

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

*Bakenyezi, Dukenyerere Amahoro*: Promoting displaced, IDP and returnee women’s empowerment and public participation in Burundi Project

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Contents

[Executive summary iii](#_Toc207796266)

[Abbreviations v](#_Toc207796267)

[1. Background on conflict analysis and project design 1](#_Toc207796268)

[2. Bakenyezi Dukenyerere Amahoro project’s theory of change 2](#_Toc207796269)

[3. BDA project evaluation objectives and questions 2](#_Toc207796270)

[4. Evaluation methodology 4](#_Toc207796271)

[4.1. Preparatory phase 4](#_Toc207796272)

[4.2. Data collection phase 4](#_Toc207796273)

[4.2.1. Data collection methodology for outcome 1 5](#_Toc207796274)

[4.2.2. Data collection methodology for outcome 2 5](#_Toc207796275)

[4.2.3. Data collection methodology for Outcome 3 and project quantitative indicators measurement 6](#_Toc207796276)

[4.3. Evaluation methodology limitations 7](#_Toc207796277)

[5. Evaluation findings 8](#_Toc207796278)

[5.1. Relevance and coherence analysis 8](#_Toc207796279)

[5.1.2. Analysis of the project's relevance to the Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) 10](#_Toc207796280)

[5.1.3. Analysis of the project's alignment with Burundi's national policy and priorities. 10](#_Toc207796281)

[5.1.4. Analysis of the relevance of project activities to the needs of intended beneficiaries. 11](#_Toc207796282)

[5.1.4.1. To what extent were the project’s capacity-strengthening goals relevant to the needs of Women-Led Organizations (WLONs)? 11](#_Toc207796283)

[5.1.4.2. To what extent were activities aimed at addressing the exclusion of women from decision-making spaces relevant to the needs of women? 12](#_Toc207796284)

[5.1.4.3. To what extent were activities aimed at addressing gender norms relevant to the needs of women in enhancing their participation in politics? 13](#_Toc207796285)

[5.1.5. In what ways did the project address the marginalization of specific vulnerable groups? 14](#_Toc207796286)

[5.1.6. Conclusion on the relevance/coherence analysis 15](#_Toc207796287)

[5.2. Analysis of project efficiency 16](#_Toc207796288)

[5.2.1. Beneficiaries targeting 16](#_Toc207796289)

[5.2.2. Cost-Benefit analysis of the project implementation strategy 16](#_Toc207796290)

[5.2.3. Analysis of the coordination level of the partners involved in implementing the BDA project. 17](#_Toc207796291)

[5.2.4. Analysis of BDA Project's complementarity with other Initiatives 18](#_Toc207796292)

[5.2.5. Analysis of the innovative aspects of the BDA project implementation strategy. 19](#_Toc207796293)

[5.3. Effectiveness analysis 20](#_Toc207796294)

[5.3.1. Project contribution to strengthening the institutional capacities of WLONs 21](#_Toc207796295)

[5.2.2. Achievement level of Outcome 1 indicators 26](#_Toc207796296)

[5.3.2. Analysis of the Project’s contribution to promoting Women’s political participation 27](#_Toc207796297)

[5.3.3. Achievement level of Outcome 2 indicators 31](#_Toc207796298)

[5.3.4. Analysis of the Project's contribution to reducing gender-based violence 32](#_Toc207796299)

[5.3.5. Analysis of the project’s contribution to Women’s empowerment and peacebuilding 38](#_Toc207796300)

[5.3.6. Analysis of the influence of income- generating activities on economic empowerment of the network’s members 39](#_Toc207796301)

[5.3.7. Achievement level of outcome 3 indicators 42](#_Toc207796302)

[5.2.4. Project impact analysis 43](#_Toc207796303)

[5.2.4.1. Project Impact 43](#_Toc207796304)

[5.2.4.2. Analysis of the conflict sensitivity of the project implementation strategy 43](#_Toc207796305)

[5.2.5. Sustainability analysis 44](#_Toc207796306)

[5.2.5.1. Sustainability factors analysis 44](#_Toc207796307)

[5.2.5.2. Risks for sustainability 45](#_Toc207796308)

[6. Lessons learnt and recommendation 46](#_Toc207796309)

[7. Conclusion 48](#_Toc207796310)

# Executive summary

TheBakenyezi, Dukenyerere Amahoro: Promoting displaced, IDP and returnee women’s empowerment and public participation in Burundi project was implemented by Christian Aid Ireland in consortium with five national partners. The project was funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF) with the aim of addressing systematic exclusion of internally displaced, returnee and host community women in Burundi by increasing their participation in public and decision-making spaces at commune and national levels, to strengthen institutional gender equality. Targeting 13 communes[[1]](#footnote-1) across Rutana and Ruyigi provinces, the project sought to address systemic barriers to women’s empowerment, including institutional weaknesses in women-led organizations, political marginalization, and harmful gender norms. With a budget of $1.9 million over 27 months of implementation, the project focused on three key outcomes: strengthening institutional capacities of women-led networks, increasing women’s political participation, and transforming discriminatory gender norms.

This end of project evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, focus group discussions, and case studies. Data collection involved 884 respondents randomly selected from project beneficiaries, alongside interviews with network leaders, local authorities, and project implementers. The methodology assessed progress against baseline indicators, with a particular focus on changes in gender norms, political participation rates, and institutional capacities of women-led networks.

The overall performance of the BDA project demonstrates that it was a highly relevant and effective project that made significant contributions to gender equality and social cohesion in a challenging post-conflict context. Its innovative implementation approaches yielded strong results.

In terms of relevance and coherence, the project excelled by directly addressing the precise drivers of conflict and gender inequality factors identified in its initial analysis. Its activities were well-aligned with international targets, Burundi's National Development Plan and local communal plans, ensuring high relevance (of the project) to national priorities and beneficiary needs.

The project's efficiency was bolstered by a consortium model, led by Christian Aid with local partners, and a network-based implementation strategy that maximized reach and impact at a low cost per beneficiary, creating a powerful multiplier effect. Notably, the project reached 21,711 direct beneficiaries using the same budget that was planned for 19,625 beneficiaries, while maintaining the original budget. This achievement clearly indicates the project's effective resource utilization, as it exceeded beneficiary targets while remaining within budgetary constraints.

Regarding effectiveness, the project overwhelmingly achieved its outcomes. It successfully established 8 new women-led networks and strengthened 13 women-led networks, with 11 reaching a functional level of maturity. The "Model Couples" approach was exceptionally effective in transforming harmful gender norms at family level, and reducing obstacles to greater women's political candidacy, with candidacy rates increasing a remarkable 10+ percentage points in the 2025 elections.

The project's impact was significant, fostering more peaceful communities by substantially reducing household conflicts and GBV. It successfully built social cohesion by integrating returnees, IDPs, and host communities, with women reporting increased confidence, economic agency, and a stronger collective voice to defend their rights. The evaluation noted that the conflict-sensitive implementation strategy, provided opportunities for support to women that were more engaged with and likely to pursue political campaigns.

Finally, the analysis of sustainability revealed that networks established prior to this project already demonstrated high resilience due to strong leadership and collaboration with local authorities, with the income-generating activities providing a crucial economic incentive for continued collective action. However, some of the newer networks (two of them) face some sustainability risks due to a lack of political commitment. The multiplier effect of support to these networks is also recognised. Increases in the numbers of women leaders, engagement in planning and other public spaces, and the building of bonds between excluded women and their communities will also benefit long term sustainability and peacebuilding.

Based on these findings, the BDA project has largely been a success and showed that it is possible to build and strengthen intermediary women’s networks, that in turn support and engage on gender equality and women’s empowerment priorities. Future projects should emphasize strategic coordination by formalizing partnerships and coordination mechanisms of the existing network with other actors to leverage synergies and avoid duplication.

# Abbreviations

AVEC : Association Villageoise d’Epargne et de Crédit

BDA: Bakenyezi Dukenyerere Amahoro

CA: ChristianAid

CENI: National Independent Electoral Commission

CFAT: Couple Functionality Assessment Tool

CNDD-FDD: Conseil National de Défense de la Démocratie - Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie.

COCAFEM : Concertation des Collectifs des Associations Féminines

CPAJS : Conseiller Politique, Administratif, Juridiques et Sociales

CRS: Catholic Relief Services

GBV: Gender based violence

HC: Host community

IDP: Internal displaced people

IGA: Income-generating activities

NA: Not applicable

ND: Not determined

NDP: National development plan

NGO: Non-governmental organization

PCDC : Plan Communal de Développement Communautaire

RFP: Réseau Femme et Paix

SDG: Sustainable development goal

UNPBF: United Nation Peacebuilding Fund

WFD: Westminster Foundation for Democracy

WLON: Women lead organization network

WPS: Women peace and security

WSCG: women’s savings and credit groups

YELI: Youth Empowerment and Leadership Initiative

YPS: Youth peace and security

# Background on conflict analysis and project design

A gender and conflict analysis conducted during the design phase of this project revealed deep-seated structural barriers hindering women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding and political spaces in Rutana and Ruyigi provinces. The findings painted a concerning picture of systemic erosion of civil society, which had particularly devastated women-led organizations. This institutional weakening left civil society organisations struggling with funding shortages, weak management systems, and minimal integration into formal peace and governance decision-making processes.

The analysis further revealed that patriarchal gender norms systematically excluded women from decision-making spaces at all levels. Although constitutional gender quotas ensure 30% representation in the National Assembly, local governance structures told a different story. Following the 2020 general elections, women occupied fewer than 10% of hill-level leadership positions in Rutana and Ruyigi provinces. Even when women secured seats, their participation was largely symbolic, as traditional power dynamics privileged male voices. This marginalization extended beyond politics into household dynamics, where cultural norms reinforced restrictive gender roles that confined women to the domestic sphere.

Economic barriers create additional layers of exclusion, as financial independence is essential for meaningful political engagement. The near-total male monopoly on land ownership, with women holding only 17.7% of property titles compared to 80.2% for men, means that women are deprived of the collateral necessary to access credit or political campaign financing. The remaining 2.1% are jointly owned with a land certificate in the names of both spouses. Regarding the participation of women in public life, gerontocratic norms further complicate matters by requiring married women to seek spousal permission and unmarried women to obtain parental consent. The combination of institutional weakness, political marginalization, cultural restrictions and economic dependence creates a cycle that perpetuates women's exclusion from peace processes and public spaces.

Based on this conflict analysis, Christian Aid implemented the Bakenyenzi Dukenyerere Amahoro (BDA) Project. This 27-month project was funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF) with a budget of $1.9 million. Targeting women from IDP, returnee and host communities, the project covered 13 communes (six in Rutana and seven in Ruyigi) and adopted a threefold approach. Firstly, the project aimed to strengthen 13 women-led networks by building their capacity to address structural weaknesses in female-led civil society organisations. Secondly, it sought to enhance the political participation of individuals, primarily women, by providing advocacy training, facilitating gender-responsive planning with local officials and offering leadership coaching to female politicians. Finally, the project engaged 12,480 community members in challenging harmful gender norms through action-oriented policy research, localised action plans and behaviour change initiatives, tackling the cultural barriers to women's empowerment, peace and social cohesion.

# Bakenyezi Dukenyerere Amahoro project’s theory of change

**IF** women-led organizations in Rutana and Ruyigi are better connected and reinforce their institutional capacity; **and**

**IF** returnee, IDP and non-displaced women enhance their political participation at commune and national level through strategic advocacy and economic empowerment; **and**

**IF** a strong evidence base is used to inform women’s activism and women are supported domestically to engage in political processes;

**THEN** women-led organizations will be more resilient and effective to challenge gender inequality, local development processes will respond to the unique needs of vulnerable women and young women, and policy debates will reflect the lived experience of marginalized women so institutions will tackle the root causes of women’s political exclusion,

**BECAUSE** Women-led organizations will have effectively engaged decision makers strategically and networks, speaking with a united voice to drive transformative change, gender-transformative development plans will have created an enabling environment to tackle gender inequality, and male allies and gender-sensitive policies will facilitate women’s meaningful engagement alleviating the domestic burden.

This theory of change guided the project's intervention logic throughout its implementation. To assess the extent to which the project objectives were achieved, Christian Aid commissioned this final evaluation. The specific objectives of this evaluation are outlined in the following section.

# BDA project evaluation objectives and questions

The endline evaluation aimed to generate conclusive evidence about the project's achieved outcomes and measured output-level indicators after implementation. It sought to measure the project's contributions toward advancing gender equality, promoting social inclusion, and supporting peacebuilding in Burundi, while identifying key lessons to inform future programming. Specifically, this evaluation was intended to:

1. Assess how the project addressed the relevance and appropriateness of: 1) key drivers of gender inequity, exclusion and economic disempowerment including for returnee women, Displaced and host women including the most vulnerable women; 2) alignment with National Policy and national priorities of Burundi; 3) whether the project capitalized on the UN’s added value in Burundi; and 4) the degree to which the project addressed cross-cutting issues such as conflict and gender equality in the country.
2. Assess to what extent the PBF-funded project (Bakenyezi Dukenyerere Amahoro) has made a concrete contribution to reducing gender inequality and exclusion particularly for returnee women, IDPs, Batwa and the most vulnerable in Burundi.
3. Evaluate whether the project helped advance achievement of the SDGs, and in particular the Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5), which aims to "achieve gender equality and empower of all women and girls".
4. Evaluate the project’s efficiency and effectiveness, including its implementation strategy and approaches, institutional arrangements as well as its management and operational systems and value for money.
5. Assess whether the support provided by the PBF has promoted the Women, Peace and Security agenda (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda, allowed a specific focus on women’s and young people’s participation in peacebuilding processes, and whether it was accountable to gender equality.
6. Assess whether the project has been implemented through a conflict-sensitive approach.
7. Document good practices, innovations and lessons emerging from the project.
8. Assess how the institutional capacity of the network.
9. Conduct an analysis on how policies, structures, strategies and practices that were identified at project inception to have negative effects on women participation in decision making, including returnees and IDPs were handled following suggested recommendations to improve the impact of project interventions.
10. Document context related risks that occurred during project implementation and how they were managed in the project coverage area during the project life cycle.
11. Explore relevant existing policies, structures, strategies and practices that affect women’s participation in decision making, including returnees and IDPs and make appropriate recommendations to improve the impact of project interventions.
12. Provide specific and practical recommendations and document lessons to be utilized for future programming, explore the sustainability drivers for the project and support the data collection for accountability and feedback mechanisms.

To address these evaluation objectives, the consultants were guided by predefined research questions developed for this assessment. These questions included:

1. What is the current status of engagement and collaboration within women-led organizations? How has the network approach been helpful for women participation? To what extent?
2. How have harmful social/gender norms that make households less supportive to women’s engagement in decision-making processes at both local and national levels been handled?
3. What is the level of participation of women in local decision-making processes and how do they use available information to secure their leadership positions?
4. What change in attitudes regarding women and men of different age/ethnic groups/socio economic status/disability marginalization were fostered during implementation?
5. What kind of initiatives are currently being implemented by women’s networks to enhance social cohesion?
6. To what extent are women able to advocate for things that matter for them (gender transformative issues)? What were the barriers & how were they handled?
7. What are the mitigation measures employed to close the knowledge gaps identified in the associations at evaluation? Are there differences according to province, commune, vulnerability, age, gender?
8. What are the mitigation measures adopted to enhance enablers and reduce blockers to effective women’s participation in decision-making processes? Kindly present them in a disaggregated format per target area.

The aforementioned objectives and questions served as the framework guiding consultants in developing an appropriate methodological approach to meet this evaluation's requirements. The following section provides a detailed breakdown of the methodological steps implemented during this evaluation.

# Evaluation methodology

The evaluation methodology was implemented through a sequential process beginning with preparatory work, followed by data collection, and concluding with analysis and reporting. The following sections provide more information on each phase.

## Preparatory phase

This phase began with Christian Aid convening a detailed briefing session with the consultants to align on evaluation expectations and requirements. Following this initial briefing session, the consultants revised their proposed methodological approach from the original technical proposal to incorporate the clarified parameters provided by Christian Aid. To ensure the methodology accurately reflected the project's realities, Christian Aid shared comprehensive project documentation with the consultants, enabling them to develop an evaluation framework grounded in the project's actual achievements. This collaborative process resulted in an enhanced methodological approach that received formal approval from Christian Aid.

With this foundation established, the consultants proceeded to develop the inception report, which served as the evaluation's first key deliverable. Recognizing the importance of stakeholder alignment, Christian Aid organized two critical consultations: first with UNBPF representatives in Bujumbura to incorporate their institutional perspective into this evaluation process, and subsequently with implementing partners across both project provinces. These partner consultations served dual purposes - communicating the evaluation's objectives while simultaneously gathering critical insights about priority focus areas from those most familiar with the project's on-the-ground implementation. The preparatory phase concluded with the production of an inception report detailing the methodological approaches and data collection tools. This report was submitted to the CA for approval to move forward with the data collection phase.

## Data collection phase

This phase began with a training session for the enumerators, covering data collection tools and the ethical considerations associated with the evaluation. A total of 21 enumerators underwent one day of training before starting fieldwork. Data collection took place from 21 to 25 July 2025 across the project’s 13 intervention communes. The process continued during the week beginning 28 July 2025 to capture the perspectives of project stakeholders based in Bujumbura. For pragmatic reasons, the data collection process was organised around the outcomes of the BDA project to ensure that data on each outcome was collected systematically.

### Data collection methodology for outcome 1

The BDA project's Outcome 1 focused on establishing and strengthening the institutional capacities of women-led (local returnee, IDP and host community) networks in the 13 target communes. The data collection aimed to measure the extent to which project interventions had effectively enhanced the institutional capabilities of these networks. To this end, individual interviews were conducted with two key informants in each commune: (i) a network representative and (ii) a local authority involved in project activities. These informants provided critical insights into whether the project's capacity-building efforts had improved the networks' performance across nine key areas which are: (1) the ability to identify priority needs for women’s empowerment; (2) network intervention strategies; (3) inclusive targeting of beneficiaries (including returnees, Batwa, and other vulnerable groups); (4) sustainability of interventions; (5) accountability to stakeholders; (6) fundraising capacity; (7) partnership development; (8) networking and collaboration; and, (9) advocacy capabilities.

To ensure the reliability and quality of the data, information provided by the key informants was cross-referenced with project implementation reports and supplemented by interviews with project implementation teams. This triangulation method enabled a thorough evaluation of the 13 networks in the nine assessment domains. To collect data related to Outcome 1, the evaluation carried out 13 interviews with network leaders, 10 with local authorities, and 5 with project implementation partners. In addition to these interviews, the evaluation team conducted a review of the community development (CDP) plans for all 13 communes to assess the extent to which the strategic plans developed by the BDA project for each WLON contributed, or failed to contribute, to achieving the intended objectives of the CDP.

### Data collection methodology for outcome 2

Outcome 2 of the BDA project focused on increasing women's political participation in public spaces to strengthen gender equality in decision-making spaces at local, provincial and national levels. Data collection for this outcome was conducted in two phases:

* In the first phase, consultants gathered quantitative data on the proportion of women in political decision-making bodies following the 2020 general elections. These figures were then compared with the results of the 2025 communal and legislative elections to assess progress. As hill council elections had not yet taken place, the evaluation focused on measuring the extent to which women were empowered to run as candidates in the upcoming elections (at hill level). This was evidence of the project's success in encouraging political engagement among its beneficiaries.
* The second phase involved case studies of women who had shown a particular interest in political activities and had successfully secured decision-making roles. These case studies aimed to understand the role of the BDA project in their political achievements and to extract lessons for future initiatives centred on women's political participation. For this assessment, one case study was conducted with a woman elected to Parliament in the 2025 legislative elections, one with a woman elected to a communal council and one with women who ran as candidates in the 2025 hill council elections.

Finally, the evaluation has collected data to identify the factors that have contributed to improved women's political participation following the implementation of the BDA project. Then, a checklist inspired by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) framework was administered to some key informants. The focus of the checklist was to determine the extent to which the project impacted the four domains of women's political participation which are: (1) Women's capacities; (2) Political processes; (3) Incentives and attitudes; (4) Linkage and Network. In addition to these qualitative assessments, a questionnaire was given to female beneficiaries to determine the percentage increase in women actively participating in local decision-making processes / events. Questions were also included to evaluate self-reported participation scores among female network members and potential political candidates. These two indicators were designed to measure the level of achievement of Outcome 2.

### Data collection methodology for Outcome 3 and project quantitative indicators measurement

Outcome 3 of the project focused on transformative gender approaches and combatting harmful gender norms that hinder women's political participation. To gather data related to this outcome, a quantitative approach based on a community survey was adopted. A representative sample of 884 respondents was selected to evaluate the impact of the project's transformative gender activities on gender norms. Respondents were randomly selected from project beneficiaries, with a representative sample of approximately sixty-five participants per commune. Participants completed a streamlined questionnaire derived from the Couple Functionality Assessment Tool (CFAT), a standardised measurement framework developed by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to evaluate key dimensions of couple dynamics. These dimensions included household decision-making, gender roles and responsibilities within households, communication and cohesion between partners, and conflict resolution. In addition to the CFAT questions, respondents provided data to measure the final quantitative values of the project's results framework indicators.

To provide additional insight on the quantitative data, the consultants conducted six focus group discussions to analyse the extent to which harmful gender norms had changed as a result of the project. These discussions provided detailed insights into how gender norm dynamics evolved during the project. They also enabled a comparative analysis of these norms before and after implementation of the BDA project, providing a clear picture of its transformative impact on harmful gender norms.

## Evaluation methodology limitations

The evaluation of the BDA project does not reveal any significant methodological limitations that could compromise the quality of its findings. However, it is important to note that the timeframe allocated for this evaluation was particularly tight. This constrained the ability to collect data with the level of detail typically required for such assessments. This time constraint led the consultants to focus on the most important elements to adhere to the schedule, which potentially limited their capacity to gather additional information that might have provided further clarity on certain issues that the evaluation may raise for readers.

Another limitation stemming from the compressed timeline relates to the investigation of gender norms, particularly with regard to domestic violence against women. Such sensitive topics require extended interaction between enumerators and respondents to establish sufficient trust. While the consultants made every effort to create a comfortable and safe environment for participants, the limited time available for building rapport may have resulted in some respondents withholding information, particularly regarding deeply personal or stigmatised issues. These discussions require open and frank dialogue, which often takes more time than was available during this evaluation. To address this limitation, the evaluation compared its findings with additional gender-based violence (GBV) data collected during the BDA project implementation. This included both the baseline study and the study on the root causes of GBV, which was conducted by the University of Burundi with funding from this project. This comparative analysis helped to assess the project's contribution to transforming harmful gender norms in the areas in which it was implemented.

Additionally, the period of the evaluation itself presented challenges. Indeed, the hill council elections had not yet taken place, meaning the evaluation could not measure women's actual representation in these decision-making spaces, which was a key objective of the BDA project. Consequently, the evaluation focused on the proportion of women who stood as candidates in these elections.

To conclude this section, it is important to note that some of the planned interviews could not be conducted due to scheduling conflicts arising from the senatorial and communal administrator elections, which took place during the fieldwork period. Consequently, some key informants were unavailable to respond to our interview requests.

Despite these limitations, none of which are substantial enough to undermine the quality or validity of the findings, the evaluation assumes that the data presented in this report accurately reflects the actual achievement of the BDA project.

# Evaluation findings

This chapter presents the consultants' evaluation findings, which are based on a comprehensive analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected from multiple sources. These findings are organised according to the standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

The evaluation was specifically designed to assess the project's success in achieving its core objective of fostering peace and social cohesion within target communities. A central focus of the evaluation was to examine how the project's unique approach, which emphasised women's engagement and challenged norms and practices that excluded women from decision-making spaces, contributed to advancing social cohesion and gender equality.

Readers should note this dual focus throughout the findings. While social cohesion was the primary project goal, the implementation strategy intentionally addressed barriers to gender and political participation as a means of achieving cohesive and equitable communities. The analysis therefore evaluates outcomes through these two interconnected lenses.

This chapter begins with an analysis of the BDA's relevance.

## Relevance and coherence analysis

This analysis was conducted to generate evidence informing the evaluation's objective of assessing the project's relevance in addressing several critical needs and priorities of women. Specifically, it examined how the project tackled key drivers of gender inequity, exclusion, and economic disempowerment - with particular attention to returnee women, displaced women, host communities, and the most vulnerable groups. The relevance analysis also evaluated the project's alignment with Burundi's National Policy and development priorities and its integration of cross-cutting issues including conflict sensitivity and gender equality.

To conduct this analysis, the evaluation focused on how the project attempted to address the challenges regarding women's disempowerment identified in the conflict analysis phase. As a reminder, the project's conflict and gender analysis had identified a set of challenges related to women's disempowerment that were to be addressed by the BDA project. These challenges were: (1) the limited organisational capacity of women-led organisations; (2) the exclusion or underrepresentation of women in decision-making spaces; (3) traditional norms hindering women's political participation and empowerment; and, (4) the marginalisation of specific groups (returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and Batwa women) in community associational life. The evaluation carefully assessed the appropriateness of the measures taken by the project to address these challenges.

The evaluation concluded that the project successfully proposed appropriate interventions to meet the needs of its beneficiaries related to the four identified disempowerment challenges. The project's strategy also proved to be aligned with key national and international priorities, as evidenced in the following sections.

* + 1. **Analysis of** **the project's relevance to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS)**

The evaluation also concludes that the project has contributed to advancing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda by addressing its three core pillars of prevention, participation, and protection, as detailed in the figure below.



Through awareness-raising campaigns combating violence against women and transforming harmful gender norms, the project has successfully prevented community-level conflicts where women are often the primary victims. Furthermore, by working with returnees and internally displaced persons, the project aligns with Burundi's post-conflict context to enhance women's peace and security following forced displacement conditions.

Regarding participation, the evaluation finds the project has promoted women's equal engagement in local political processes and decision-making bodies across all levels—from community hillside councils to national institutions—thereby fulfilling this critical pillar of the agenda.

Finally, on protection, the project achieved significant progress in safeguarding women and girls against sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence. These outcomes were made possible through model couples' advocacy initiatives and the empowerment activities implemented by communal women's networks.

In summary, the project has made significant contributions to advancing the principles outlined in UN Security Council Resolutions 1889 and 2467, as well as Resolution 1325, by taking a comprehensive approach to empowering women in post-conflict settings. By promoting women's political participation, the project has directly addressed the mandate for increased female participation in peace processes set out in Resolution 1889, whereas the actions related to Outcome 3 have aligned with Resolution 2467's call to end sexual violence against women in post-conflict settings.

### Analysis of the project's relevance to the Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5)

The BDA project has made significant strides in advancing the targets of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, particularly in addressing discrimination and violence against women and girls (Targets 5.1 and 5.2). Through its integrated approach combining awareness-raising and network capacity-building, the project has contributed to dismantling gender inequalities.

On Target 5.1 (End all forms of discrimination), the project has actively challenged harmful gender norms by promoting women’s participation in leadership roles including local governance and economic associations. The project has reduced discriminatory practices that previously excluded women from public and household decision-making. Testimonies from women beneficiaries highlight increased confidence in claiming their rights and combatting women discrimination

For Target 5.2 (Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls), the project’s interventions have led to a measurable decline in gender-based violence (GBV). This significant decline in gender-based violence has been attributed to the project's interventions, as demonstrated in the dedicated sections of this report. Undoubtedly, the project has contributed to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5).

### Analysis of the project's alignment with Burundi's national policy and priorities.

Analysis of the activities proposed under the BDA project revealed a strong alignment with Burundi's national objectives and priorities. Indeed, Burundi's 2018–2027 National Development Plan (NDP) includes a strategic objective dedicated to consolidating the rule of law and human rights. To achieve this, one of its programme priorities is to eradicate all forms of inequality. According to this strategic document, projects that aim to improve women's social and cultural status in society are encouraged. The NDP also encourages capacity building for stakeholders involved in implementing national gender policies. Furthermore, it supports initiatives targeting the economic empowerment of women and young girls. Given these strategic priorities and the activities carried out by the BDA project, the evaluation confirms that the project closely aligns with these national objectives.

At the local level, the evaluation found that the 13 Communal Community Development Plans (PCDCs), which logically derive from the PND, included objectives relating to gender equality and women's empowerment, to which the BDA project contributed. In some cases, the project supported the local authorities in adapting the PCDCs to make them gender-sensitive and align with the BDA's goals. To summarize, the evaluation concluded that the project was well aligned with national policies on gender equality and women's empowerment.

### Analysis of the relevance of project activities to the needs of intended beneficiaries.

This analysis evaluates the extent to which the project objectives were well-suited to the context and addressing the significant needs of the targeted groups.

### To what extent were the project’s capacity-strengthening goals relevant to the needs of Women-Led Organizations (WLONs)?

In the provinces of Ruyigi and Rutana, the evaluation found that prior to the BDA project, some women's civil society organizations existed but were weakly structured to advocate for common causes such as women's political participation. The evaluation observed that women's organizations were structured into networks in the former communes of Ruyigi, Bweru, Butaganzwa, and Mpinga Kayove. Some of these women's networks had been established by ActionAid and primarily focused on combating violence against women. This was confirmed in an interview with a network leader in Bweru:

*"Our network was created in 2019 and includes 29 associations spread across all the hills of the former Bweru commune. Before this project, we were mainly focused on fighting violence against women."* Interview with the leader of the TUZAMURANE network, July 2025.

In other communes, the evaluation found that before the BDA project, women's civil society organizations existed as individual associations primarily concerned with improving women's economic conditions through savings and credit activities. They were not structured around common objectives, making their actions less visible at the communal level and their advocacy for women's rights less effective. A communal network leader confirmed these findings:

*"I had long envisioned a platform that would bring together women's associations in Butezi commune to advocate for the common cause of women's rights, as I saw that isolated efforts by individual associations were ineffective in advancing women's issues."* Interview with the leader of the MUKENYEZI TSIMBATAZA AMAHORO NITERAMBERE network in Butezi, July 2025

Based on the project implementation context, the evaluation found that the project worked with pre-existing women's networks established by ActionAid in four communes and created nine new women's networks at a commune level, plus worked with two networks working on a provincial level. In both cases, the evaluation found that all beneficiary networks required capacity strengthening, and the priorities targeted reflected the priority needs of the networks. Even the ActionAid-established networks operated without strategic plans to guide their activities. To address these gaps, capacity-building initiatives covering six key areas—leadership, organizational management, financial management, fundraising, monitoring and evaluation, and accountability—proved highly effective in enhancing the organizational management of BDA-supported networks. All network leaders confirmed that these trainings improved their governance and management systems, as illustrated by this statement:

*"The financial management training improved our network's financial resource management system, enhancing transparency and, consequently, members' trust in the leadership team I represent."* Interview with a Network leader in Butaganzwa, July 2025

Similar testimonials were common across all training themes, unequivocally demonstrating that the project's capacity-building interventions were well-aligned with network representatives' needs.

Another critical aspect of institutional capacity-building was the establishment of income-generating activities (IGAs) by the networks. These IGAs ranged from agropastoral activities to agro-processing. In all cases, the evaluation found that these IGAs strengthened solidarity among members by providing shared capital, which also funded initiatives to defend women's rights. As one participant noted:

*"Our collective harvests represent shared wealth that keeps network members united. The income we generate covers transportation and medical expenses for GBV survivors who cannot afford these costs themselves."* Interview with a Network Leader in Bweru, July 2025

The evaluation confirmed that the project's IGAs provided women with additional income, boosting their self-esteem and their standing within their households. As one woman explained during a focus group discussion:

*"My husband's attitude toward me changed after I started earning income through this project. I feel respected, and even our marital conflicts have decreased."* Focus group in Gisuru, July 2025

Such testimonials reaffirm that the IGAs effectively addressed the needs of network members while fostering economic empowerment and social cohesion.

### To what extent were activities aimed at addressing the exclusion of women from decision-making spaces relevant to the needs of women?

The BDA project was put into action in areas where women’s engagement in decision-making processes was quite low. As outlined in CENI’s report in 2022, there were only 9% and 8% female representation among hill chiefs in Ruyigi and Rutana provinces respectively, and women made up only 20% and 24% of hill council members in these regions. To address this underrepresentation in community decision-making structures, the evaluation found that the project made significant efforts to identify barriers to women's political participation and community engagement, subsequently developing targeted advocacy strategies. Nationally, the project implemented advocacy campaigns aimed at raising the profile of women’s political participation. At the community level, advocacy was directed through educational campaigns aimed at encouraging husbands to support the political participation of their wives. A leader of a WLON from Rutana noted in this statement:

“*The sensitization sessions with husbands about supporting their wives' political participation gave new momentum to our network members' engagement in hill council elections*”.

Additionally, the project offered specialized coaching to equip 1,000 women with political ambitions for leadership roles. From the perspective of the evaluation, the project successfully implemented appropriate interventions to enhance women's political engagement across all 13-implementation commune. Local authorities acknowledged this progress/appropriateness, for example, Bweru’s CPAJS official stated: “*Women’s mobilization in community and political activities at the communal level has never been as strong as during the BDA project implementation.”* Interview with CPAJS Bweru

Similar testimonies supporting the contribution of the BDA project to women's mobilisation for political participation and community mobilisation were offered by all the other 12 communes visited during the evaluation. These findings confirm that the project was tailored to the needs of its beneficiaries with regard to political participation.

### To what extent were activities aimed at addressing gender norms relevant to the needs of women in enhancing their participation in politics?

Upon reviewing the BDA project proposal, it emerged that the implementation zones (Ruyigi and Rutana provinces) were characterised by deeply rooted gender norms that discouraged women from participating in politics. A study conducted by the University of Burundi into the root causes of gender norms and gender-based violence (GBV) revealed that 30% of women were excluded from decision-making processes within their households and communities. This significantly hindered their political participation. The study also found that 30% of respondents believed that a man could physically beat his wife for misbehaving, thereby normalising violence against women. Furthermore, over 70% of surveyed women considered domestic chores, including meal preparation, yard cleaning and childcare, to be exclusively female responsibilities. This entrenched domestic confinement systematically limited women's engagement in political activities, consequently undermining their empowerment.

The project therefore correctly developed appropriate responses to this situation, specifically seeking to transform the norms that impeded women’s socio-political emancipation. To this end, the project undertook extensive research to identify the root causes of gender inequality and associated gender-based violence. This research aimed to produce relevant data to inform anti-violence strategies. In parallel, the Model Couples training programme educated 'model couples' (approximately thirty per commune) to reduce domestic violence and increased gender equality in the household. These couples then became active community mediators, resolving disputes and serving as mentors and referral points in cases of domestic violence among neighbours.

In addition, the project organised mass awareness campaigns on transformative gender concepts, gender equality and changing norms that restrict women's political and social participation. The evaluation concluded that these interventions were well-suited to addressing the challenges of gender inequality. For example, one of the project managers noted the relevance of the research undertaken during the BDA project:

*“Understanding local proverbs and beliefs that perpetuate gender inequality enabled us to craft community-specific advocacy message*s”. Interview with a BDA project Manager, July 2025

The research provided many recommendations for improving the project's interventions on harmful gender norms. Regarding the Model Couples approach and community sensitisation, the evaluation confirmed their contextual relevance. Data from local authorities and Women-Led Organisation Networks (WLONs) revealed that marital conflicts, often arising from poor management of household resources, alcoholism and infidelity, constituted the most common disputes. The Model Couples established by the project worked with exemplary effectiveness to resolve conflicts that arose among couples in their neighbourhoods, as noted by this women's leader from the Butaganzwa communal network: “*The Model Couples approach has been revolutionary in transforming relationships. Model couples now resolve most conflicts that previously required our intervention, freeing us to focus on other priorities*” Interview with a Network leader, July 2025

### In what ways did the project address the marginalization of specific vulnerable groups?

The BDA project was designed to benefit three groups: host community members, returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Within each category, the focus was deliberately on reaching the most vulnerable groups, such as the Batwa and women with disabilities, widows and those with albinism.

For a peacebuilding project such as BDA, the evaluation examined whether the target groups matched those who were most in need of support in order to improve social cohesion within the communities of Ruyigi and Rutana provinces. Statistics show that over 120,000 Burundian returnees, 53% of whom were women, returned to Burundi between 2017 and 2021. This population of newly returned individuals was joined by internal migrants (mostly women) who moved to Rutana and Ruyigi primarily for economic reasons. According to the IOM (2022), economic migrants accounted for 76.4% of all migration to these two provinces targeted by the project.

A conflict and gender analysis conducted during the evaluation found that women affected by forced displacement (returnees and IDPs) face double the challenges. Upon arriving in new communities, they are often confined to domestic chores and rarely get the opportunity to join local associations, which are mostly made up of members of the host community who typically have no social ties with IDPs or connections with returnee families. As one returnee woman in Gisuru explained: *“Spending 10 years in exile means losing friends and social connections built over a lifetime. When you return, you have to rebuild almost everything from scratch”.*

Returnee and IDP women often prioritise rebuilding their families' livelihoods over engaging in political activities or GBV prevention efforts. A woman who migrated from Kayanza to Ruyigi shared: “*Before this project, I didn’t see the point of joining an association because I didn’t know anyone. But this project gave me a chance to join a hillside association that’s part of the communal network”*.'

Based on these testimonies and analyses, the evaluation concluded that the project’s target groups were well aligned with the local context. Among victims of forced displacement (returnees and IDPs), the project focused on women who face the harshest consequences. Gender norms confine them to the home, making it difficult for them to build social ties with other women in the host community. They are rarely elected due to low visibility, and struggle to join existing civic groups as they are unknown and focused on survival.

For Batwa women, intentional targeting helped lay the groundwork to reduce their marginalization. By bringing together these three groups — returnees, IDPs, Batwa and other marginalized women — the project created spaces for dialogue and the sharing of experiences among women who had previously had little interaction. This reduced the risk of conflict and strengthened social cohesion. Moreover, targeting these three groups was strategic because it aligned with the Burundian government’s priorities for the socio-economic reintegration of returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), as well as the inclusion of Batwa communities (2025-2027).

In fact, the government’s multi-year reintegration plan outlines in its fourth objective the need to strengthen social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in areas hosting returnees, IDPs, and local communities. Given the methodology used to select these beneficiary groups, the BDA project served as both a strong example and a foundation for this multi-year reintegration and inclusion strategy.

### Conclusion on the relevance/coherence analysis

Overall, the project's objectives were highly relevant to the needs of its various target groups. Furthermore, the project successfully engaged with the relevant groups to promote social cohesion within the beneficiary communities. Evidence suggests that the target groups, including repatriated women, internally displaced women and women of the host community, were marginalised segments of the population, making them a fitting and pertinent focus for the project. By working with these groups, the project successfully strengthened social cohesion and gender equality within the communities. This achievement provides a critical foundation for ongoing peace consolidation efforts.

## Analysis of project efficiency

This section evaluates the extent to which the project was implemented according to schedule and within its planned budget framework. It provides further details concerning the beneficiary selection strategy, the project execution approach, and its complementarity with similar initiatives being implemented concurrently in the target area.

### Beneficiaries targeting

The project was initially designed to support 19,625 beneficiaries, including 4,433 returnees, 787 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 14,406 members of host communities. The evaluation confirmed that the project exceeded its intended beneficiary targets. Considering members of the 13 community networks as direct beneficiaries, the evaluation found that the project reached 5,243 returnees, 1,234 IDPs and 15,234 host community members. This totals 21,711 direct beneficiaries, surpassing the original goal of 19,625.

During the beneficiary targeting process, it is important to note that the inclusion of new members created some challenges for the four pre-existing networks (established by ActionAid) in Ruyigi, Bweru, Butaganzwa, and Mpinga Kayove. These networks built collective assets, including monthly contributions from member associations and financial capital for their savings and credit groups. Consequently, integrating new members proved challenging, as existing members were reluctant to share their investments with newcomers. The following interview excerpt illustrates this: “*We were required to partner with five new returnee associations to meet the BDA project’s requirements. Now that the project has ended, it is only natural that these five associations will no longer benefit from the investments made before they joined the network”*. Interview with a WLON in Mpinga Kayove.

The situation was more favourable for the integration of returnees, IDPs and other vulnerable groups in networks established under the BDA project, as the project actively ensured their representation. However, the evaluation found that, once operational, these networks tended to become closed circles due to investments made through the BDA project’s income-generating activities (IGAs). They became less receptive to new members, fearing that they would have to share the benefits they had acquired.

Despite these minor challenges, the evaluation found that the project successfully overcame these obstacles by ensuring the inclusion of returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and members of the host community. Notably, the project reached 21,711 direct beneficiaries using the same budget that was planned for 19,625 beneficiaries, while maintaining the original budget. This achievement clearly indicates the project's effective resource utilization, as it exceeded beneficiary targets while remaining within budgetary constraints.

### Cost-Benefit analysis of the project implementation strategy

The project's implementation strategy was based on communal networks. The evaluation specifically assessed how this network-centred approach contributed to the efficient execution of project activities. The findings conclusively demonstrated that this strategy substantially enhanced the project's overall efficiency.

The analysis revealed an average investment of $124.72 (approximately 349,418 BIF) per direct beneficiary. Within this budgetary framework, the project successfully enabled beneficiaries to participate in three key areas: institutional capacity building for their networks, initiatives promoting women's political participation, and activities addressing harmful gender norms. While this per-beneficiary allocation might appear modest, the network-based implementation approach proved instrumental in maximizing results while minimizing operational costs.

A concrete example illustrates this efficiency: the "model couples" training program, delivered to 780 beneficiaries at $101.70 per participant. These trained individuals subsequently disseminated their knowledge across their entire networks, ultimately reaching 20,931 communal members with key concepts. Had the project attempted to deliver this training directly to all network members under similar conditions, the cost would have escalated to approximately $2,128,766 - representing a thirty-fold increase over actual expenditures.

This network-centric strategy yielded multiple advantages. The decentralised structure of communal networks, consisting of hillside associations, ensured that project information reached even the most remote areas. This proved particularly effective in engaging female participants, who would otherwise have required considerable resources. Information flowed efficiently from network leaders to the most distant hillside communities.

Moreover, the project's impact extended beyond its direct beneficiaries, creating a catalytic effect that reached additional community members outside the formal networks. This multiplier effect enabled the project to achieve extensive reach while maintaining strict budgetary discipline, thus demonstrating the exceptional cost-effectiveness of the network-based implementation model.

### Analysis of the coordination level of the partners involved in implementing the BDA project.

The BDA project was implemented by Christian Aid, an international NGO, in a consortium with five local non-governmental organisations: YELI, COCAFEM, Dushirehamwe, RFP and Buja Hub. Led by an international NGO with robust financial and project management capabilities, this consortium was highly commended by both the evaluation team and partners. It was noted that Christian Aid maintained a supervisory role to ensure quality without interfering in the internal management of the local organisations involved.

The project's implementation strengthened the management capacities of local organisations engaged in peacebuilding initiatives by localising peacebuilding based on the Resolution 1325 and project management skills. Notably, the establishment of income-generating activities by communal networks of women's organisations enabled these networks to enhance their institutional and micro-grant management capacities.

Consequently, some networks have developed the capacity to secure and manage small peacebuilding grants. The project's implementation strategy facilitated the localisation of peacebuilding approaches, including UN Resolution 1325, down to communal and hillside levels. Furthermore, the involvement of up to five partner organisations in project implementation was highly commended. The project served as an inter-organisational learning and knowledge-sharing platform, enhancing its overall success. Implementation teams commonly exchanged insights on effective and less effective approaches during project execution, thereby maximising the likelihood of success. Additionally, organisations such as DUSHIREHAMWE, which had both communal and provincial focal points as well as dedicated project staff, significantly improved activity monitoring at the community level.

The project's efficiency was significantly enhanced by the establishment of provincial focal points and the deep community roots of local implementing organizations. Operating through these local structures drastically reduced monitoring and implementation costs, as routine oversight activities could be carried out without additional expenditure. This approach contrasts sharply with a scenario lacking such local anchoring, where substantial expenses would have been incurred for vehicle rentals, fuel and staff per diems for monitoring missions. Furthermore, without a continuous on-the-ground presence, monitoring would have been limited to sporadic field visits, which would have compromised the quality and consistency of oversight. The local organization-based model ensured sustained and effective monitoring, contributing directly to the project’s overall efficiency and success.

However, despite these implementation strengths, the lack of harmonisation in certain project expenses, such as travel allowances and per diems, led to frustration among participants. Discrepancies arose when participants accustomed to the reimbursement rates of one organisation received lower allowances for activities organised by another partner within the same project. Standardized reimbursement rates for participants could resolve such inconsistencies in the future.

### Analysis of BDA Project's complementarity with other Initiatives

The BDA project was implemented in Ruyigi and Rutana provinces, where it played a complementary role alongside local government efforts in mobilizing women for civic and political participation. Testimonies from local authorities highlighted that some activities planned in their PCDCs (Communal Development Plans) were effectively carried out by the project. As one official noted: *"Awareness campaigns against harmful gender norms were included in our PCDC, but they were rarely or poorly implemented due to lack of resources."* (Interview with a local authority in Butaganzwa). This demonstrates that the project effectively supplemented and synergized with local government actions.

Regarding complementarity with other projects sharing similar objectives, the results were mixed. For instance, in both provinces, the EU-funded *Kaze Twiyunge* project supports the sustainable reintegration of returnees by providing protection services, legal and social referrals, mental health support, and community cohesion initiatives through reception committees and community action groups. Similarly, UNHCR and its partners implement programs focused on returnee rights protection and social cohesion. However, the evaluation found little evidence of collaboration or coordination between BDA and these initiatives, leading to potential overlaps or gaps —particularly in addressing gender-based violence and harmful social norms, which were common across all projects.

In terms of women’s participation in decision-making, initiatives like UNFPA-funded programmes by *Icirore C’Amahoro (ICCA)* in Ruyigi also aimed to promote women’s leadership and conflict prevention. Despite shared goals, no synergy existed between BDA and ICCA, increasing the risk of duplicated efforts. Additionally, the World Bank-funded *PRODECI* project, which supports local-led initiatives in refugee-hosting provinces, presented an untapped opportunity. BDA could have amplified its impact by linking women’s networks to PRODECI, potentially securing additional funding for their activities.

In summary, while the project successfully complemented local government plans (PCDCs), there was limited evidence of meaningful coordination with other donor-funded programmes in the area. This lack of synergy may have reduced overall efficiency and missed opportunities for greater collective impact.

### Analysis of the innovative aspects of the BDA project implementation strategy.

To assess the degree of innovation in the design and implementation of the BDA project, the evaluation drew upon the theoretical framework of the Development Bank of Canada. This framework distinguishes creativity from innovation, defining creativity as the generation of new ideas, while innovation involves applying those novel ideas to solve client (in this case, beneficiary) problems. The framework categorizes innovation into three types: incremental, major, and disruptive. **Incremental innovation** introduces small-scale changes to enhance the efficiency of an existing business model. **Major innovation** typically leverages science and technology to explore new ideas, whereas **disruptive innovation** creates entirely new, groundbreaking products.

Based on this framework, the design and implementation of the BDA project align with incremental innovation. The evaluation found that the project introduced modifications to conventional models of combating gender-based violence (GBV) and, consequently, to peacebuilding and the implementation of UN Resolution 1325, for the following reasons:

* By implementing Income-Generating Activities (IGAs) for WLONs: The income-generating activities, originally designed to enhance the financial capacity of communal networks to support their vulnerable members, proved highly effective in strengthening social cohesion. As a shared collective capital, these activities revitalized previously dormant women’s networks, empowering them to advocate for women’s rights and social peace. Unlike traditional peacebuilding projects, which often focus solely on awareness-raising and training, the provision of IGA capital motivated women to continue fighting for their socio-economic peace even after the project’s conclusion. This economic empowerment enabled networks to more effectively combat GBV, as illustrated by this testimony from a communal network leader in Bweru:

"*With the income from our IGAs, we cover transportation costs for the most vulnerable GBV survivors to access care centers. We even pay for medical expenses or legal fees for cases requiring judicial assistance."*

The project added unique value beyond other forms of assistance that the WLONs were used to offer to victims of GBV in previous projects, as noted by this participant:

"*With ActionAid’s support, we focused on GBV prevention through awareness-raising, but we lacked the means to assist victims directly. This led some to question our network’s relevance. Now, thanks to the IGAs, community interest in our work has grown significantly*."

* By implementing the "Model Couples" approach as an Innovation in GBV Prevention. The beneficiaries were accustomed to standard GBV awareness campaigns, but they were impressed by the effectiveness of the 'Model Couples' approach. During a focus group discussion, a female participant from Rutana shared:

"*To be honest, I’ve seen many projects addressing GBV, particularly on joint household resource management. But the model couples approach struck me as far more effective—it profoundly transformed men’s behaviours in our community."*

By training couples together, the initiative radically shifted harmful gender norms. Transformed men became agents of change, influencing their communities through new behaviours and awareness-raising actions that served as models for other community members.

* By implementing digital skills training: The project’s design included training for communal network members on digital technologies (digital literacy, communication, and social media) to promote peacebuilding through digital channels and enhance women’s political participation via social media. While this was a promising innovative idea, its execution fell short. One participant expressed disappointment: *"We were excited to learn digital skills to modernize peacebuilding techniques, but the project left us disillusioned in this regard."*

The planned training on new technologies represented an anticipated innovation that never materialized. The project failed to develop a methodology and content suited to the project’s context—accounting for training duration, beneficiaries’ skill levels, and available digital tools. Future initiatives must ensure implementing partners possess tailored content and tools aligned with trainees’ capacities.

## Effectiveness analysis

This section evaluates the extent to which the BDA project achieved its intended objectives. The analysis systematically examines the three core outcomes of the project: (1) strengthening the institutional capacity of women’s networks; (2) improving the political participation and representation of women in decision-making processes; and (3) transforming harmful gender norms that obstruct equality.

To this end, the evaluation first provides a synthesis of qualitative data collected in the field for each outcome. Subsequently, it offers a quantitative assessment of the indicators associated with each outcome. Where relevant, final indicator values are compared with baseline values to demonstrate the project’s tangible contributions. The following subsection discusses the project’s achievements in strengthening the Women Led Organisation Network (WLONs) in each commune. The Project’s effective was high as reflected by the outcomes and outcomes produced – ref. The indicator table.

### Project contribution to strengthening the institutional capacities of WLONs

As previously mentioned, the BDA project implemented a series of activities aimed at strengthening the institutional capacity of Women-Led Organisation Networks (WLONs). These activities focused primarily on capacity strengthening and financial support for income-generating activities (IGAs) managed by the WLONs. In general, it is important to recognize that the BDA project has undoubtedly strengthened the capacities of the 13 communal networks. This explains why the indicators of this outcome have been achieved.

The following section analyses the extent to which these WLONs were empowered to advocate for women’s rights, particularly with regard to combatting gender-based violence (GBV) and promoting women’s political participation. This analysis was conducted using a streamlined version of an organisational capacity assessment tool developed by ActionAid. This tool evaluates each communal network in key domains. These domains were: (i) needs assessment capabilities; (ii) operational methodologies; (iii) targeting strategies and inclusion practices; (iv) the sustainability of implemented actions; (v) accountability mechanisms; (vi) fundraising capacity; (vii) partnership and networking effectiveness; and (viii) advocacy capabilities. For each of these areas, the networks’ capacities were assessed using a plant growth-based framework inspired by the stages of plant development: Planting, Seedling, Maturing and Harvesting. The findings of this analysis should be interpreted according to the following guidelines:

* Planting: Initial stage with minimal or no capacity
* Seedling: Early development with basic capacity
* Maturing: Significant progress with functional capacity
* Harvesting: Fully developed, sustainable capacity

Used as described, this analytical framework facilitated the classification of the 13 networks in four development stages according to their capacity levels in each analysed area. The analysis involved assessing the situation of the communal networks before and after the BDA project. Overall, the networks' capacities have significantly strengthened across all areas covered in the analysis. Compared to the initial situation, which was mostly marked as 'red' (see Table 1), the post-implementation scenario shows clear improvement, with networks progressing to the 'yellow' (Stage 2), 'green' (Stage 3) and even reaching Stage 4 in some areas. The results of this analysis are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 : Assessment of the institutional capacities of the 13 municipal networks supported by the BDA project

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Domain of analysis | Situation | Analysis of the comparative situation before and after the project in each commune | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | Ruyigi | Butaganzwa | Butezi | Bweru | Gisuru | Nyabitsinda | Kinyinya | Giharo | Bukemba | Gitanga | Rutana | Mpinga Kayove | Musongati |
| Need Assessment | Before BDA | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| After BDA | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Ways of Working | Before BDA | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| After BDA | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Inclusion/ Targeting | Before BDA | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| After BDA | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Sustainability | Before BDA | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| After BDA | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Accountability | Before BDA | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| After BDA | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Fundraising | Before BDA | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| After BDA | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Networking/ Partnership | Before BDA | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| After BDA | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Advocacy | Before BDA | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| After BDA | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |

1= Planting: Initial stage with minimal or no capacity

2= Seedling: Early development with basic capacity

3= Maturing: Significant progress with functional capacity

4= Harvesting: Fully developed, sustainable capacity

Women’ s needs Assessment: The evaluation concluded that all thirteen WLONs are at stage 3 on a 4-level scale. It was evident that the networks' leadership bodies primarily analyse issues limiting women's rights, believing they understand the challenges faced by women in their communities, who are often perceived as a homogeneous group. However, the evaluation noted the limited involvement of community members, particularly the most vulnerable groups (Batwa, IDPs and returnees), in identifying priority needs requiring the networks' attention. Involving the most vulnerable groups in the needs assessment process would raise the level of this domain to stage 4.

Ways of working: All the 13 WLONs (Ruyigi, Bweru, Butaganzwa, Butezi Gisuru, Kinyinya et Nyabitsinda, Rutana; Mpinga Kayove; Giharo; Gitanga; Musongati et Bukemba)were rated at stage 3. Indeed, the evaluation noticed that all WLONs had developed three-year strategic plans, providing the basis for annual action plans with realistic, measurable objectives. While most networks had partially executed their 2024 action plans by the time of the evaluation, some activities remained unfunded and unimplemented. However, the evaluation noted that the structured planning and year-end review process introduced by the project were gradually being abandoned. Only one out of thirteen networks had reviewed the 2024 plan to inform the 2025 plan. The domain received a rating of 3 out of 4

Inclusion/ Targeting: 4 WLONs ( Ruyigi, Bweru, Butaganzwa, Mpinga Kayove) were at stage 2 while 9 WLONs (Gisuru, Kinyinya; Butezi; Nyabitsinda, Rutana; Giharo; Gitanga; Musongati et Bukemba) were at stage 3. The four WLONs currently at stage 2 were established prior to the BDA by Action Aid. These networks have demonstrated limited openness to integrating the project's target groups, including the Batwa community, IDPs, and recent returnees. Over time, they have accumulated material and financial capital which they are reluctant to share with new members. Regarding the nine other WLONs at stage 3, while they have successfully incorporated the project's target categories into their networks, The evaluation reveals that the most vulnerable groups remain largely passive participants in network activities. This limited engagement substantially reduces their actual level of inclusion within these structures.

Sustainability: 2 WLONs (Nyabitsinda and Giharo) were at stage 2; 7WLONs (Gisuru, Kinyinya; Butezi; Rutana; Gitanga; Musongati et Bukemba) at stage 3 while 4 WLONs (Ruyigi, Bweru, Butaganzwa and Mpinga Kayove) were at stage 4. The two WLONs evaluated as Stage 2 represent communal networks that the evaluation identified as high-risk for sustaining their operations under current conditions. In these communes, the project was primarily perceived as an income-generating activity rather than a peacebuilding and women's rights initiative. Network leaders demonstrated limited commitment to advocating for women's rights - notably in Nyabitsinda. Additionally, Giharo commune experienced leadership challenges that threaten the network's sustainability. Stage 3 networks were established under the BDA project and show strong commitment to continuing project initiatives without external support. Members have effectively utilized acquired knowledge and skills to champion women's rights in their respective communes.

Finally Stage 4 networks were originally created by ActionAid. They demonstrate clear sustainability indicators even without ongoing funding. These networks have institutionalized women's rights advocacy and combatting gender-based violence as core priorities in their operation

Accountability : All the 13 WLONs (Ruyigi, Bweru, Butaganzwa, Butezi Gisuru, Kinyinya et Nyabitsinda, Rutana; Mpinga Kayove; Giharo; Gitanga; Musongati et Bukemba) were rated at Stage 3. The evaluation found that the networks produce reports on their activities and expenditures for the BDA project's implementing partners. However, there is limited documented communication of achievements to local authorities. In most cases, the networks' results are only shared with local administrations in narrative form. Furthermore, community-wide meetings to discuss the networks' achievements and potential improvements are rarely organized, limiting opportunities for collective feedback and engagement.

Fundraising: All the 13 WLONs (Ruyigi, Bweru, Butaganzwa, Butezi Gisuru, Kinyinya et Nyabitsinda, Rutana; Mpinga Kayove; Giharo; Gitanga; Musongati et Bukemba) were rated at stage 2. The evaluation found that all 13 networks face similar challenges. Their funding primarily comes from member organizations' monthly contributions and income-generating activities established through the BDA project. However, the assessment revealed that these networks lack strategic approaches to identify potential funding sources, such as local NGOs working on women's rights advocacy or financial institutions operating in their communities. Currently, the networks rely almost exclusively on BDA project funds and member contributions without actively pursuing alternative financing opportunities. This limited approach to resource mobilization could affect their long-term sustainability.

Networking/ Partnership: All the 13 WLONs (Ruyigi, Bweru, Butaganzwa, Butezi Gisuru, Kinyinya et Nyabitsinda, Rutana; Mpinga Kayove; Giharo; Gitanga; Musongati et Bukemba) were rated at Stage 3. The evaluation found that these networks have established informal partnerships with various levels of local administration (particularly at the hill, zone, and commune levels). They demonstrate strong collaboration with local authorities across all administrative tiers, regularly participating in coordination meetings for communal activities.

However, beyond government entities, the networks have not succeeded in forming additional formal or informal partnerships with other organizations. This limits their ability to create synergies or complementary actions with potential collaborators in their areas of operation.

Advocacy: 11 WLONs (Ruyigi, Bweru, Butaganzwa, Butezi Gisuru, Kinyinya et Rutana; Mpinga Kayove; Gitanga; Musongati et Bukemba) were rated at stage 3. In these communes, the evaluation found strong evidence that their networks have developed significant expertise in selecting and implementing effective advocacy strategies to promote women's rights and create a peaceful environment for women. However, the evaluation classified Nyabitsinda commune as being at Stage 2, noting that the communal network had limited engagement in advocacy activities to promote women's rights within the commune. In the Giharo commune (Stage 3), advocacy efforts faced challenges due to leadership crisis. However, the current leadership is clearly committed to advancing women's welfare through advocacy initiatives.

Overall, the evaluation found that the majority of communal networks supported by the BDA project have reached Stage 3 (the maturity stage) out of 4. Since 9 of the 13 networks were established under the BDA project and have progressed from Stage 1 (the initial phase) to Stage 3, the evaluation concludes that the project has significantly strengthened the institutional capacity of these networks. Notably, 11 of the 13 established networks have now developed sufficient capacity to foster peaceful environments for women in their respective communes.

### 5.2.2. Achievement level of Outcome 1 indicators

The evaluation also sought to assess how the project improved the logical framework indicators related to Outcome 1. Table 2 below shows the final status of these indicators.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Level** | **Result** | **Indicator** | **Baseline** | **Target** | **Achieved** | **Comments** |
| **Outcomes** | **Outcome 1:** The institutional capacity of 13 local returnee, IDP and host women-led networks is strengthened to effectively operate and manage their associations | **Outcome Indicator 1a**: Number and % of targeted women-led networks with strengthened capacity in self-identified priority areas | 0 | 13  100% | 13  100% | The baseline study identified specific capacity-building needs, which the project incorporated into its implementation strategy. The evaluation confirmed that the training themes selected for network capacity building, such as monitoring and evaluation and organizational /administrative management, were chosen in response to these initial findings. These priority areas, which were originally highlighted in the baseline study, were effectively integrated into the networks' capacity-building sessions. |
| **Outcome Indicator 1b**: Evidence of improved engagement and collaboration of women-led organizations within the supported women’s networks | The evaluation noted limited association engagement and a lack of tangible evidence of collaboration. | Clear evidence of engagement exists for all 13 supported networks with demonstrated signs of collaboration. | Clear evidence of engagement exists for 13 supported networks with demonstrated signs of collaboration. | Qualitative data gathered through interviews with all 13 representatives of the communal networks demonstrates that the BDA project strengthened their engagement to peacebuilding and, crucially, to preventing gender-based violence (GBV). During the evaluation, the review of the networks' activity reports revealed that they had already handled more than 135 cases of women's rights violations related to GBV. The evaluation also noted enhanced collaboration among these networks, who now systematically share information on community-level social cohesion and incidents of violence against women in particular.  This collaboration has created an effective dissuasive measure, preventing perpetrators of GBV from evading consequences by fleeing to neighbouring communes. The evaluation has also noted some examples of peer-to-peer mentoring and coaching among political women candidates |

### Analysis of the Project’s contribution to promoting Women’s political participation

This section evaluates the extent to which the project transformed the attitudes of women, their spouses, and the broader community to foster an enabling environment for women’s political engagement. Implemented in a context of chronic underrepresentation of women in local and national decision-making bodies, the BDA project explicitly aimed to amplify women’s voices in political processes. This section therefore examines how the project achieved its objective of enhancing women's political participation

#### Analysis of the project contribution to Women's political participation

Burundi held its communal and legislative elections on 5 June 2025. This positioned the implementation period of the BDA project (2023–2024) as a critical time before the elections. The project actively encouraged women to stand as candidates, achieving notable results in the communal elections. As one communal advisor observed: “*The 2025 hill elections featured more female candidates than any previous election in my experience*”. Interview with a local authority in Ruyigi, July 2025

This increase in female candidates was consistent across all communes. Evaluation data revealed an average female candidacy rate of 57% per hill in the former Rutana province and 53% in Ruyigi in 2025. During the 2020 hill elections, female candidacy rates reached 41% in Rutana Province and 43% in Ruyigi Province. By the 2025 elections, these figures had increased by over 10 percentage points in both provinces, demonstrating significant progress in women's political participation**.**

Local authorities unanimously confirmed this increase, attributing it directly to BDA's awareness campaigns. One first-time candidate testified: “*After attending BDA's training sessions on women's political participation, my two friends and I decided to stand in the upcoming hill elections, something we'd never considered before”.* Focus group discussion in Gisuru, July 2025

Similar testimonials highlight how the project empowered women to break through traditional barriers and pursue candidature.

For communal and legislative elections, the project encouraged political parties to include more women on their candidate lists. However, the impact was more limited here due to deeply rooted socio-political considerations that extend beyond the scope of a two-year project like BDA. As the COCAFEM project lead acknowledged: “*While parties have pledged to increase women's representation in the 2030 elections, the 2025 candidate lists had already been finalised, which was a structural constraint that we couldn't overcome”.*'

#### Assessment of factors contributing to enhanced Women's Political Participation

To understand how the BDA project strengthened women's political engagement, the evaluation team engaged leaders from all 13 communal women's networks to assess the initiative's impact across four critical dimensions: women's capacity building, political processes, community attitudes, and gender relations. These qualitative assessments focused on measuring the project's effectiveness in creating more enabling conditions for women's political participation.

The aggregated analysis of responses from all 13 networks, presented in the accompanying table, employs a color-coded system to visualize impact levels: green indicates significant project contribution to improving women's political standing, yellow reflects moderate influence, while red denotes areas where the project's impact remained limited.  The findings are summarized in table 3

Table 2: factors contributing to enhanced Women's Political Participation

| **Domain** | **Participation condition** | **Project contribution** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Capacities** | 1. Growth in knowledge and skills |  |
| 1. Resilience in the face of political challenges |  |
| 1. Improved media engagement |  |
| 1. Increased confidence |  |
| 1. Access to additional resources and support for political participation. |  |
| **Processes** | 1. Creation/improvement of institutional responses or positions on inclusion and participation of women |  |
| 1. Implementation of systems preventing violence against women in politics |  |
| 1. Changes in political parties’ or other political institutions’ candidate selection processes |  |
| 1. Creation of ‘gender-sensitive’ institutions |  |
| 1. Access to financial support enabling women to run for elected office. |  |
| **Incentives and attitudes** | 1. Positive changes in attitudes of husbands/ community to support women political participation |  |
| 1. Changes in women’s attitudes to and perceptions of their own and other women’s positions |  |
| 1. increased perceptions of effectiveness of female leaders by constituents |  |
| 1. Inspiration drawn from other female leaders. |  |
| **Linkages and relationships** | 1. Improved access to political networks for women, particularly repurposing existing informal networks |  |
| 1. Creation or strengthening of women’s party or parliamentary networks |  |
| 1. Improved access to fundraising and financing opportunities |  |
| 1. Improved relationships with constituents |  |
| 1. Improved connections between female politicians and candidates with civil society |  |

Analysis of responses from communal networks revealed that, of the 19 conditions affecting women's political participation identified, the BDA project achieved significant improvement in eight. The most notable progress was in women's capacity development, where the project substantially enhanced participants' knowledge, skills, political resilience and, crucially, self-confidence in seeking and holding political positions.

The project also made significant contributions to political networking, distinguishing itself through three key achievements: establishing connections among politically ambitious women; improving candidate–voter relations; and creating linkages between aspiring female politicians and civil society organisations within the network.

Moderate improvements were recorded for eight additional conditions, marked in yellow in the table 3. Overall, the BDA project successfully enhanced 16 of the 19 conditions affecting women's political participation. However, its impact was limited in terms of addressing structural political processes, such as reforming candidate selection procedures to improve gender inclusivity.

#### Persistent barriers to political participation

Despite these advancements, significant obstacles continue to hinder women's political engagement. Financial constraints, exacerbated by the geographical distance to voter registration centres, pose a significant challenge. As a CPAJS official from Butezi explained: “*Some hills are located more than 15 km from the commune centre. Expecting economically disadvantaged women to travel this distance to the commune headquarters, and then a further 20 km to the CECI office in Ruyigi to register as candidates, is a considerable challenge*”. This geographical barrier was reported across multiple communes.

Additionally, declining interest in hill council positions was reported in communes such as Butaganzwa, affecting both male and female participation. Local authorities attribute this disengagement to the limited financial incentives for council members, who must dedicate a great deal of time to public service with little return on investment. As the CPAJS of Butaganzwa commune noted: “*Many women lost interest in hill elections as they see no economic benefit for their familie*s”

Finally, negative stereotypes about women's supposed inability to govern well and combat corruption have further limited women's political participation. Following the 2020 elections, in communes and hills led by women, cases of poor governance or corruption by individual female leaders were often generalised to the whole female population, creating a discouraging environment for potential candidates. Many women internalised these perceptions, believing electoral success was impossible, as one interviewee noted: 'The community is tired of female leadership.'

This sentiment was particularly evident in Nyabitsinda commune, where a network leader reported: *“When we tried to raise awareness about women's political participation, community members consistently responded, "We've seen the consequences of having women in leadership. People are tired of poor governance, and I doubt any woman could get elected in our hill now*”. Similar accounts repeatedly emerged in areas where female leaders had underperformed.

This dynamic perpetuates harmful stereotypes about women in politics by attributing individual failures to all women collectively, whereas men's shortcomings are seen as isolated incidents. Interestingly, no equivalent phenomenon exists to promote women's leadership when male officials underperform, which is a clear example of a double standard that perpetuates systemic gender bias in political representation

#### Documenting success: Case Studies of Women's political successes

This section presents three case studies that examine the impact of the BDA project on the political careers of women at different levels of administration. The first study looks at how the project influenced a woman who was elected as a parliamentarian from the former Butezi commune. The second analyses the experience of a councillor elected in the former Rutana commune, and the third follows a woman who ran in hill-level elections. Together, these case studies trace the political journeys of women across all levels of administration, from local hills to the national parliament.

### Achievement level of Outcome 2 indicators

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  | Baseline | Target | Achieved | Comments |
| Outcome 2: 9,642 individuals (including 99% women, 28% youth, 27% returnees and 5% IDPs) have increased their participation in political spaces at national, regional and/or local level to strengthen institutional gender equality. | Outcome Indicator 2a: Number and % of women and men who report they are regularly and actively participating in local decision-making processes (M/W/IDPs/Returnees/HC) | Returnees | 25,00% | 30% | 38% | The final evaluation findings demonstrate positive progress in women's participation in local decision-making processes. The indicator values show clear improvement compared to baseline measurements. |
| IDPS | 12,50% | 17 % | 19,50% |
| HC | 26,20% | 31% | 34% |
| W | 23.8% | 28% | 30% |
| M | 47,10% | 52% | 56,40% |
| Outcome Indicator 2b: Self-reported ‘participation and influencing score’ of targeted women’s organizations and women political candidates (0 – 10) | Returnees | 3,7 | 6 | 6,77 | The evaluation found that the final score achieved is higher than the baseline situation and the expected target, which indicates a clear improvement due to the project's implementation. |
| IDPS | 5,2 | 6 | 6,59 |
| HC | 4,6 | 6 | 7,16 |
| W | 4 | 6 | 7,02 |
|  |  |  |  |

### Analysis of the Project's contribution to reducing gender-based violence

The BDA project initially conducted a conflict analysis followed by an in-depth study of the root causes of gender inequality and gender-based violence. Based on these findings, the project implemented a series of training and awareness-raising initiatives targeting harmful gender norms. These initiatives aimed to transform the discriminatory attitudes and beliefs that undermine women's domestic peace and political participation. This section evaluates the project's success in reducing violence against women within Burundi's challenging context of deeply rooted harmful gender norms

#### Project's contribution to transforming gender norms in household decision-making

This evaluation sought to measure the project's impact on improving joint decision-making between spouses in beneficiary households. The assessment specifically examined five critical aspects of household decision-making: how couples decide on using women's earnings, seeking healthcare for family members, making major household purchases, managing daily expenses, and approving women's visits to relatives. These areas were prioritized because they had been previously identified in the BDA project's study on the root causes of gender-based violence as key indicators of gender inequality. The findings are as follow

The figure illustrates the percentage of women involved in household decision-making before and after the project was implemented. As can be seen, the data reveals improved female participation in domestic decision-making across nearly all analysed aspects of household life. The evaluation therefore concludes that the project successfully increased women's influence over household decisions, thereby challenging traditional stereotypes and gender norms that reinforced male dominance in domestic decision-making processes.

#### Quantitative assessment of men’s shifts regarding harmful gender norms

To analyse the extent to which the project also influenced other gender norms, men’s tolerance indices toward certain practices were examined. These indices indicate a shift in the perception of women’s role and place within households and the community. The results are summarized in the table below.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | N | Mean | SD | Minimum | Maximum |
| Men's tolerance index regarding the inclusion of women in financial decision-making | Returnee | 54 | 2,87 | 0,516 | 1 | 4 |
| IDP | 18 | 2,94 | 0,416 | 2 | 4 |
| Host Community | 112 | 2,82 | 0,573 | 1 | 4 |
| Total | 184 | 2,85 | 0,542 | 1 | 4 |
| Men's tolerance index regarding women's political participation | Returnee | 54 | 1,83 | 0,423 | 1 | 3 |
| IDP | 18 | 1,89 | 0,323 | 1 | 2 |
| Host Community | 112 | 1,87 | 0,493 | 0 | 3 |
| Total | 184 | 1,86 | 0,458 | 0 | 3 |
| Men's tolerance index regarding women's speech/public speaking | Returnee | 54 | 2,67 | 0,614 | 0 | 3 |
| IDP | 18 | 2,72 | 0,575 | 1 | 3 |
| Host Community | 112 | 2,63 | 0,671 | 0 | 3 |
| Total | 184 | 2,65 | 0,643 | 0 | 3 |
| Men's tolerance index regarding women's involvement in community matters | Returnee | 54 | 2,87 | 0,478 | 0 | 3 |
| IDP | 18 | 3,00 | 0,000 | 3 | 3 |
| Host Community | 112 | 2,81 | 0,562 | 0 | 3 |
| Total | 184 | 2,85 | 0,511 | 0 | 3 |
| Men's tolerance index regarding the consideration of women's opinions in major household purchases | Returnee | 54 | 3,67 | 0,644 | 1 | 4 |
| IDP | 18 | 3,67 | 0,485 | 3 | 4 |
| Host Community | 112 | 3,68 | 0,588 | 2 | 4 |
| Total | 184 | 3,67 | 0,593 | 1 | 4 |

*\*N = Number of individuals who responded to the questionnaire*

*\*SD = Standard deviation*

Based on these findings, the evaluation concluded that men's tolerance of certain women-friendly practices is at a highly satisfactory level compared to the maximum possible value. This suggests that harmful gender norms are not widespread. Men, who are often the perpetrators of violence against women in the 13 targeted communes, now have more favourable perceptions of women's roles within households and communities. This trend is consistent across all key groups targeted by the project, including repatriated men, internally displaced persons, and members of host communities. Indeed, the study found no statistically significant differences between these categories.

#### Comparative assessment of gender norms before and after the BDA project

To conduct this assessment, the evaluation performed a rapid comparative analysis of harmful gender norms before and after project implementation. The methodology engaged 30 women across 5 focus groups, asking participants to estimate the prevalence of harmful norms based on cases observed in their communities. Each woman received 10 small stones representing 10 households in their locality. They were instructed to estimate the number of households that demonstrated harmful gender norms before the project was implemented, and how this figure changed afterwards.

This subjective assessment was supplemented with qualitative explanations to precisely identify how the project contributed to reducing harmful gender practices. Participants provided detailed accounts of specific changes observed, allowing the evaluation team to understand both the scale and nature of transformations in community gender dynamics. The findings are summarized in the following table

Text

|  | Nr. of HH with harmful gender norms | | GRAPHICS | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Genders norms analyzed | Before the project | After the project |
| DECISION-MAKING | | | | | | | | |
| **1. Sole male financial control** – Men decide household resource use without spousal consultation. | 212 | |  | | --- | | 88 | |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **2. Reproductive autonomy suppression** – Men control wives' sexual/reproductive rights, including family planning. | 226 | 74 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **3. Community participation gatekeeping** – Men determine if wives can engage in leadership/community activities. | 222 | 78 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| NORMS, BELIEFS AND SOCIAL PRACTICES | | | | | | | | |
| **Silencing of women in public** – Women are discouraged from speaking publicly when men are present. | 239 | 61 | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Political exclusion of Women** – "Respectable" women are expected to avoid politics. | 223 | 77 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Leadership ability stereotype** – Women are widely viewed as less competent leaders than men. | 210 | 90 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Rigid domestic-gender roles** – Domestic labor is women’s duty; income-generating work is men’s domain | 161 | 139 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ACCESS AND CONTROL OVER RESOURCES | | | | | | | | |
| **Male-Preferential asset ownership** – High-value resources (land, property) should be male-owned to avoid spousal "shame." | 219 | 81 | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Occupational gender bias** – Men should access higher-paying jobs/incomes than women. | 232 | 68 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Information asymmetry** – Men are entitled to greater awareness of community/national affairs than wives. | 276 | 24 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Technological Exclusion** – Men are prioritized over women for access to devices (e.g., phones). | 270 | 30 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND TIME USE | | | | | | | | |
| **Domestic Labor Stigma –** Men helping with childcare/housework is unacceptable if wives are available. | 183 | 117 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Leisure Restriction for Women –** Women taking social/recreational time (e.g., outings with friends) is frowned upon. | 261 | 39 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| SAFETY, DIGNITY AND WELL-BEING | | | | | | | | |
| **Coercive control (GBV) Justification** – Physical, psychological, or economic spousal abuse is tolerated to enforce submission. | 220 | 80 |  | | | | | |

Qualitative data unequivocally confirms that harmful gender norms significantly declined by the end of the project compared to the situation before the project began. This is true of harmful gender norms relating to decision-making, beliefs and social practices that are unfavourable to women, access to and control of resources, gender roles and responsibilities, and gender-based violence. A synthesis of qualitative data was used to assess in which gender-related areas the project had the greatest impact, revealing the following average percentages of households where gender norms were observed before and after the project

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Before | After | Reduction |
| Access and control over resources | 83% | 17% | 66% |
| Roles and responsibilities and time use | 74% | 26% | 48% |
| Decision making | 73% | 27% | 47% |
| Gender based violences / security | 73% | 27% | 47% |
| Norms, beliefs and social practices | 70% | 30% | 40% |

Analysis of the data clearly shows that the project helped to reduce harmful gender norms within households. In-depth discussions with focus group participants revealed that these remarkable results were largely achieved through the project’s use of model couples. Testimonies collected across all municipalities support the idea that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between the decline in harmful gender norms and the influence of these model couples. The following excerpt illustrates this: *“The model couples from the BDA project really made other couples aware of the importance of jointly managing household resources, which significantly reduced family conflicts*” Excerpt from a focus group discussion held in Ruyigi.

Beyond raising awareness, these model couples also served as role models for men in the community. Indeed, after witnessing the dramatic behavioural changes in men who had undergone training on the model couples’ approach, some men revised their own household management practices. This created a multiplier effect, extending the project’s impact to couples who were not direct beneficiaries, as highlighted in the following focus group excerpt from Bukemba: “*Some men who had perpetrated gender-based violence noticed that their peers had transformed after participating in the Smart Couples training. They saw how these men improved their relationships with their wives, which had a positive impact on family well-being. This inspired them to change their own harmful behaviours*”

The evaluation found that thanks to the project’s awareness campaigns and the influence of model couples, women became increasingly aware of their rights, particularly with regard to harmful gender norms and social practices that undermine women’s rights and social cohesion in their communities. Consequently, they actively resisted these practices wherever possible, as expressed by women from Gisuru Commune:

*"Before this project, it was socially acceptable for men to take a second wife alongside their legally married spouse. Now, when we hear of such cases, we drive the second wife out of our community. This has restored peace to many families who were silently suffering."*

### Analysis of the project’s contribution to Women’s empowerment and peacebuilding

Overall, the BDA project contributed to peacebuilding by reducing household conflicts. By fostering harmony within households, it helped strengthen social cohesion among beneficiary communities. This was achieved by bringing together returnees, host community members, and internally displaced persons (IDPs), thereby preventing potential conflicts among these three groups.

By strengthening the capacities of women’s networks, the project created spaces for dialogue and female emancipation. The strong collaboration between communal women’s associations and local authorities has enabled women to defend their rights without fear, as solidarity has become their strength. This shift is captured in the following interview excerpt:

*“Today, men in our community respect us. They know that if they commit violence against any one of us, there is a collective of peers ready to defend her.”* Focus Group Discussion in Butaganzwa

Previously, violence against women was often silenced due to corruption among local authorities. However, the situation has evolved, as corrupting an entire network to cover up women’s rights violations is no longer feasible. Women have become resolute in combating violence against their peers and refuse to side with perpetrators through corrupt practices. Interviews with women in Rutana and Ruyigi confirm this progress:

*“Household conflicts linked to gender-based violence have significantly declined because perpetrators are now reported and punished according to the law. Bribing to silence such violence is no longer as easy as it once was.”*

Furthermore, the women’s savings and credit groups (WSCG), combined with monthly discussions to assess women’s conditions across hillside communities, have enabled timely identification of rights violations and appropriate measures to address them.

The project's efforts to raise awareness and enhance women's political participation and decision-making roles, coupled with improved economic conditions through greater access to and control over household resources and -generated income, have motivated women to engage in politics. As one participant shared:

*“I had no intention of running in the local elections, but this project gave me the opportunity to earn an income. This empowered me to become a candidate and advocate for my peers against the violence they face.”*

Such testimonies are common, demonstrating how the project’s financial empowerment component has increased women’s willingness to participate in political processes, particularly elections, with the hope and motivation to effectively defend their peers against violence and consolidate peace within the households and therefore in the community.

Finally, the participation of couples in the Model Couples training programme, alongside awareness-raising efforts to combat harmful gender norms, has led to a significant shift in perceptions of women’s status within households. Consequently, women have become more involved in household decision-making, while men have become more proactive in sharing domestic responsibilities with their spouses. This has given women access to and control over family resources, granting them greater autonomy and reinforcing their valued roles within their homes. Consequently, women have gained more empowering responsibilities within their households, contributing to a notable decline in gender-based violence (GBV) in communities. This positive transformation has fostered stronger social cohesion and enhanced community peace, creating a more equitable and harmonious environment for families in general and women in particular.

### Analysis of the influence of income- generating activities on economic empowerment of the network’s members

The evaluation assessed the extent to which the project had empowered beneficiaries economically by implementing income-generating activities within the networks. In total, the BDA project invested $130,000, allocating $10,000 per network to initiate IGAs. The modalities of the approach have been hailed as a role model by authorities through combining peacebuilding with income generating economic empowerment.

However, the results observed to date are largely consistent across all municipalities: in general, it was concluded that the majority of IGAs initiated by the BDA project have not yet led to significant improvements in the monetary income of the networks or their members – operating in a very challenging economic environment. Some are even struggling to sustain or operationalise their IGAs. For instance, some networks now rely on member contributions to maintain their IGA following the end of the project. This presents challenges as not all members have the means to make regular monthly contributions, for example to fund livestock maintenance. While the project's original intent was to establish a sustainable source of income to enable women's networks to fulfil their roles and achieve financial autonomy for their members, the evaluation concludes that this objective has only been partially met.

The project successfully set up future revenue sources for the networks by establishing these IGAs. However, it is still too early to speak of meaningful financial empowerment among individual members from the revenues generated by the municipal network IGAs.

However, Interviews with local authorities confirmed the critical importance of income-generating activities (IGAs) for peacebuilding projects. It was noted that initiatives which fail to address root causes of conflict, such as poverty, are not viewed favourably. As one municipal official remarked,

“*We have seen many peacebuilding projects that are limited to raising awareness and providing training, with no income-generating activities. In my opinion, they are no longer necessary”*. KII interview with a communal authority in Bweru

The authorities expressed strong appreciation for the BDA project, which combined soft peacebuilding approaches, such as the training component known as Mukenyezi Seruka component ("women becoming visible"), with hard approaches centered on establishing IGAs known as the Umugambi Wunguka component ("profitable project"). They strongly recommend this approach for future project. Details on the situation of IGA implemented by each network is given below

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Commune | IGA implemented | Current situation | Assessment of the IGA's Contribution to the Economic Empowerment of Members |
| Butaganzwa | The municipal network acquired a mill intended to produce porridge flour. The project's focus was the production and marketing of this porridge flour. | As of the time of the evaluation, the mill was not operational due to the lack of an electricity meter. | Low |
| Ruyigi | The municipal network acquired mills to sell cereal grinding services. The network also purchased goats. | As of the time of the evaluation, the mills had not been installed due to the absence of an electricity meter, as the Ruyigi center power grid could not support the acquired mills. The goats exist, but their numbers are very insignificant compared to the size of the network's membership. | Low |
| Butezi | The network developed a pig farm with the hope that each network member would receive a piglet from this operation to generate their own income. | As of the time of the evaluation, members could not claim to have earned any income from this livestock operation because the number of pigs was still insufficient relative to the number of members. Furthermore, maintenance costs were too high to allow for the generation of revenue for the network. | Low |
| Bweru | The network developed agricultural activities, primarily maize production, whose sales were intended to be a source of income for the network members. | At the time of the evaluation, it was noted that the network had sold 3.5 tons of maize to the municipality. Members are expected to earn income from the sale of this harvest. Furthermore, the project provided mobile phones to the representatives of the hill associations, which has facilitated communication among members. | Moderate |
| Gisuru | The network acquired two mills to provide paid grinding and rice hulling services for the local population. | At the time of the evaluation, it was found that the network had recorded profits. In their account, they held over one million Burundian francs. They had shared a portion of the profits generated from this IGAs, demonstrating that the project contributed to the financial empowerment of its members. | High |
| Nyabitsinda | The network undertook maize farming during the dry season using modern irrigation techniques. They encountered a water shortage, which resulted in a loss of the investments made. | At the time of the evaluation, it was found that the municipal network incurred a net loss as its IGA did not succeed. The remaining funds were invested in acquiring a one-hectare plot of land for the network. However, concerns were raised regarding the participation of members who live far from the field in its cultivation. | Low |
| Kinyinya | The network acquired an oil palm field and a mill for rice hulling. | The mill was out of order at the time of the evaluation, and had been for some time, highlighting the members' inability to mobilize sufficient funds for its maintenance. The field was highly valued and represented hope for the future but had not yet generated any income. | Moderate |
| Musongati | The network established a pig farm. | The livestock operation is in place, but members have not yet received any financial benefits from it. | Low |
| Rutana | Bean and maize farming, and goat rearing. | They harvested approximately 2.5 tons of maize, and the goats are still there, with the hope that each member will receive a goat from the BDA project funds. | Moderate |
| Gitanga | Cattle farming. | The cows are being raised, but network members have not gained anything so far in terms of improved income. | Moderate |
| Bukemba | Pig farming. | The pigs are in place, and members are beginning to derive income from the sale of piglets. | Moderate |
| Giharo | Rice cultivation. | The evaluation found that a leadership crisis has affected the implementation of income-generating activities for this network. The network members have gained nothing so far. | Low |
| Mpinga kayove | Crop farming and goat rearing. | The network harvested over six tons of maize and maintains a goat herd. Network members earn a small amount of money from the sale of harvests and kids. | Moderate |

### Achievement level of outcome 3 indicators

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |
| Outcome | Indicators | Disaggregation | | Baseline | Target | Achieved | The target is achieved |
| Outcome 3: 12,480 people (including 50% women, 20% youth, 30% returnees and 5% IDPs) transform harmful social/gender norms within their households and adopt new approaches for gender equality | Outcome Indicator 3a: Number and % of sampled women-led organization members who report that their households are more supportive of their membership and engagement | Returnees |  | 82% | 87% | 94,3% |
| IDPs |  | 84,40% | 89,4% | 96,5% |
| HC |  | 61,50% | 66,5% | 91,4% |
| **TOTAL** |  | **79%** | 84% | **94%** |
| Outcome Indicator 3b: Average score for women and men in the Gender Attitudes Assessment (1 –10 | Returnees |  |  |  |  | The target is achieved |
|  | 4.96 | 7 | 8.2 |
| IDPs |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | 5.65 | 7 | 8.9 |
| HC |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | 6.39 | 7 | 8.3 |

\*NA: Not Available

\*For t indicator 3a: The final evaluation values are below the baseline study values. One possible reason is that the questions used to calculate this indicator were different from those used in the baseline study. Indeed, they were too simplistic, which made the baseline study values very high in a community like Burundi where gender norms still exist. In fact, if we use the same questions, the values of this indicator would reach 100%, which does not reflect the reality of the Burundian context. But now we used the same methodology

## 5.2.4. Project impact analysis

### 5.2.4.1. Project Impact

The impact assessment focused on measuring the anticipated positive changes across the three project components: (1) strengthening the institutional capacity of communal networks, (2) improving women's political participation and (3) combatting gender-based violence (GBV). Based on the analysis of field data, the evaluation reached the following conclusions:

* Regarding the institutional capacity building of communal networks, significant progress was observed. This is particularly evident in enhanced managerial and leadership skills within the networks, as well as improved financial capabilities. The evaluation found that the project had laid strong foundations for active networks working to create communities in which women can live in peace and thrive.
* In terms of women's political participation, the project had a remarkable impact on motivating women to engage in political spaces. Specifically, it strengthened women's willingness and confidence to participate in the 2025 electoral cycle. Not only did women run for office, they also participated in large numbers across various electoral processes as electors.
* In terms of the third outcome, which relates to combating GBV and transforming harmful gender norms, the project achieved notable progress. It empowered women to stand up against the violence they frequently experience. Additionally, it significantly shifted men's attitudes, raising awareness of harmful gender norms and encouraging positive masculine behaviours.

By combining these findings per outcome, the project successfully mobilised women to advocate for their own political participation. It also contributed to creating violence-free, peaceful communities. Furthermore, deliberately including women from host communities, returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) proved an effective strategy for reintegrating victims of forced displacement. This approach strengthened social cohesion among women from different social backgrounds. As one communal network leader in Ruyigi explained:

“*Today, repatriated women and Batwa women who joined this network have found a second family: a support system they can rely on for social and economic challenges”.*

Based on the above findings, it is clear that the project has contributed to the reinforcement of peaceful communities and therefore to the peacebuilding objectives of this project.

### 5.2.4.2. Analysis of the conflict sensitivity of the project implementation strategy

The BDA project was implemented in a context of restrictions on political freedoms and near-systemic scarcity of financial resources, particularly for political activities. In this environment, opposition parties have become increasingly invisible on the political landscape, and the project was not designed to reverse this trend but sought to do no harm in the context.

The project aimed to increase women's political participation so they could join decision-making spaces, and given the political realities on the ground that meant that most supported female candidates were operating within the existing political framework of Burundi.

## 5.2.5. Sustainability analysis

### 5.2.5.1. Sustainability factors analysis

The sustainability analysis of the project's results across the 13 implementation communes was conducted using five key factors: (1) the level of collaboration with local authorities (F1); (2) the level of member motivation to sustain project activities (F2); (3) the level of seniority of the networks (F3); (4) the level of profitability of income-generating activities (IGAs) established by the network (F4); and (5) the level of project objective ownership by network leadership (F5).

Each factor was scored on a scale of 1 to 3 (1 for low, 2 for medium, and 3 for high), allowing for the calculation of an overall sustainability score (the product of individual scores) that reflects the sustainability of outcomes in each commune. Communes with a total score equal to or exceeding 150 were classified as having high sustainability, those scoring between 70 and 149 were deemed to have medium sustainability, and those with scores below 70 were considered to have low sustainability. The results of this assessment are summarized in the following table.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Communes | Sustainability factor score | | | | | sustainability | |
| F1 | F2 | F3 | F4 | F5 | overall score | Interpretation |
| Mpinga kayove | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 162 | High |
| Ruyigi | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 162 | High |
| Bweru | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 162 | High |
| Rutana | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 108 | Medium |
| Musongati | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 108 | Medium |
| Gisuru | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 108 | Medium |
| Kinyinya | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 108 | Medium |
| Bukemba | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 72 | Medium |
| Butezi | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 72 | Medium |
| Gitanga | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 72 | Medium |
| Butaganzwa | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 72 | Medium |
| Giharo | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 24 | Low |
| Nyabitsinda | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 16 | Low |
| Total | 37 | 33 | 29 | 29 | 33 |  |  |

F1: Collaboration with local authorities

F2: Member motivation to sustain project activities

F3: Seniority/Established duration of the networks

F4: Profitability of income-generating activities (IGAs) established by the network

F5: Project objective ownership by network leadership

The data in the preceding table shows that the sustainability of the BDA project's outcomes mainly comes from close collaboration between the project team and local authorities in the implementation communes. Other critical factors for sustainability include the motivation of members to maintain project activities and the extent to which the leadership of communal networks has embraced the project's objectives.

Evidence confirms that communes where networks were originally established by ActionAid and subsequently strengthened by the BDA project demonstrate significantly greater potential to sustain outcomes after project completion. Among networks newly established by the BDA project, most demonstrated moderate sustainability levels. However, two communes revealed concerning sustainability indicators: Giharo, which faced leadership challenges, and Nyabitsinda, where commitment to sustaining project objectives was weak.

The lesson learnt is that, for optimal network effectiveness, the support period for these networks should extend beyond the BDA project's timeline. Furthermore, effective network leadership is a key factor in both effectiveness and sustainability. This is particularly evident in communes where leadership deficiencies corresponded with diminished sustainability outcomes. The case of Giharo and Nyabitsinda clearly demonstrate the direct influence of leadership quality on the longevity of project achievements.

Finally, it is important to highlight the sustainable nature of the models introduced by the project, such as the "model couples" approach, which is a key component of the initiative. The model couple approach already shows strong signs of sustainability. Additionally, the women leaders who have been trained and entered decision-making positions at the hill, communal and national level serve as lasting sources of inspiration for other women. These outcomes demonstrate the long-lasting impact of the BDA project's results.

### 5.2.5.2. Risks for sustainability

In addition to identifying sustainability factors, the evaluation carefully analysed the risks associated with maintaining the project's achievements. It concluded that the recent administrative subdivision threatens the sustainability of the project's gains. For example, certain hills whose community associations were originally part of Butaganzwa Commune have been reassigned to Gisuru Commune, creating uncertainty regarding the associations' affiliation. Tensions are already emerging over income-generating activities established by the project, with some network members arguing that associations that are no longer part of a commune should not be able to claim income from the network, while these associations still consider themselves members of the Ruyigi network.

Another sustainability risk involves potential conflicts and the appropriation of network income-generating activities (IGAs) by a small group of individuals. Most IGAs are located near the residences of network leaders, which makes it difficult for members from more distant hills to work for those IGAs, such as farms, livestock operations or mills. In the long term, there is a significant risk that project-established IGAs may primarily benefit the handful of people overseeing them, inevitably leading to conflicts. For example, some networks with over a thousand members have collectively purchased farmland (such as in Nyabitsinda). However, logistical challenges were observed for members living far from the farm, preventing them from participating in its cultivation. Questions are already arising about how these shared assets will be managed if members decide to dissolve their association.

Another observed risk is that members have limited capacity to sustain income-generating activities without external support. Current patterns suggest that these initiatives may well become sources of future conflict.

# Lessons learnt and recommendation

Following the various points presented in this report, the lessons learned and recommendations that the evaluation can draw from the implementation of the BDA project are:

| Analysis Criteria | Lessons learned | Recommendations |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Relevance & Coherence Analysis | The project was **highly** relevant, addressing core drivers of conflict and gender inequality identified in the initial analysis. However, its coherence with other donor-funded initiatives in the same area was weak, leading to potential duplication and missed synergies. | 1. Conduct a thorough mapping of all active projects and government initiatives in the target area during the design phase to identify clear complementarities and avoid overlap. 2. Formalize coordination mechanisms (e.g., quarterly meetings, shared dashboards) with key stakeholders (UN agencies, INGOs, local NGOs, government) to ensure strategic alignment and leverage comparative advantages. 3. Explicitly link project objectives to specific national and local government plans (PCDCs) from the outset, framing the project as a direct support mechanism to achieve these government priorities. |
| 2. Efficiency Analysis | The consortium model and network-based approach were **highly** efficient, maximizing reach and impact at a low cost per beneficiary. However, a lack of harmonized financial protocols (e.g., per diems) among partners caused frustration and undermined perceived fairness. | 1. Establish a Consortium Operational Manual at the start of the project that standardizes all participant-related costs (transport, per diems, incentives) across all implementing partners to ensure equity and transparency. 2. Invest more significantly in digital innovation that was planned but poorly executed. Develop a realistic, context-appropriate digital literacy curriculum and ensure partners have the technical capacity to deliver it effectively. 3. Provide networks with clear asset management regulations and protocols before distributing IGA capital in order to avoid any future conflicts regarding ownership and benefits |
| 3. Effectiveness Analysis | The project was **highly** effective in achieving its outcomes, particularly in strengthening networks and transforming genders norms via the "Model Couples" approach. Effectiveness was lower in areas requiring systemic change, such as influencing political party candidate lists, and was hampered by leadership crises in some networks. | 1. Develop a tiered support strategy for networks, recognizing that nascent networks need longer and more intensive mentorship (beyond 2 years) than pre-existing, more mature structures. 2. Integrate advanced advocacy and lobbying strategies into capacity-building programs for high level authorities, specifically targeting how to engage with and influence political parties and their internal selection processes. 3. Mandate leadership development and succession planning as a core component of network strengthening, including coaching on conflict resolution and transparent governance to build resilience against leadership crises. |
| 4. Impact Analysis | The project had a **significant** positive impact on social cohesion, women's empowerment, and reducing GBV. The conflict-sensitive strategy of working implicitly with ruling party affiliates successfully avoided political conflict but risked reinforcing existing power dynamics and excluding women affiliated with the opposition. | 1. Adopt a more nuanced conflict-sensitive approach that does not avoid implicitly engaging with opposition affiliates. Instead, design activities that explicitly bring together women from different political affiliations around common, non-partisan goals (e.g., GBV prevention, economic empowerment) to build bridges. 2. Implement a robust "Do No Harm" framework with continuous context monitoring to identify and mitigate unintended consequences, such as the elite capture of benefits or the marginalization of certain groups. 3. Strengthen monitoring systems to specifically track inclusion and benefits for the most vulnerable subgroups (e.g., Batwa, recent returnees, opposition supporters) to ensure the project does not inadvertently exacerbate existing inequalities. |
| 5. Sustainability Analysis | Sustainability prospects are good, with sustainability strongest where networks were pre-existing and had strong leadership and collaboration with authorities. Newer networks and those with unprofitable or centrally located IGAs are at high risk. Administrative redivisions pose a major external threat to network cohesion and asset ownership.  The BDA project has achieved other sustainable outcomes, such as the 'model couples’ approach' and the promotion of political participation for women, both of which show strong potential for sustainability. | 1. Condition IGA support on the development of a sustainable business plan and a clear, equitable management agreement co-signed by all network members, which includes provisions for resolving disputes and the potential departure of members. 2.  Facilitate a formal handover process of network assets and roles to local authorities or elected community committees as the project concludes, to institutionalize support and protect the project's investments. 2. Initiate collaboration between “model couple established by BDA project with the mediators or elected hill official in conflict resolution/ prevention |

# Conclusion

The Bakenyezi Dukenyerere Amahoro (BDA) Project represents a highly effective and strategic investment in sustainable peacebuilding and gender equality in Burundi. Funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund and implemented through a synergistic consortium model, the project delivered significant returns by systematically addressing the root causes of conflict and women's marginalization in Rutana and Ruyigi provinces.

The project demonstrated exceptional relevance and coherence by strategically targeting the fundamental drivers of conflict and gender inequality, which had been meticulously identified during the project's initial design phase. This precise alignment between the project's core objectives and the actual needs of the community ensured that its interventions were necessary and powerful, directly addressing the most critical barriers to peace and equality.

The project's operational efficiency was a notable success factor, achieved through its innovative consortium model and network-based approach. This structure enabled the project to maximise its reach and deepen its impact across diverse communities while maintaining impressively low costs per beneficiary. This ensured that resources were optimised for maximum effect.

In terms of effectiveness, the project was highly successful in achieving its intended outcomes. It was particularly impactful in strengthening communal networks and deliberately transforming deep-seated gender norms, largely thanks to the pioneering, culturally informed "Model Couples" approach that brought about change within the household.

The project's positive impact has been significant and multifaceted, markedly improving social cohesion, advancing women's empowerment and reducing incidents of gender-based violence. This impact was underpinned by a conflict-sensitive strategy that engaged affiliates from all political parties implicitly — a cautious approach that proved instrumental in fostering positive change without triggering backlash or social conflict.

Finally, the prospects for sustainability are good to strong. The project has been most successful where it has built upon pre-existing networks with inherent leadership strength and a proven capacity for collaboration with local authorities. Beyond these structures, the project has embedded sustainable models into the fabric of the community. Notable examples include the 'model couples' approach and the increased number of women in leadership positions, which together provide convincing proof of the project's lasting impact.

1. In Ruyigi Province, the project was implemented in Butanganzwa, Butezi, Bweru, Ruyigi, Gusuru, Nyabitisinda, Kinyinya communes.  In Rutana Province, it was implemented in Mpinga Kayove, Rutana, Giharo, Bukemba, Musongati, and Gitanga communes [↑](#footnote-ref-1)