

Burundi: Integrated Project

The Challenge

Burundi has experienced decades of social, economic and political challenges, contributing to the country having the lowest GDP per capita.¹ As a landlocked country in East Africa with one of the highest population densities, 80% of the population works in the agriculture sector.² The country's susceptibility to climate-related disasters, such as drought and flooding, and climate variability, coupled with its lack of preparedness measures, threatens crops, livestock, natural resources and infrastructure that people rely on for their livelihoods. Food insecurity levels remain high across the country, with 70% of the population living in poverty and 52% of children under 5 stunted.³ Climate shocks further impact women and girls who already have limited access to basic social services and economic opportunities due to traditional practices, such as women's inability to own or inherit land.

Since 2010, the Province of the Anglican Church of Burundi (PEAB) implemented projects focused on food security, reducing gender-based violence (GBV) and HIV awareness and health education. The projects ran independently of one another. Starting in 2018 and through a collaborative process, Episcopal Relief & Development and PEAB designed an integrated, multi-sectoral approach to address key needs within communities centered around livelihood development, health and reducing GBV. Key learnings from the three-year integrated pilot (2019-2021) validated the need for a more comprehensive program model to drive social and economic empowerment. PEAB became an NGO who remains affiliated with the Church of Burundi but is able to operate with more flexibility in terms of how and where programs are implemented. PEAB is now called the Anglican Services for Sustainable Community Development (SADC).

GBV Change Agents

The project equips volunteer GBV Committees—chosen among community members, to take the lead on raising awareness and combating GBV. Volunteers are guided through a participatory process of self-discovery that emphasizes looking one's own beliefs and actions. This enables faith leaders, for example, to more comfortably preach on gender issues and effectively use scriptures to facilitate community discussions. Together with other community leaders, these change agents challenge cultural norms that reinforce discrimination and oppression of women. The GBV Committees provide individual and group psychosocial counseling and raise awareness through youth-led dialogues, sport, dance and drama events.

¹ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=XL>.

² <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burundi/overview>.

³ <https://www.wfp.org/countries/burundi>.

The Approach

Under the integrated programming model, SADC's work prioritizes women, particularly widows, single mothers and those with low literacy, and other marginalized groups in rural communities to provide holistic interventions that invest in economic opportunities, access to finance, GBV prevention and awareness, and service delivery for survivors of violence. Working with the Mothers' Union, SADC partners with trusted members in the community—particularly youth, GBV volunteers, faith leaders, to serve as change agents. Volunteers are equipped to co-facilitate trainings and organize community-based events that leverage a participatory, self-discovery learning and action methodology to challenge cultural gender norms. During the three-year pilot, the team conducted risk, vulnerability and resilience assessments and focused efforts on building community assets and strengthening program design to ensure the project met the most pressing needs.

Livelihood development: The project invests in livelihood resilience of small-holder farmers, many of whom are women, through training on improved agricultural methods and inputs, inputs support, establishment of farmer cooperatives to facilitate group-led savings and loans, and access to micro-finance institutions. Farmers are identified using a participatory approach in the presence of local faith and lay leaders, with validation from the Provincial Sector staff. Priority is given to vulnerable populations, including widows and orphans.

This is coupled with environmental protection awareness to inform climate resilience-strategies and technologies that protect community land. The project targets women, many of whom were identified through the project-established safe house, for reforestation efforts within communities. In addition to combating environmental degradation, these efforts provide additional economic security for women. Women who plant trees on land where they had decision-making ability are able to choose how to manage the assets, which includes harvesting the trees to sell or growing fruit trees to provide for the household.

Access to savings and finance: Complementary to livelihood development is sustained and inclusive economic and social empowerment to vulnerable households through the establishment of group-led savings groups. Initially established in partnership with the Mothers' Union to focus on functional literacy, during

Interfaith GBV Advocacy

SADC works in consortium with interfaith and secular actors to advocate for improved and enforced laws related to GBV. The consortium includes FOMU (Muslim Forum on Human Rights), Dushirehamwe (a civil society group promoting women's welfare) and RCBIF (an association of Muslim, Catholic and Anglican faith leaders for the promotion of family welfare).

the pilot, the project recognized the need to adapt the model to facilitate women's empowerment and decision-making power within the household. A critical need was access to capital. To meet this need, the project adopted more robust financial inclusion efforts through the savings collectives to enable women more choice within the household and economic independence. Collectively, group savings are loaned to members (either collectively or as individuals) to invest in small businesses, education or other critical needs. Illustrative examples of small businesses include breeding, charcoal production, and agriculture.

Support for survivors: The project operates a safe house that provides immediate medical and psychosocial support to survivors as well as referrals to judicial and further medical and psychosocial support. Survivors are provided clothing, sheets, hygiene materials and sanitary equipment. They are also connected to livelihood development opportunities through the project as well as savings cooperatives. As part of its mandate, the safe house trains men on positive masculinity and non-violence communication/conflict resolution. It also advocates amongst the broader community for social justice and inclusion, specifically raising awareness on GBV.

2019-2022 Reach



2022 Results

Support to survivors:

- Safe house provided direct services to 417 survivors of violence and provided referrals for medical (35) psychological services (184), judicial services (63), provision of materials (99) and dignity kits (68)
- 22 men trained on positive masculinity and non-violence communication/conflict resolution

Access to savings and finance:

- 60 functional literacy and savings groups operational, promoting sustained and inclusive economic and social empowerment of 1500 vulnerable households

- \$35,500 in savings by 1425 members of savings groups

Livelihood development:

- 1,200 kg. of maize, 1,000 kg. of rice, 138 kg. of vegetables, 6,500 kg. of potatoes and 110,000 kg. of sweet potatoes provided to 1,437 small-holder farmers (595 men, 842 female)