusive spaces for dialogue, build the capacities of women and youth leaders and promote collaborative approaches to peace and governance.

Within this context, WIPC and its partners worked to strengthen civil society's ability to engage constructively with state institutions, advocate for gender-responsive governance and enhance community resilience. Through documentation, training and advocacy, the interventions sought not only to address immediate challenges but also to contribute to long-term transformation toward inclusive, just and peaceful societies in Burundi.

2. Methodology

This documentation exercise was undertaken to capture and share the experiences, lessons and best practices emerging from the Women's International Peace Centre's interventions in Burundi. The process was designed to ensure that the perspectives of diverse stakeholders particularly women, youth and marginalized groups were reflected in the final report. A participatory and inclusive approach was therefore adopted throughout the data collection and analysis phases to ensure the authenticity and relevance of the findings.

Data collection was carried out by a multidisciplinary team composed of enumerators with vast experience in research and with a better context understanding of the communities. These were supervised by a team of experienced staff from the Peace Centre, the Association des Femmes Recherchant la Paix au Burundi (AFRABU) led by the Peace Centre's Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting & Learning (MERL) Manager. The team employed a combination of qualitative methods to gather evidence and insights, including:

- ▶ **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Conducted six (06) FGDs with women, youth and members of marginalized groups to explore their experiences, perceptions and outcomes resulting from the interventions.
- ▶ **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):** Held with twelve (12) local administrators, partner organizations, Teachers, CBO leaders and beneficiaries to obtain detailed perspectives on implementation, challenges and results achieved.
- ▶ **Document Review:** Existing reports, training manuals, monitoring data and project activity summaries were reviewed to triangulate information and validate emerging themes.

Data collection took place across selected provinces of Bujumbura (Mairie) , Makamba, Bururi, Mwaro, Rumonge and Cibitoke where the Peace Centre and its partners implemented interventions, ensuring a representative view of the project's geographical and thematic scope. The process also emphasized the inclusion of participants from diverse backgrounds rural and urban, women and men, young and adult to capture a holistic understanding of the interventions' impact and sustainability.

The data gathered was synthesized and analyzed thematically to identify patterns of success, innovation, and learning. Particular attention was given to approaches that demonstrated effectiveness in enhancing inclusion, leadership and resilience among women and youth. The findings were subsequently validated through consultations with partners and key stakeholders to ensure accuracy, ownership and practical relevance.

Ultimately, this methodology ensured that the documentation reflects not only the results achieved but also the voices and lived realities of those who participated in and benefited from the interventions. It provides a grounded evidence base for advocacy, learning and replication within Burundi and beyond.

2.1 Objective and Purpose

The objective of documenting “Transforming Communities for Peace: Inclusive Peacebuilding Experiences in Burundi” is to systematically capture and share effective approaches, lessons learned, success stories and innovations that have contributed to transforming communities and fostering peace in Burundi. This Report seeks to preserve and disseminate knowledge generated through the Women’s International Peace Centre’s interventions, highlighting how inclusive peacebuilding practices anchored in gender equality, women’s leadership and community participation have strengthened social cohesion and resilience.

Through this process, the documentation specifically aimed to:

- ▶ Promote learning and reflection among stakeholders to enhance future programming in peacebuilding, justice, and governance.
- ▶ Inform policy and advocacy efforts that advance inclusive and gender-responsive peacebuilding at community and national levels.
- ▶ Demonstrate accountability and celebrate the impact of the Women’s International Peace Centre in transforming lives and promoting peaceful coexistence; and
- ▶ Provide a foundation for replicating and scaling effective models of inclusive peacebuilding in Burundi.

3. Programming for Peace

In Burundi, women, youth, and individuals from marginalized groups constitute a significant proportion of the population and are therefore central to any meaningful and sustainable social transformation. With nearly half of the country's population under the age of 18 and adolescents aged 10–19 representing about 23% of the total population (UNICEF, 2024), the engagement of young people in decision-making and peacebuilding processes is essential for the nation's long-term stability and development. Similarly, women make up more than half of Burundi's population, yet structural inequalities and sociocultural barriers continue to limit their full participation in governance and leadership.

Despite their demographic weight, women, youth, and marginalized groups including persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities such as the Batwa remain underrepresented in political, social, and economic decision-making spaces. Although women hold 38.2% of parliamentary seats as of February 2024 (UN Women Data, 2024), their participation at local governance levels remains limited, and meaningful influence in community and policy decisions is still constrained. Youth face similar exclusion: they account for roughly 35% of the national workforce, yet unemployment and underemployment remain high due to limited access to education, professional training and decision-making opportunities (World Bank, 2024).

Several intersecting challenges perpetuate this exclusion. These include inadequate access to information and civic education, weak advocacy and leadership skills, and socio-cultural norms that discourage active engagement in public life. Many women and young people experience low self-esteem and lack the confidence to participate freely in governance processes. Limited awareness of rights especially among women and marginalized populations further undermines their capacity to demand accountability and advocate for equitable inclusion. Data from UN Women show that 19% of women aged 20–24 were married before 18, reflecting persistent gender-based inequalities that restrict girls' education and long-term empowerment.

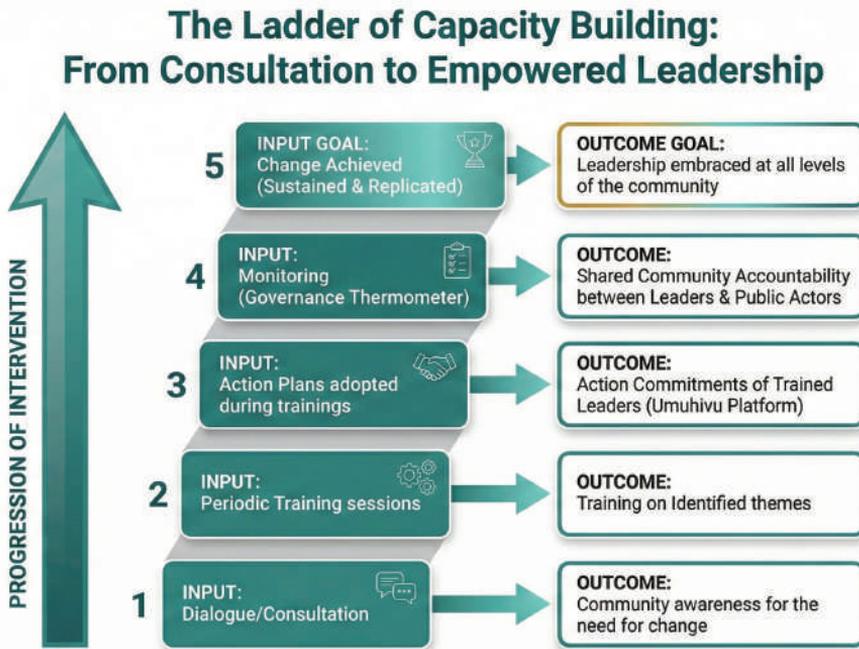
In education, participation rates also reveal disparities: only 35.5% of youth and adults aged 15–24 were enrolled in formal or non-formal education or training, with female participation slightly lower (33.8%) compared to males (37.8%) (ADEA Knowledge Hub, 2023). Although there has been progress in higher education with women now constituting 41.1% of new university entrants (UN Women Africa, 2024) gender parity remains elusive across all sectors.

In response to these persistent inequalities and barriers, the Women's International Peace Centre (WIPC) designed and implemented inclusive peacebuilding interventions aimed at transforming the structural and social conditions that perpetuate exclusion. Building on its long-standing experience in promoting women's leadership and gender-responsive peace processes, the Peace Centre sought to create an enabling environment where women, youth and marginalized groups could meaningfully participate in governance and peacebuilding. WIPC's approach emphasized strengthening individual and institutional capacities, enhancing access to information and advocacy tools and promoting inclusive legal and policy frameworks that safeguard equality and participation. Working closely with

civil society organizations, community-based structures, local authorities and the media, WIPC contributed to shifting social norms, amplifying marginalized voices and fostering a culture of peace and inclusion at both community and national levels.

3.1 Capacity Building Interventions

Capacity building through various training sessions, based on evidence observed and shared among partners, has been a consistently recognized best practice throughout the interventions. These trainings strategically addressed identified gaps, and they followed an evolving approach, beginning with findings from grassroots consultations and dialogue among partners and progressing toward the ultimate goal of empowered leadership at all levels.



The training was participatory and contributed to strengthening inclusive community leadership. The themes were identified based on expressed needs or studies conducted, including one on the effectiveness of youth representation. Trainings also covered topics such as UN Resolutions 1325 and 2250, the National Strategy on Youth, Peace and Security, accountability, advocacy, dialogue and more.

But all of this is not enough. The key lesson learned is that training alone is insufficient. There is a clear need for ongoing support through coaching, mentoring, and accountability mechanisms within a framework that ensures continuous monitoring of both community governance and the actions of civil society organizations (CSOs) engaged in advocacy for inclusive gender equality. Ultimately, what is required is not only continuous training but also the sharing of experiences.

3.1.2 Training Sessions

The training sessions organized, enabled beneficiary organizations to strengthen their capacities in several key areas: advocacy, leadership, strategic positioning, internal organization and governance, networking, and mentoring of community-based civil society organizations (CSOs). These sessions provided a solid foundation for more effective engagement in inclusive governance and community development.

No	Category	Objectives/ Expected Results	Period
1.	<p>Training / Capacity Building for youth:</p> <p>Strengthening the capacities of young people (girls, boys, and marginalized groups) to advocate for the implementation of the National Strategy on Youth, Peace, and Security (Resolution 2250).</p>	<p>WIPC aimed to:</p> <p>Widely disseminate the National Strategy on Youth, Peace, and Security (NSYPS) across the country.</p> <p>Raise awareness among young people about their rights and responsibilities regarding inclusion and participation in peace and development.</p> <p>Train young leaders on their responsibility to advocate for the strategy's implementation.</p> <p>The initiative was supported by the Ministry of Youth and EAC Affairs, which provided senior officials to lead the training sessions. WIPC plans to continue this initiative.</p>	December 2024 & August 2025.
2.	<p>Training of women and youth Networks.</p> <p>The architecture of peace, security, and governance within the African Union and Regional Communities.</p>	<p>Strengthen the knowledge of women's and youth networks on the African Union, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and Regional Mechanisms (RMs), to enable more effective advocacy on issues of peace, justice, and security particularly regarding the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA).</p> <p>Enhance their capacity to use regional mechanisms to influence national and local decision-makers, ensuring greater participation of women and youth in decision-making bodies.</p>	December 2022

No	Category	Objectives/ Expected Results	Period
3.	Training on Leadership Responsibility, leadership, lobbying, and advocacy.	Strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs), particularly the Umuhivu platform, in monitoring accountability through advocacy and lobbying, by leveraging the enhanced leadership of youth and women to promote the inclusion and participation of women, youth, and the most marginalized groups.	December 2022
4.	Training on organizing and facilitating community dialogues, participatory advocacy, and coaching.	Strengthen the capacities of members of the Umuhivu platform to effectively support elected women at the hill level and young leaders through coaching and participatory advocacy. Identify opportunities and challenges within the current context. Define strategies for effective support tailored to the needs and realities of these leaders.	August 2021

3.1.3 Empowering Youth for Advocacy on the National Youth, Peace, and Security Strategy (Resolution 2250)

As part of its commitment to youth empowerment, WIPC organized four training and awareness workshops in Burundi focused on the National Youth, Peace, and Security Strategy (2024–2028) and its action plan, as well as the regional strategy and plan.



The first workshop took place in Bujumbura, from October 10 to 12, 2024, and a regional workshop in December 2024 with participation from around ten civil society organizations (CSOs). The second and third workshops were held in Gitega and Bujumbura, on July 30 and 31, 2025, respectively. A total of 141 participants (67 women, 74 men), aged 18–39 were trained on the National Youth, Peace, and Security Strategy (2024–2028) and its action plan.

The workshops served as a source of inspiration that could benefit other countries in raising awareness and sharing information on the domestication of national, regional, and international instruments. They provided a valuable opportunity to advocate for youth inclusion in decision-making, recognition of the role of young people in conflict prevention and protection, active participation, and the establishment of partnerships for the implementation of Resolution 2250, as well as youth disengagement from violent conflicts.

WIPC and AFRABU were pioneers in disseminating the National Youth, Peace, and Security Strategy (NYPS) through these workshops, as well as through the production and distribution of related documents. These materials were shared during the sessions and officially handed over to the Ministry responsible for youth affairs.



Mr Mbarubukeye Séverin, The Permanent Secretary in charge of Burundi's integration into the East African Community, under the Ministry of East African Community Affairs, Youth, and Sports, stated that

“Burundi values United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 through its domestication, which has led to the development of the National Youth Policy on Peace and Security. This strategy offers opportunities for youth through its five pillars: participation, prevention, protection, partnership, disengagement, and reintegration.”

The Permanent Secretary expressed gratitude to all those who contributed to the development of the National Strategy. He specifically thanked the Association of Repatriated Women of Burundi (AFRABU) and its partner WIPC, who were the first to respond to the Ministry's call to support the dissemination and promotion of the National Youth Strategy on Peace and Security in Burundi.

Excerpt from the Report on the “Workshop for the Dissemination and Promotion of the National Youth, Peace, and Security Strategy (NYPS)” from 10th to 12 October 2024.

WIPC and AFRABU have paved the way for continued participatory advocacy initiatives aimed at informing and raising awareness among key partners involved in the implementation of the NYPS such as the Government, National Youth Council, civil society organizations (CSOs), and government partners. A notable example is WIPC's consultation during an information and awareness workshop organized by CSOs in Gitega with support from UNFPA, where WIPC's Burundi-based consultant was invited as an expert to share insights on the development and implementation of the strategy.

WIPC became an essential partner in the implementation of the NYPS. Since 2024, it has been consistently consulted for major events, including high-profile national gatherings initiated by the President of the Republic. One such example is the celebration of International Youth Day in 2024, held under the high patronage of the Head of State (Bujumbura, August 12, 2024), where WIPC played a key role in organizing the event and involving youth from the East African Community (EAC). During the ceremony, the Head of State gave the floor to the EAC youth representative supported by WIPC.

Ambassador Rémy BARAMPAMA, Director General for the Coordination of Political, Security, Legal, and Communication Affairs at the Ministry responsible for Youth and East African Community Affairs, stated that

“Burundi is firmly advancing toward its vision of becoming an emerging country by 2040 and a developed country by 2060. Since last year, the country has adopted the National Youth Peace and Security Strategy, in reference to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250, adopted in 2015 on the theme of youth, peace, and security. These two instruments form a vital foundation for the future of youth.”

The Ambassador expressed deep gratitude to AFRABU and WIPC for taking the lead in disseminating this strategy following the implementation of Law No. 1/05 of March 23, 2023, concerning the new administrative division in the country. He encouraged young people to seize all the opportunities now available to them at the communal level

Excerpt from the Report on the Workshops Held in Gitega and Bujumbura on “youth awareness on the implementation of the national youth, peace and security strategy” (July 30 and 31, 2025)

The various training sessions on the National Youth, Peace, and Security Strategy (NYPS) were organized in partnership with the Ministry responsible for Youth and East African Community Affairs. This approach was also applied to other activities, such as experience-sharing missions, which consistently involved the Ministry of Gender and the Ministry of the Interior

The various training sessions on the National Youth, Peace, and Security Strategy (NYPS) were organized in partnership with the Ministry responsible for Youth and East African

Community Affairs. This approach was also applied to other activities, such as experience-sharing missions, which consistently involved the Ministry of Gender and the Ministry of the Interior.

These ministries are essential for promoting civic participation among women, youth, and marginalized groups. This good practice enabled WIPC to:

- ▶ **Position itself nationally and within communities.** All national and local activities were organized in collaboration with ministry partners, tailored to the relevant themes.
- ▶ **Gain legitimacy and visibility among key stakeholders** advancing the Women and Youth agendas through the localization of Resolutions 1325 and 2250. This was achieved in a sometimes-sensitive context, particularly around mobilizing women, youth, and marginalized groups for electoral participation and leadership. By working with these key ministries and in partnership with AFRABU, WIPC was legitimized and invited to lead activities related to NYPS training.
- ▶ **Create communication and visibility opportunities** through media coverage of training workshops. Feature reports were produced, and social media platforms covered these workshops and other events such as press cafés and regional seminars held in Burundi.

Strategic positioning and national legitimization represent a replicable good practice at both national and regional levels. This approach deserves support to enhance the visibility and impact of WIPC and its partners. It has enabled WIPC to progress despite certain challenges linked to its status as an international NGO operating intermittently. The partnership with AFRABU has been a valuable asset in achieving this positioning and legitimacy

The workshops on the National Youth, Peace, and Security Strategy (NYPS) concluded with strong commitments from participants to implement the strategy and advocate for its adoption among key stakeholders. Action plans were developed to support this implementation, and they deserve further support to ensure their execution. As part of this process, numerous initiatives were launched by women, youth, and individuals from traditionally marginalized groups.



Testimony 1:

Miss Fadette Munezero Member of the Cross-Sector room of Young Entrepreneurs of Burundi

"I am one of the young people who had the opportunity to participate in the workshop on the National Youth, Peace, and Security Strategy. This training was a true revelation for me, especially regarding the importance of youth and women's participation in peace, security, and development processes. It helped me realize the role I can play within my community. Here is how I put the lessons learned into practice..."

1. Sharing content via social media: After the training, we were given documents containing the full text of the strategy. Once I returned home, I read and reread them carefully. I discovered essential information that is often overlooked by most young people. Knowing that youth are very

active on social media, I decided to share the content on my Facebook account (fadettemunezero, followed by 1.3k subscribers). The reactions were immediate: many young people messaged me to learn more, as most were not even aware of the existence of this strategy. This encouraged me to continue raising awareness online to reach as many people as possible.

2. Organizing a Workshop at the University: At my university, there is a department dedicated to women's leadership. I am organizing a sensitization workshop there, where I will share the lessons from the training on the National Strategy on Youth, Peace, and Security. My goal is to pass on this knowledge to other young women so that they, in turn, can become agents of change.

3. Engagement with COCAFEM YOUTH: I also serve as the focal point for COCAFEM YOUTH on the "Women, Peace, and Security" agenda. This platform gives me access to a broader network, which I intend to use to widely disseminate the strategy's content and mobilize youth and women around these critical issues.

This training helped me realize that every young person, every woman, can be a driver of peace and development. All it takes is believing in your potential and getting involved wherever you are. I encourage all young people to take ownership of this strategy, talk about it with others, and take action.

Participant testimonies from the workshops on the National Youth, Peace, and Security Strategy (NYPS) have revealed surprisingly positive impacts. These workshops complemented earlier trainings on UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 (Women, Peace, and Security) and 2250 (Youth, Peace, and Security), reinforcing the agendas for women and youth in peacebuilding and security.



Testimony 2:

Testimony of Grace Nduwimana, President of the ASBL DUKINGIRE AMASHAMBA Association.

"Following the debriefing session, we invested in environmental protection by creating a women's association ASBL DUKINGIRE AMASHAMBA dedicated to safeguarding the Kibira Nature Reserve. Our association includes twenty women and five men. We focus primarily on maintaining the boundaries of the Bururi Nature Reserve. We conduct patrols in collaboration with forest rangers and carry out post-community work awareness campaigns to educate the population on the importance of protecting the Bururi forest."

"Today, the risk of devastating bushfires has decreased. The local

population is now better informed and aware of the forest zone boundaries, which helps prevent encroachment from agricultural activities especially since the excuse of unclear boundaries can no longer be used."

"Our association's impact is now being recognized, and the national body responsible for protecting Burundi's nature reserves has granted us financial compensation as encouragement. This support enabled us to establish a savings and credit system that is gradually helping us become self-sufficient."

"We have also developed coaching programs for communities living near the forest, resulting in the creation of eight additional associations dedicated to forest protection. This is a direct extension of the impact of the training sessions we received, expanding the number of beneficiaries."

3.1.4 Training Workshops on Responsibility, Leadership, Lobbying and Advocacy

A series of training workshops on organizing and facilitating dialogue were held in August and September 2021 across the seven provinces where WIPC had interventions. These sessions targeted members of the "Umuhivu w'imboneza" Platform, who committed to advocating with elected officials to ensure the inclusion of women, youth, and traditionally marginalized groups in public programs so that these groups can participate in decision-making bodies.

Community dialogue at the hill level is a participatory approach that encourages open expression, enabling inclusive participation from all social and political groups in shaping the life of the hill or commune. This hill-level dialogue represents a form of civic engagement and collective intervention aimed at transforming communities without leaving anyone behind (LNOB), in alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5 and 16.

Community dialogue has emerged as a replicable good practice, applicable throughout Burundi and adaptable to other countries. A facilitation guide was provided to participants as a tool to support future dialogue sessions.

This training built upon a previous series of workshops held in 2021 focused on leadership, coaching, mentoring, and advocacy. The new training was designed to complement and strengthen those earlier efforts.

The most recent session took place from December 14 to 16, 2022, in Bujumbura (at Le Chandelier Hotel), gathering around thirty (30) participants from 15 civil society organizations representing women, youth, and marginalized groups in Burundi. The training aimed to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) engaged in advocacy for inclusive local governance. It also sought to reinforce the localization of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 2250, enhancing leadership, ownership, and community participation to ultimately foster social peace and peaceful coexistence.

3.1.5 Training of Partner CBOs and Networks on Accountability and the Architecture of the African Union (AU).

The training covered two key themes: **Accountability** and the **Architecture of the African Union (AU)**. The localization of Resolutions 1325 and 2250 is a bottom-up community strategy based on the principle that local ownership and participation enable effective advocacy. This approach helps relay grassroots concerns to strategic levels, ensuring that public policies and programs are implemented in ways that reflect the real priorities of community members.

These beneficiaries rely on national, regional, and international tools and mechanisms to assert their rights and conduct evidence-based advocacy. Mastery of these instruments is essential for meaningful engagement and impact.



Ambassador Serge Karonkano leading the training session on the African Union architecture

In this spirit, the workshop on the African Union architecture was organized to strengthen the knowledge of women and youth networks on the African Union, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and Regional Mechanisms (RMs). The goal was to enhance their engagement in advocacy around issues of peace, justice, and security. It also aimed to build their capacity to leverage these structures effectively in order to influence national and local decision-makers and ensure greater participation of women and youth in decision-making bodies.



Participants of the workshop on accountability

The second phase of the workshop focused specifically on accountability, with the objective of strengthening participants' skills in leadership, advocacy, and lobbying. They were trained on public policy development processes, policy evaluation (using the "accountability thermometer"), governance, and leadership in service of community development.



Professor Elias Sentamba delivering his lecture on accountability.

Participants strengthened their capacities in accountability, leadership, lobbying, and advocacy. These themes reinforced the knowledge gained from previous trainings. In terms of impact, they are cross-cutting, and testimonies are expected to emerge at all levels.



Testimony 3:

NSHIMIRIMANA Joséphine, President of Persons with Disabilities in Kayokwe Commune, Mwaro Province.

She testifies on the successes on leadership, lobbying and advocacy skills that she acquired thanks to the training on accountability and the on the AU architecture.

Society often tends to look down on people living with disabilities, and this rejection deeply affects our self-esteem. One day, however, the women from the Umuhivu W'imboneza platform showed me that despite my disability, it is possible to achieve great things. They also helped me understand that I not only have the right to vote, but also to run for decision-making positions to represent my community."

"Thanks to the training on accountability and the architecture of the African Union, I was able to defend my rights and those of others. I applied the lobbying techniques I learned to serve the community of people living with disabilities. Here are a few examples:"

1. I voted just like everyone else and also ran for leadership positions in the Women's Forum Association and the Children's Rights Committee.
2. I advocated within the IPHB association to reintegrate the group of persons with disabilities that I lead, in order to strengthen our connections and stay informed about issues that concern us.
3. I raised awareness among other people living with disabilities, as well as mothers of children with disabilities, about the importance of education. I encouraged them to send their children to school.
4. I lobbied directors of several specialized centers that serve children with disabilities, urging them to provide services tailored to the children's specific needs

Achievements following advocacy efforts:

- The community placed its trust in me, and I was elected Vice President of the Women's Forum Association in my locality. I was also elected President of the Children's Rights Committee.
- Once again, I submitted my candidacy for the 2025 elections for the position of President of the Women's Forum.
- I successfully reintegrated the group of persons with disabilities that I lead into the IPHB association, strengthening our connection with other groups.
- I managed to refer 20 children to specialized centers—Kumutwenzi, OPR Bene Terezia, and ODAGE—for their education and access to services tailored to their needs.



Testimony 4: Testimony of Chantal Nibigira Mwaro Province

"I used to be a very shy person, with no self-esteem, because I never had the chance to go to school. I was entirely dependent on my husband for my personal needs. But one day, the women from UMUHIVU taught me how I could start earning a little money on my own by joining forces with other women. I gave it a try and joined the ADL DUFASHANYE cooperative."

"Today, I'm able to buy school supplies and uniforms for my children. I can also afford clothes for myself, and I now contribute to my family's livelihood through the income I earn from the cooperative. We were also shown that, as women, we have the right and the ability to run for positions on various committees to represent our community."

"I took that step and submitted my candidacy. I am now one of the notable advisors of Bisha hill. For the 2025 elections, three members of our cooperative are running for office: myself for the position of notable advisor, and two others for communal councilor roles."

"I am deeply grateful for the support I received. It helped me regain confidence and build self-esteem something I never had before."



Testimony 5: NZEYIMANA Christian Head of the NTUNKUMIRE Association (People Living with Disabilities)

"Thanks to this training, I've learned a great deal whereas before, I didn't know how to defend my own interests or those of others. I've applied my new knowledge to lead advocacy efforts and better organize our association, and the results speak for themselves:"

1. We established focal points for our association "NTUNKUMIRE" in all six communes of the former Bururi Province.
2. I advocated for a teacher with a disability named Nelly BIZIMANA, who had been assigned to a post far from her home. She won her case and was reassigned closer to her residence.
3. I advocated for Emmanuel, a man from Songa Commune (Kiryama Zone), who lost his legs in a road accident in 1994. He lacked the documentation to prove his indigence, which was required to receive medical support from the Ministry of Solidarity. Local officials were demanding bribes to issue the certificate. After our intervention, the process was normalized, and he is now close to obtaining the certificate.

4. I lobbied the Provincial Directorate of Education (DPE) to ensure that all schools have latrines adapted for students with disabilities. The DPE responded positively and committed to submitting the issue to the Ministry of Education.

5. I made a similar appeal in the prison system, advocating for accessible sanitation facilities for inmates with disabilities. Prison directors responded positively, although implementation is still pending.

"There have been real changes in my community. Personally, I was elected neighborhood chief three years ago, thanks to the transformative leadership training and coaching I received. By sharing my experience, I've seen several positive developments:"

Our community of people living with disabilities is beginning to realize that we have rights too. I receive more and more calls from individuals who feel their rights have been violated, and together we take action to defend them. This marks a true shift previously, we felt marginalized and often remained silent.

Although society tends to believe that people with disabilities cannot represent others, I've once again submitted my candidacy for neighborhood chief. I hope this initiative will raise awareness within my community. Meanwhile, our association continues the fight by encouraging our brothers and sisters to attend school, vote, and run for office.

In conclusion, the training on accountability, leadership, lobbying, and advocacy empowered beneficiaries and positively impacted Burundian society by fostering:

- ▶ **Civic Participation in Local Governance:** Participants became better informed, more responsible, and actively engaged in monitoring and evaluating public affairs that affect them and their communities. They committed to greater participation and accountability, while also taking responsibility for their own commitments.
- ▶ **Advocacy for Transparency in Public Management:** The training initiated or strengthened a culture of transparency and mutual accountability among associations, communities, and partners. This has enhanced the credibility and legitimacy of both elected local institutions and civil society leaders.
- ▶ **Strengthening Community-Level Performance:** Building on previous training, participants gained new skills to demand accountability and practice it themselves. This has reinforced local capacities and improved their credibility with both beneficiary communities and territorial administrations. Local officials acknowledged this and requested WIPC and AFRABU to continue supporting PF Umuhivu members to replicate the training for a wider reach, including newly elected officials.

- ▶ **Deepening Leadership Knowledge for Project Impact:** The integration of accountability into projects and civil society organizations has made them more responsive to the concrete and realistic needs of communities. This has improved governance and positioned them as credible community role models, as confirmed by PF Umuhivu members and local administrators.
- ▶ **Sustainability of Project Initiatives:** Reinforcing previous training through accountability-focused sessions has made the WIPC initiatives more sustainable by institutionalizing monitoring and reporting practices. These gains are now more durable and replicable in other contexts.
- ▶ **Enhanced Leadership for 2025 Local Elections:** The leadership developed through these trainings, especially in accountability and advocacy, will strengthen civic participation during the period of newly elected local institutions in 2025. Trained individuals will be called upon to play a critical role in supporting new local leaders.

Overall, the accountability training has helped build trust, improve local governance and ensure lasting results making it a scalable and sustainable.

3.2 South-South Experience Sharing Exchanges

A total of 26 targeted beneficiaries participated in a series of learning and exchange visits held in Rwanda, Casamance (Senegal) and Uganda. The participants included women and young leaders, members of marginalized groups and public officials responsible for gender and territorial administration. These exchanges provided an invaluable opportunity to complement the training sessions previously received under the WIPC programmes.

The exchange visits were designed to broaden participants' perspectives by exposing them to diverse experiences and best practices in peacebuilding, governance and gender equality. For many participants, it was a chance to move beyond local limitations and gain practical insights into how similar challenges are addressed in other contexts. This approach echoed the wisdom of the Burundian proverb, "Akanyoni katagurutse ntikamenya iyo bweze" literary meaning; the bird that does not fly will never know where the harvest is ripe." Inspired by this philosophy, the Women's International Peace Centre facilitated the study missions to Rwanda and Casamance in Senegal in 2021 and 2022, fostering peer learning, cross-border solidarity, and a renewed commitment to inclusive peacebuilding in Burundi.

The learning and exchange visits yielded several important outcomes. Participants gained practical knowledge and innovative approaches to promoting inclusive governance, women's leadership, and community-based peacebuilding. Exposure to different contexts helped them identify strategies to overcome social and institutional barriers, particularly those affecting youth, women and marginalized groups. The exchanges also fostered networking and collaboration among participants, enabling them to share experiences, best practices and lessons learned across borders. Importantly, these visits enhanced participants' confidence and motivation to implement similar initiatives in their communities, contributing to more informed, inclusive and effective interventions by the Women's International Peace Centre in Burundi.

A Learning from Other Countries A Global Best Practice To overcome ignorance and foster growth, it is essential to learn from the experiences of other nations. This principle is beautifully captured by the Burundian proverb: “Akanyoni katagurutse ntikamenya iyo bweze” – “The bird that does not fly will never know where the harvest is ripe.”

WIPC fully understood this challenge and supported AFRABU in mobilizing members of the Umuhivu w’Imboneza Platform (PF) and other public partners to learn from experiences in other countries.

As part of this commitment, study missions were organized in Senegal and Rwanda for both government and civil society partners. These international exchange visits were carefully chosen for their unique contributions:

- ▶ **Senegal:** Recognized for its strong tradition of women’s participation in peacebuilding.
- ▶ **Rwanda:** Known for its remarkable resilience and social inclusion initiatives led by women, especially following the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.

3.2.1 Exchange Visit to Casamance in Senegal

- ▶ **Burundian Delegation: 10 Participants (2 Men and 8 Women):** 1 senior official from the Ministry of National Solidarity, the Governor of Karusi Province, 3 representatives from AFRABU 1 representative from the National Women’s Forum (FNF) 1 representative from the grassroots association “NTARAMBIRWA” 1 indigenous woman from the Mutwa community 2 women leaders from the “Umuhivu w’Imboneza” platform representing Mwaro and Bururi provinces.
- ▶ **Non-Burundian Participants:** 2 women from WIPC based in Kampala and the Program Coordinator of WIPC in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- ▶ **Senegalese Participants:** The President of the Peace Platform in Casamance 12 women representing member organizations of the platform.

The mission significantly enhanced the experience of Burundian women leaders and their counterparts from other countries. It fostered solidarity among women for peacebuilding and contributed to strengthening their active participation in governance and the consolidation of peace.



Testimony 6: Mrs Philomène NDAYISABA

During our mission to Casamance, we observed that women who had experienced sexual violence or suffered war-related injuries were placed in specialized centers where they received psychological and other forms of support. They were also organized into associations. This practice deeply inspired us, and we are now working to pilot similar initiatives in Burundi.

After sharing the mission’s findings with other members of the Umuhivu

Platform, and despite our limited resources, we undertook several initiatives:

1. **Raising Awareness Among Survivors:** We sensitized women and girls who had experienced sexual violence, encouraging them not to remain silent out of fear or shame, as was traditionally the case.
2. **Referral to Support Services:** Knowing the organizations dedicated to supporting survivors, we referred sensitized victims to care centers, including CAFOB, for medical and psychological follow-up.
3. **Access to Justice:** We encouraged women and girls to pursue justice and seek compensation. For those lacking financial means, we referred them to the Bujumbura Bar Association, a partner of the Just Future Project, which provided legal representation.

I can confidently say that these exchanges have strengthened our ability to actively participate in processes of good governance and peacebuilding. Within these associations, after community work sessions, speaking time is systematically given to women leaders. This allows them to express their ideas, share experiences, and contribute meaningfully to collective decision-making.

3.2.2 Exchange Visit to Rwanda; Leadership of women, youth and marginalized groups

A total of 14 participants took part in the mission, representing a diverse and inclusive group: Umuhivu Platform (PF): 2 representatives from each participating province AFRABU: 4 representatives, CORDAID: 1 representative, WIPC: 3 representatives 2 from Rwanda and 1 from Burundi. The learning mission to Rwanda proved to be a true school of innovation, deeply appreciated by all participants. It offered valuable insights into innovative initiatives, resilience, organizational excellence, advocacy, and resource mobilization. Participants visited four standout organizations:

- Réseau des Femmes Œuvrant pour le Développement Rural
- Dorcas Consolation Family (DCF)
- Urugo Women Opportunity Center (WOC)
- DUHOZANYE Organization

These associations, all starting with little more than intellectual capital, have built multifaceted social enterprises from scratch. During the visits, participants were struck by the remarkable organizational capacity of these Rwandan NGOs and the transformational journeys they undertook.

From humble beginnings, these organizations have grown step by step into powerful engines of social and economic change, with social missions at the heart of every action. Today, they stand as living proof that with vision, resilience, and solidarity, modest initiatives can evolve into impactful institutions that uplift communities and inspire regional replication:

a) Network of Women Working for Rural Development.



The Network of Women Working for Rural Development (RFDR) is the first organization in Rwanda with a nationwide reach. It was founded in 1986 with the mission to promote the status of Rwandan women. RFDR is a non-profit organization.

Since its inception, RFDR has made significant contributions to:

- Promoting education for rural women
- Supporting women’s participation in decision-making roles
- Combating gender-based violence (GBV) through sustained advocacy and dissemination of legal frameworks that protect women

Its vision is of a society where women and men enjoy equal rights and contribute equally to the sustainable development of the country.

b) Dorcas Consolation Family (DCF)



Dorcas Consolation Family (DCF) is an organization committed to giving hope, education, and opportunities to women. Its founder, Madame Ketsia Kabanyana, was deeply shaped by her childhood in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where she became an orphan at the age of seven. Her difficult experiences inspired a lifelong mission: to ensure that no girl or woman endures the same suffering.

Driven by this vision, she established DCF to uplift vulnerable rural families. As Kabanyana emphasizes:

“We walk alongside vulnerable rural families, investing in sustainable development to empower them because we believe that when women have hope, education, and opportunities, families thrive and communities flourish.”

“Girls’ Rooms”: An Innovative and Impactful Practice Inspired by DCF

One of the most innovative and impressive practices learned from Dorcas Consolation Family (DCF) during the mission was the concept of “Girls’ Rooms” safe, dedicated spaces designed to support and empower young girls.

This model was quickly piloted upon return from the mission, reflecting its relevance and adaptability. The initiative provides girls with:

- A safe environment to express themselves freely
- Access to educational resources and mentorship
- A space for psychosocial support and peer solidarity

By creating these rooms, local actors in Burundi have begun to replicate DCF's approach, offering girls not only protection but also hope, dignity, and opportunity key pillars for building resilience and leadership.



Testimony 6:

NIMBONA Marie Gorethe: Director of ECOFO RUBANGA in MATANA commune.

“Before the experience-sharing visit to Rwanda, I had never heard of the concept of a ‘Girls’ Room.’ When this practice was shared with us, I took the initiative to establish one in my school.

We trained girls to make reusable sanitary pads using locally available fabric. We also introduced mentors ‘aunties’ for girls and ‘uncles’ for boys whose role is to guide and counsel students. These mentors provide emotional support and practical advice to help young people navigate sensitive issues.

Before this initiative, girls during their menstrual periods felt excluded and ashamed. If a girl stained her clothes, she was mocked and often never returned to school. We recorded many requests from girls to leave school during their periods, leading to frequent movement in and out of school and through the streets. Thanks to the Girls’ Room, we’ve seen remarkable changes:

1. Girls now have a private and dignified space to change during menstruation
2. There are fewer movements of girls in and out of school during the day
3. Requests for early dismissal or absence have significantly decreased
4. Although I don’t have exact figures, academic performance has improved girls now ask for a short break when needed and return to class, unlike before when they would leave and not come back

c) Urugo Women's Opportunity Center (WOC)



Women for Women Rwanda (WWR) is a multifunctional community center and social enterprise dedicated to helping women and girls in Rwanda break the cycle of poverty and achieve greater social inclusion. The organization empowers them to become more economically and socially self-reliant. The center offers: Training in education and legal rights, Vocational skills development, Economic and employment opportunities for women and the broader community.

To sustain its educational and training programs, WWR also runs income-generating activities, including: Guest accommodations, a restaurant and bar, a café, a craft boutique, market stalls, a food production unit, rental spaces for meetings and events

Testimony 7: Nishimagizwe Régine UMUHIVU W'IMBONEZA, Commune of Mugwi

"The experience-sharing mission to Rwanda was incredibly valuable to us, especially our visit to the Urugo Women's Opportunity Center (WOC). We were struck by the scale of this social enterprise and its impact in the region.

Personally, I was deeply moved by how indigenous Batwa women are integrated into the center crafting pottery using modern techniques and diversifying their products into beautifully designed decorative items that are sold across Rwanda. In contrast, in our communities, Batwa women still work with clay using centuries-old methods.

The center's high-level management and multi-sectoral approach inspired me. It showed that our income-generating activities (IGAs) must follow a similar path to accelerate women's empowerment. However, we face significant challenges due to limited resources.

One key strategy we learned is the importance of working collectively, pooling resources, and organizing into specialized groups to achieve empowerment goals. I was also inspired by the initiative of persons with disabilities at the center, who built inclusive public sanitation facilities accessible to all, including people with disabilities and generate income from them. It made me reflect: How can I implement such activities in Burundi? We understood that the Rwandan government provided substantial support to help these women realize their goals.

Since that day, I've committed to implementing similar initiatives in Mugina commune. I launched awareness and advocacy campaigns, and mobilized youth to form agricultural and livestock cooperatives. As a result of these efforts, 64 women submitted their candidacies to run for local council positions an achievement made possible through our sensitization work."

d) Duhozanye Organization: Empowering Women Through Solidarity and Recovery



Duhozanye is a women-led association founded on November 11, 1994 by Madame Daphrose Mukarutamu, in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The organization was created to support widows of the genocide, helping them find emotional support and development opportunities. Duhozanye is dedicated to:

- Women's empowerment
- Promotion of gender equality
- Strengthening solidarity among women

Duhozanye is committed to supporting widows and orphans affected by the 1994 genocide by providing them with shelter, food, and development opportunities. The organization also focuses on women's empowerment, enabling them to actively participate in the country's development, and promotes national reconciliation. Duhozanye has played a pivotal role in Rwanda's reconciliation process by helping genocide survivors rebuild their lives with dignity and hope. Through its work, it fosters healing, solidarity, and inclusive development.

The Coordinator of the Network of Women Working for Rural Development emphasized the rationale behind selecting DUHOZANYE as one of the key organizations to visit during the learning mission. She explained that DUHOZANYE's activities align closely with the principles of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security despite the fact that the organization was established prior to the resolution's adoption.



Founded during a critical period when Rwandans were striving to rebuild their country after the 1994 genocide, DUHOZANYE has consistently embodied the spirit of women's empowerment, peacebuilding, and national reconciliation, making it a model of grassroots resilience and leadership.

Excerpt from the Exchange Visit Report.

The members of the delegation visiting DUHOZANYE Organization expressed deep appreciation for the remarkable level of resilience demonstrated by its members:

The final activity of the learning mission was a workshop dedicated to reflection and exchange, held at the end of the Burundian delegation's stay in Rwanda. Its purpose was to deepen the dialogue, synthesize field visits, and share insights among all participants for collective enrichment. The workshop brought together 38 participants from public institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs). It served to reinforce the lessons learned during field visits with Rwandan NGOs and their leaders, fostering a stronger understanding of local innovations and leadership practices.



Positive Engagement of Rwandan Officials in Experience Sharing

We were impressed by the level of collaboration between Rwandan public actors and civil society organizations.” The testimonies of Rwandan officials who participated in the workshop were particularly enlightening, especially regarding the support provided to CSOs those working on women’s empowerment, marginalized groups such as the Batwa, and the fight against gender-based violence (GBV).

The workshop stood out as a cross-border experience sharing, extending beyond interactions between Rwandan and Burundian CSOs to include meaningful exchanges with government officials. These interactions allowed Rwandan authorities to share their perspectives and strategies with the Burundian delegation.

The Burundian delegation expressed deep satisfaction with the knowledge gained during the mission and appreciated the opportunity to learn from Rwanda’s inclusive and collaborative approach. For all participants, the visit was a valuable learning experience and a catalyst for future action.



Testimony 9: RIRANKANYE Victoire, Leader of UMUHIVU W'IMBONEZA, Gitega Province

“Before the learning mission, I had never heard of this type of room. But once I understood its importance, I knew I had to implement it in my own community. Upon returning to Burundi, we realized that secondary school girls face similar challenges to those observed in Rwanda. During their menstrual periods, many suffer from discomfort, embarrassment, and even Stigmatization, which severely affects their concentration and school attendance. It’s a silent reality with serious consequences for their academic success.

Within the UMUHIVU W'IMBONEZA platform, we organized a debriefing session to share insights from the mission with all members. Together, we launched advocacy efforts targeting the directors of five boarding schools in Mwaro commune: Lycée Mwaro, École Les Mignons de Kibumbu, Lycée Rumarantimba, ECOFO Kibumbu and Lycée Communal Kayokwe.

We urged them to establish Girls’ Rooms in their institutions. We also engaged the Provincial Director of Education (DPA), encouraging him to promote this initiative across other schools, recognizing its vital role in supporting girls’ education.

The results remain mixed, and these rooms are not yet widely implemented. However, the advocacy continues, driven by the belief that dignified menstrual care is essential for girls’ empowerment and academic success.”

These learning missions have been highly appreciated and have often led to new partnerships with delegates from other countries. As Anne-Marie, a participant from Cibitoke Province living with a disability, testified.



Testimony 10: Anne-Marie, a participant visited Zambia from Cibitoke Province

I had the opportunity to participate in an experience-sharing program in Zambia, where I met women leaders from various countries. Following this exchange, we established a women’s leadership network that has since become a powerful platform for collaboration and advocacy. Thanks to this network, I was able to advocate for a young Burundian girl living with a disability, whose medical condition could not be treated by doctors in Burundi. Through the connections and support mobilized via the network, we successfully arranged for her to travel abroad for specialized treatment.

3.3 Networking and Community Engagements ; Radio Debates and Targeted Studies

A harmonious interaction between all approaches is essential for achieving lasting success and sustainability of outcomes. It was necessary to integrate networking at all levels, involving both public and community actors, to promote inclusive and participatory advocacy.

This approach expanded spaces for dialogue and communication among public actors (civil society organizations and local administration), women, youth leaders and marginalized groups. It fostered inclusive and participatory advocacy in decision-making processes at both community and strategic levels. The networking was not only strategic but also operational, strengthening synergy among all stakeholders including CSOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), and administrative bodies to promote collective advocacy involving women, youth, marginalized groups, and relevant local and national actors.

The approach systematically integrated all categories of stakeholders into a unified action framework: community leaders, CSOs, CBOs, local authorities and technical services working in communes and communities. It led to community radio-facilitated debates and regular dialogue sessions that supported advocacy for inclusive, gender-sensitive change. Jointly identified advocacy themes, improved accountability and the inclusion of marginalized groups' priorities in some communal development plans and electoral processes were key outcomes.

The inclusion of all actor categories at every level stood out as it enabled the consolidation of advocacy initiatives within a participatory and consensus-driven manner. This ensured legitimacy and collective ownership of solutions, which were either co-created or based on evidence from targeted studies. The Radio Debates were aimed at Mobilizing Women, Youth, and Marginalized Groups in the Electoral Process.

In 2024 and 2025, WIPC, in collaboration with AFRABU, organized community radio debates and press café discussions in Bujumbura, Mwaro, and Rumonge, focusing on the ongoing electoral process. These radio debates played a crucial role in promoting free, transparent, and peaceful elections.

They served as a powerful tool for electoral education, informing women, youth, and marginalized groups about the electoral process and the importance of participating in the 2025 elections. By engaging these groups early and meaningfully, the debates helped foster informed participation.

The radio debates contributed to: Raising awareness among women, youth, and marginalized groups about their right and role in elections, encouraging active participation, including running for office, Promoting dialogue, social cohesion, and community engagement.

These forums allowed citizens to share their views on electoral participation, engage in dialogue about the electoral process, and seek clarity on administrative reforms all while informing the broader public. Such debates played a vital role in: Empowering citizens to voice their opinions and concerns, clarifying electoral issues to promote informed and

enlightened engagement, advocating for the participation of youth, women, and marginalized groups, fostering open and transparent dialogue, contributing to a peaceful and cohesive social climate.



Press Café Debate (May 6, 2025): Advocating for Women’s Inclusion in Decentralized Administrative Structures to discuss the importance of integrating women into the newly decentralized administrative structures at the commune level

Community radio debates played a vital role in informing local populations, especially due to the proximity and accessibility of these radio stations. Electoral periods are often fertile ground for the spread of false information and rumors, which can undermine public trust and participation. By engaging independent journalists, these community radio debates helped to: Dispel misinformation and clarify facts



Testimony 11: CONGERA Patric – Provincial Representative of UNIPROBA, Bururi

Thanks to the radio debates broadcast on select stations, the Batwa community experienced an awakening of citizenship awareness. Once excluded from the electoral process, we began to see ourselves as fully Burundian.

I personally participated in a radio program in Rumonge, and after that debate, I found the strength to mobilize and raise awareness among other Batwa. Together with the provincial focal point of the UMUHIVU W’IMBONEZA platform, we actively sensitized and coached Batwa women to participate in the elections and to run for office, so they could be represented in decision-making bodies.

Testimony 12: The Director of Eagle Sport FM Radio Makamba Province

“During the campaign and electoral period, we used our radio broadcasts to raise awareness among women, encouraging them to actively participate in the elections and seek positions in decision-making bodies. These programs had a significant impact in our community, successfully mobilizing many women to submit their candidacies for local leadership roles, particularly as hill notables. Our radio station reaches over 5 million listeners, and we estimate that approximately 200,000 people follow us from abroad, including from Tanzania and Western countries.

Patricia Nikuza Journalist at CDN Ijwi rya Cibitoke said, “We conduct baseline studies to understand what our listeners think about our programs. Through our awareness-raising broadcasts, women begin to grasp the importance of empowerment and civic participation. As a result, they join cooperatives and decision-making bodies in greater numbers than men. Thanks to the dialogues organized by WIPC and AFRABU, many women found the courage to submit their candidacies and were successfully elected to local councils. These programs have played a key role in shifting mindsets, encouraging women to take leadership roles and actively shape their communities.”

3.3.1 Targeted Studies

WIPC Conducted Targeted Studies on Women, Youth, and Marginalized groups. WIPC and AFRABU led two targeted studies focused on:

1. The participation and effectiveness of youth involvement in Mixed Committees for Peace and Human Security.
2. The implementation of CEDAW, 30 years after its ratification by the Burundian government.

Conducting targeted studies on women, youth, and marginalized groups is a critical step in understanding their realities, specific needs, aspirations, and the structural and sociocultural barriers they face. These studies generate disaggregated data by sex, age, disability, and other relevant criteria, which inform the design, implementation, and monitoring of inclusive and equitable interventions.

This approach was replicable to other groups or key themes to influence the adoption of policies and strategies, such as the National Strategy on Youth, Peace, and Security (SN/JPS) which has been adapted, disseminated, and is currently being implemented through WIPC-led workshops.

Moreover, these studies serve as a powerful advocacy tool for the implementation of Burundi's international commitments on the rights of women, youth, and marginalized populations. They also enhance accountability by enabling advocacy efforts directed at institutions responsible for fulfilling these commitments.

Key outcomes of these studies include:

- Drawing government attention to the need for evaluating CEDAW, three decades post-ratification.
- Initiating the development, adoption, and rollout of the National Strategy on Youth, Peace, and Security, with WIPC actively contributing to its implementation.
- Establishing a factual and data-driven foundation enables inclusive planning by providing insights that help design strategies tailored to the real needs of targeted groups, such as youth.
- Strengthening advocacy through verified data and evidence ensures that studies serve as effective tools to influence public policies and promote greater consideration of the specific needs of marginalized populations.

4.0 Conclusion, Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

This section presents a synthesis of the key findings emerging from the implementation of the Women’s International Peace Centre (WIPC) interventions in partnership with AFRABU. It summarizes the overall results and impact of the programme, highlights critical lessons derived from the implementation process, and outlines actionable recommendations for sustaining and scaling up inclusive peacebuilding and governance initiatives in Burundi. The reflections presented here are drawn from field evidence, beneficiary feedback and partner experiences documented throughout the intervention cycle.

4.1 Conclusion

The partnership between the Women’s International Peace Centre (WIPC) and AFRABU made a significant contribution to advancing inclusive governance, gender equality, and peacebuilding in Burundi. Through a combination of capacity-building initiatives, advocacy training, South–South exchanges, radio debates and targeted studies, the interventions empowered women, youth, and marginalized groups to engage meaningfully in governance and peace processes.

These initiatives addressed the deep-rooted structural and sociocultural barriers that have historically limited participation by equipping beneficiaries with leadership, advocacy, and accountability skills. The interventions also strengthened linkages among civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based structures, local authorities, and the media enhancing collaboration and evidence-based advocacy.

Through dissemination of key policy frameworks such as the National Youth, Peace, and Security Strategy (SN/JPS) and localization of UNSCR 1325 and 2250, the project promoted inclusive dialogue and collective action for peace. Overall, WIPC and AFRABU’s interventions established a solid foundation for inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding in Burundi where women, youth, and marginalized populations are empowered as leaders and agents of social transformation.

4.2 Lessons Learnt

1. Inclusive Participation Strengthens Ownership and Sustainability

Engaging women, youth, and marginalized groups from the planning to implementation stages fostered local ownership and accountability. Communities that co-create initiatives demonstrate stronger commitment to sustaining results.

2. Partnerships and Collaboration Amplify Impact

Strategic collaboration between CSOs, community networks, local authorities, and media institutions enhanced advocacy outcomes and increased the legitimacy of peacebuilding initiatives.

3. Capacity Building Translates into Confidence and Action

Leadership and advocacy training equipped participants with essential knowledge and confidence to engage meaningfully in decision-making and community governance structures.

4. Contextual and Culturally Sensitive Approaches Enhance Effectiveness

Using local proverbs, community dialogues, and participatory radio formats increased acceptance and relevance of project messages across Burundi's diverse cultural settings.

5. Evidence-Based Advocacy Drives Policy Influence

Targeted studies on women, youth, and marginalized groups provided credible data for advocacy, enabling evidence-informed dialogue with policymakers and strengthening accountability mechanisms.

6. Peer Learning and Cross-Border Exchanges Broaden Perspectives

The South–South exchanges in Rwanda, Casamance (Senegal), and Uganda exposed participants to innovative peacebuilding practices, fostering regional solidarity and inspiring local adaptation.

7. Media Engagement Promotes Civic Awareness and Social Cohesion

Community radio debates and press cafés proved effective in raising awareness, fostering dialogue, and encouraging peaceful participation in electoral processes.

8. Continuous Mentorship Ensures Sustained Impact

Post-training mentorship and follow-up were crucial to reinforce acquired skills, sustain engagement, and translate knowledge into practical advocacy and leadership outcomes.

4.3 Key Recommendations

1. Strengthen Institutional Support for Inclusive Participation

Government ministries and local governance bodies should institutionalize participatory mechanisms that guarantee women, youth, and marginalized groups active representation in policymaking and program implementation.

2. Expand Civic Education and Leadership Development

Scale up leadership, advocacy, and civic education initiatives to reach rural and underserved communities. Continuous education enhances civic competence and strengthens inclusive governance.

3. Sustain Youth Engagement in Peace and Security Agendas

Ensure effective implementation of the National Youth, Peace, and Security Strategy (SN/JPS) by promoting youth participation in peace committees, community leadership, and electoral processes, consistent with UNSCR 2250.

4. Institutionalize Evidence-Based Programming

Conduct regular, disaggregated studies (by sex, age, and disability) to inform inclusive policy and programming. Data-driven advocacy should guide national strategies and local action.

5. Enhance Coordination and Networking

Promote stronger partnerships among CSOs, community-based organizations, local authorities, and media actors to sustain multi-stakeholder platforms for inclusive dialogue and policy engagement.

6. Promote Inclusive and Peaceful Electoral Participation

Institutionalize civic education and dialogue forums such as radio debates to encourage peaceful and informed participation of women, youth, and marginalized groups in elections.

7. Establish Participatory Monitoring and Learning Systems

Develop robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) frameworks that include community participation to assess impact, document lessons, and guide adaptive programming.

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