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# WFP Burundi: Social Protection Strategy Development

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Carol Watson  
*Independent consultant*

Stephen Devereux  
*Centre for Social Protection, Institute of Development Studies, UK*

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## 1. Introduction

The Social Protection Learning Facility (SPLF) was established in May 2020 to provide both technical assistance and real-time learning for WFP staff working on social protection in the eastern and central Africa region. In this context, SPLF was commissioned to support the WFP country office in Burundi to conduct a review that will result in strategic recommendations to guide WFP's future engagement with the social protection sector in Burundi. As per the Terms of Reference (ToRs), the review aims to contribute to:

- ❖ Identifying WFP's entry points and priorities to support the social protection sector in Burundi
- ❖ Defining WFP Burundi's positioning and added value within the social protection space in Burundi, especially vis-a-vis UNICEF and the World Bank
- ❖ Supporting and strengthening the country office's advocacy and donor engagement efforts.

WFP globally is developing its corporate social protection strategy, with a 2018 guide highlighting the centrality of social protection for all of WFP's work. WFP's Regional Bureau in Nairobi (RBN) has identified regional priorities and is currently assisting country offices in the region to strengthen their approaches, including through the SPLF.

This review was conducted by two consultants working remotely (because of the COVID situation) over the period of February/March 2021. Activities consisted of a review of documentation and consultation with key stakeholders involved in social protection in Burundi from government, partner organisations and implementing agencies, as well as WFP (at both country and regional level). A total of 26 stakeholders were consulted from WFP (Burundi country office and RBN); government (SEP/CNPS); development actors and partners (World Bank, AfDB, UNICEF, Concern Worldwide, World Vision International) and technical assistance (IPC-IG). Lists of references and stakeholders are presented in annexes 1 and 2.

It should be noted at the outset that a number of important parallel processes were underway in Burundi at the time of the consultancy. These include a review of implementation of the current national social protection strategy and preparation for the development of a new one (ongoing); a social protection programme mapping exercise supported by the Social Protection partner group (results were not available for this review); a social registry feasibility study (recommendations were being discussed for validation and further decision-making at the time of the consultancy); WFP's own ongoing strategic planning processes around development of its new Interim Country Strategic Plan (ICSP); and World Bank planning for the extension of its capacity strengthening and social safety net project Merankabandi (in conceptual phase). While all these processes serve as important entry points for strengthening WFP engagement around social protection, they also represented a moving target for this review, which limited the extent to which they could be taken as a springboard to chart the way forward.

This report is structured as follows. **Chapter 2** maps the national social protection setting in Burundi, highlighting the overall poverty and vulnerability context, and outlining key national social protection policies, structures, partnerships and programmes and priorities moving forward. **Chapter 3** reviews WFP's approach to social protection, programmes and partnerships in Burundi, and presents some perceptions on WFP as a social protection agency by insiders and others. **Chapter 4** offers options for the way forward for WFP's engagement in social protection in Burundi, including supporting several

components of the national social protection system (the new National Social Protection Strategy, the scaled-up national social safety net programme (Merankabandi), the proposed single social registry), repositioning WFP as a leader among development partners in the social protection policy space, and strengthening WFP's technical expertise to achieve these objectives. **Chapter 5** concludes.

## **2. Mapping the social protection sector in Burundi**

### **2.1 Context of poverty, vulnerability, and multiple shocks**

Burundi is characterised by widespread poverty and both chronic and cyclical vulnerabilities, including vulnerability to socio-political and environmental shocks. Household survey data (ECVMB 2013/14) show that nearly two thirds of the population (64.9%) lived under the national poverty line in 2014, with half of the non-poor vulnerable to falling into poverty.<sup>1</sup> The World Bank (2019) estimates even higher levels of poverty at 73% according to the international poverty line of US\$1.90 per day, nearly double the average for sub-Saharan Africa and for low-income countries.

Burundi is one of the most food insecure countries in the world, according to the Global Hunger Index of 2020. According to April 2019 IPC results, 15% of the population were facing emergency and crisis levels of food insecurity (phases 3 and 4) with 263,000 people in emergency (phase 4). The Joint Approach to Nutrition and Food Security Assessment (JANFSA) carried out in December 2018 revealed that 44.8 % of the population were food insecure, with 9.7 % in severe food insecurity, and with variations by locality. Demographic pressure arising from high population growth rates of 3% annually (with average fertility rates of around 5.4) contribute to a structural problem of growing scarcity of land in a country where 90% of the population is rural (World Bank 2015; population/net Burundi/). This is compounded by new influxes of returnees from Tanzania and refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which contribute to competition and disputes over scarce natural resources (WFP 2020c).

Burundi suffers from all forms of malnutrition across different age groups. It has one of the highest stunting rates at 52.2% (ENSNMB 2020), meaning that half of all children under five are chronically undernourished. According to the 2019 Fill the Nutrient Gap study (FNG), availability of and access to nutritious food remains a major challenge for adequate nutritional intake, with more than 67% of the population unable to afford nutritious food on the market (WFP 2019d). Anaemia is a major problem, affecting with 61% of children under 5, 39% of adolescent girls, and 40% of women according to the latest Demographic and Health Survey (EDSB III 2016/17).

Lack of access to basic services contributes to low levels of human capital that in turn fuel the transmission of poverty and food insecurity across generations, with significant disparities by gender, region and urban/rural locality. Only 60% of the rural population has access to safe drinking water, for example, compared to 80% in urban areas. And while net school enrolment at primary level is 86%, dropouts are high and primary completion is only 57%, with girls more likely than boys to drop out as they progress along the educational cycle. Women are therefore less educated than men (République du Burundi, 2020a). The FNG study highlights the impacts of gender inequalities on the nutritional status of women and children noting, among other things, the prevalence of patriarchal cultural norms, lack of female autonomy and decision-making power in the household and limited access to sexual and reproductive health care (WFP 2019d). While women furnish the majority of agricultural

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<sup>1</sup> A new integrated household condition of living survey is currently underway, with results expected in 2021 (République du Burundi 2020a).

work and are largely responsible for the nutrition of their families, they lack inheritance rights to land as well as authority over their production, contributing significantly to gender-based vulnerability.

Overall vulnerability in Burundi is intensified by continuous adverse shocks, both natural and socio-political. The country hosts a significant caseload of refugees (over 87,000 refugees and asylum seekers in 2019) along with increasing inflows of Burundian returnees (143,000 projected in 2021) and high levels of internal displacement due to floods and droughts (over 30,000 IDPs in 2019) (UNHCR 2021a and b). Burundi is ranked 169 out of 181 countries on the index of resilience to natural disasters and climate change (Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative).

A recent survey (IOM 2020) indicates that most internal displacement in Burundi (some 80%) is due to natural disasters, particularly torrential rains and flooding coupled with landslides causing destruction of housing and infrastructure; drought is a secondary cause natural disaster-induced displacement. The remaining 20% of displacement is due to other reasons. Most of the internally displaced (some two thirds) would seek to return to their localities of origin if conditions permit, while a third seek to integrate locally, though percentages vary according to availability of land and employment possibilities in the localities of displacement.

A national strategy for reduction of risks of catastrophes (SNRRC) was adopted in 2018 and a multi-sectoral platform has been established to coordinate efforts around food and nutrition security. In order to strengthen community resilience to disasters, the government has pledged to develop a national multi-risk early warning mechanism; to establish a national centre for emergency operations and a national fund for disaster risk reduction; and to integrate disaster risk reduction in training programmes and in Communal Community Development Plans (PCDC) (République du Burundi 2019).

## 2.2 National policy environment, priorities and governance structures

The Government of Burundi has made significant efforts over the past decade to strengthen the national policy environment for social protection, to identify key national priorities, and to establish institutional structures and for coordination of the sector (see Box 1).

### **Box 1. Key milestones in the development of the social protection sector in Burundi**

2011	Adoption of a National Social Protection Policy (PNPS)
2012	Establishment of a National Commission for Social Protection (CNPS) made up of 11 Ministries
2013	Establishment of a Technical Committee for the CNPS
2014	Establishment of a Permanent Secretariat (SEP) for the CNPS, hosted in the Ministry of Gender

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