



PEACEBUILDING FUND

PBF Projects - BURUNDI

Lessons learned from community infrastructure construction and/or rehabilitation projects

In the context of the implementation of the Priority Plan for Peacebuilding, developed by the Government of Burundi with the support of the United Nations and in collaboration with other partners, a funding package of 35 million American dollars was allocated to the Government of Burundi by the **Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)** to finance 18 projects in four priority domains, which are: (i) peace and democratic governance, (ii) reform of the security sector, (iii) justice and Human Rights and (iv) the land issue and community recovery.

The selection of proposed projects was made on the basis of several general criteria, notably – to be catalytic, to be sustainable, and to have a short implementation timeframe and a rapid impact. Of the 18 peace consolidation projects, 7 had a component of construction or rehabilitation of community infrastructure: schools, health centres, local courts, public service offices, military barracks, drinking water conveyance, reforestation, etc.

These projects were:

- *Youth participation in social cohesion at the community level,*
- *Support to the improvement of quality of local public services,*
- *Barracking of the National Defence Force (FDN) to reduce the impact of their presence within the population,*
- *Support for the National Intelligence Service to uphold the rule of law,*
- *Support to Burundian National Police of operational proximity,*
- *Rehabilitation of local judicial systems for a reduction in conflicts within communities via the reconstruction and fitting out of local courts,*
- *Support to the socio-economic reintegration of conflict-affected populations and to community recovery in the provinces of Bubanza, Bujumbura Rural and Cibitoke (P3P)*

Initially planned for a 12-month period, the implementation of these projects showed that this timeframe was too short. Extensions to implementation deadlines were granted in order to finish project activities. Project implementation partners have gleaned several lessons from this process:

- (1) For practical reasons, it is difficult to complete a public infrastructure construction/rehabilitation project in 12 months when project norms and procedures impose a nine month minimum timeframe before the winning tender is chosen.
- (2) During the formulation of some peace consolidation projects, the project activity plan didn't sufficiently take into account the coherence of needs presented by the different actors involved in community development (Commune-level authorities and local administration, decentralised sectoral services, Communal Committees for Community

Development, women leaders, etc..) in order to make the process participative and inclusive. During project implementation, the process of identification and approval of the choice of beneficiaries took a lot of time, which added to delays caused by the need to take into account technical elements; the need to adhere to administrative norms and procedures, in particular: the creation of a special expenses notebook for evaluating the nature and volume of work to be carried out, calls for tenders, guided technical visits of contracted companies, beneficiaries' opinions of products, submission deadlines, analysis of tenders, approval of contracts, goods and services by the local Committee, notification of winning tenders, formalities for putting banking guarantees in place, signing of contracts, the setting up of building sites and beginning the actual execution of works.

- (3) The estimation of costs and time frames for carrying out work is relatively precise for new construction; however, it is only indicative for rehabilitation work. Rehabilitation work can involve a lot of unexpected or unplanned physical work, which in turn has important financial consequences, but also causes delays in completion.
- (4) The lack of local actors capable of carrying out the work to an acceptable standard in certain communes led to companies being used that were generally more expensive, and who employed labour from outside the area; this didn't contribute to achieving one project's objective of community recovery.
- (5) The oversight offices should be recruited before, or at the same time, as the companies contracted to carry out the work, in order to avoid problems or significant delays. The project team should also include a professional experienced in this type of project to ensure better monitoring/follow-up.
- (6) A period of 12 months between the provisional handover and the final handover is necessary in order to check and guarantee the quality of the work carried out.
- (7) Plan for a minimum of human resources necessary to follow-up those activities still underway in the period between the operational close and the financial close of the project.

Conclusion:

It is recommended that new public infrastructure construction works be given preference over rehabilitation/renovation of existing infrastructure, for three essential reasons:

1. Budgets are relatively predictable and precise, and the timeframes contain less unknown elements.
2. The appearance of new construction gives good visibility of work carried out.
3. New construction is more long-lasting and definitely of a higher quality.