

Burundi Leadership Training Programme

Written by Elizabeth McClintock Found in Schirch, Lisa, with Deborah Mancini-Griffoli (editors). *Local Ownership in Security: Case Studies of Peacebuilding Approaches*. The Hague: Alliance for Peacebuilding, GPPAC, Kroc Institute, 2015. Found at www.humansecuritycoordination.org

Burundi's complex history and the challenges and flaws in the Arusha peace process motivated conflict management experts to challenge common assumptions about post-agreement peacebuilding processes. Could adversarial politics replace war and violence in a transition to democracy? Could building new institutions lead to stability? Would donor efforts to apply moral and political pressure, combined with legal sanctions, deter further violence or corruption? Local leaders' attitudes and behaviours needed to shift, especially those leaders in charge of implementing the Arusha Accord. A rational or technical solution was unlikely to work in such a complex conflict where deeply traumatised people held onto deep antagonism toward each other. Capacity building created an opportunity for addressing these challenges in new ways.

The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (WWICS), a Washington think tank and a US-based consulting firm, Conflict Management Partners (CMPartners), collaborated to create the Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP). The aim of the BLTP was to build a consensus on the new rules of the game, based on a understanding that the interests of all stakeholders are interdependent and thus, they must work together rather than compete with each other in adversarial politics based on a "winner take all" mentality. The BLTP's skills-based training curriculum used interactive exercises, simulations, and role-plays, designed to strengthen communication, negotiation, and conflict management skills of Burundi's leaders and to rebuild the trust necessary to solve problems together. The trainings included both mixed and homogenous groups: the security sector (both Army and Police); political party leaders and government officials; and community-based leaders, including youth.

The challenge

Leaders need new relationships, ideas, and skills to navigate implementation of a peace accord.

Theory of change:

Rebuilding relationships and reinforcing capacities for new ways of communicating and negotiating among civilian and security sector leaders will improve joint problem solving.

Participating in a BLTP training was a first step toward building relationships and trust between former enemies. In the first trainings, the facilitators used negotiation case studies from other contexts, which created enough distance from the conflict to enable the participants to explore new ways of thinking and behaving. Over the course of the program, the role-plays began to more closely reflect the real life challenges faced by stakeholders. For example, a high level military official asked the trainers to use a role play related to a ceasefire when in real life he was having a difficult time getting key stakeholders to negotiate a ceasefire. The BLTP implemented a two-year programme with military officers and police. In all, the programme trained over 350 officers in the high command of the military and police; 15 police trainers and 30 army trainers. Three successive commanders of Burundi's military academy participated in the training of trainers program.