



Wounded Memories: Perceptions of past violence in Burundi and perspectives for reconciliation

Patrick Hajayandi



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Research Report

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The front cover photograph shows the rocks at Kiganda. These are connected to
the signing of a peace treaty between the King of Burundi, Mwezi Gisabo, and
the German officer Captain von Beringe in 1903.

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Table of contents

<i>Foreword</i>	1
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	3
<i>Research team</i>	5
<i>Acronyms</i>	6
<i>Executive summary</i>	7
Chapter 01	
Introduction	11
Chapter 02	
Historical background	14
2.1. Winds of change	17
2.2. First elections and first signs of political instability	18
2.3. Rwagasore at loggerheads with the colonial administration	19
2.4. The thorny road to independence	21
2.5. Major violent crises in the post-independence era	23
2.5.1. The 1965 crisis and ethnic radicalization	24
2.5.2. The 1972 Genocide against the Bahutu	24
2.5.3. 1988: The Ntega and Marangara crisis	26
2.5.4. The 1990's reforms and resistances	27
2.5.5. The 1993 crisis and the genesis of civil war	27
Chapter 03	
Rationale behind the research project and its importance	30
Chapter 04	
Objectives of the research project	32
4.1. Specific objectives	32
Chapter 05	
Methodology	33
Chapter 06	
Field work and research team	34

Chapter 07	
Research results	35
7.1 Fieldwork sites	35
7.2 Demographics	35
7.2.1. Age	35
7.2.2. Gender	36
7.2.3. Education level	36
7.2.4. Occupation	37
7.2.5. Religion	37
Chapter 08	
Memory on the various crises	38
8.1. Knowledge about past crises in Burundi	38
8.2. Most memorable violent crisis	38
8.3. Principal sources of information on past crises and related violations	40
8.4. Victims of past crises and endemic violence	41
8.5. Perpetrators of violence	42
8.6. Burying the victims of violence and atrocities	43
8.7. Burial location of victims of killings	45
8.8. Other people who were killed	47
8.9. Burying neighbours	47
8.10. People who saved others from violence	48
8.11. The most violent crisis and its consequences	49
Chapter 09	
Consequences of the past violence on Burundi society	53
Chapter 10	
Addressing past crimes	56
Chapter 11	
Reconciling Burundians as a nation and a society	58
Chapter 12	
Commemorations and remembrance of the victims of violence	60
Chapter 13	
Construction of a single memorial for all victims	61
Chapter 14	
Conclusions	63
<i>References</i>	65

Foreword

Human beings tend to underestimate the effects and power of the legacy of the past on their well-being in the present and future. When the human rights of people have been violated, this leaves permanent wounds within their minds and bodies, which are highly resistant to being “healed”. Even when people speak of having achieved “healing” or “closure”, the trauma of the wound does not disappear, but remains as an indelible imprint in their psyches and physiologies. There is a strong tendency to want to sweep the violations of the past under the proverbial carpet and to pretend that everything has been resolved. This predisposition to conceal the past, however, is a sure path to ensuring that historical violations will resurface and manifest as a myriad of pathological symptoms and violent actions, which will undermine individuals, communities and countries.

The initiative upon which this report is based was led by Patrick Hajayandi, Senior Project Leader at the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR), in collaboration with his colleagues Dr Desire Manirakiza and Mr Aloys Batungwanayo, of the *Institut de Recherche Scientifique pour le développement* (IRSD). It is an important and timely intervention which seeks to ensure that Burundi’s past is not concealed, but revealed so that the society can make progress on its journey towards healing.

Burundi has endured multiple periods of violations and conflict, and it is more likely than not that almost everyone knows someone who is a victim and/or survivor of this legacy. The challenge of how to heal a country in which everyone is either a victim or a survivor is the immediate task confronting those who are committed to peace and security in Burundi, the Great Lakes Region, as well as the rest of the African continent. This report is a necessary addition to the documentary evidence which future

generations of Burundians will be able to consult as they take the necessary steps to ensure that their country becomes an oasis of peace.

The IJR is grateful to the Robert Bosch Stiftung for its proactive support for this project, and for its partnership in advancing the work of the Institute.

Professor Tim Murithi

Head, IJR Peacebuilding Interventions Programme

1 March 2019

Acknowledgements

This research project is a collaborative work. Many people contributed to its completion, from the beginning to the end, and I would like to acknowledge their efforts. My thanks go first to the members of the research team who spent numerous hours in the field collecting data, far from their families and away from the comfort and warmth of their homes. They faced harsh and adverse weather conditions and many physical and emotional challenges. These challenges did not in any way reduce their enthusiasm or determination to carry out their tasks. To them I say thank you so much for an assignment well done. I would like to thank the supporting team as well: the psychologist, the IT specialist and the logistics officer. Their work was crucial to the success of the whole process, from planning to deploying teams to the field and assisting during the work. Many thanks to Dr Désiré Manirakiza, who took charge of the scientific and quality aspects of the research project and ensured that the work meets the highest standards. This project could not have been achieved successfully without the leadership of Mr Aloys Batungwanayo, who supervised how the work was conducted and made the necessary contacts to ensure that the research team had all necessary permissions to carry out the data collection in the various communities. He also kept an eye on the material and financial aspects of the project. Most importantly, I express my gratitude to every person who agreed to sit down and share their stories with the interviewers and for their time spent with the research team.

The research team is part of the Institute of Scientific Research for Development (IRSD) based at Hope Africa University (HAU) in Burundi. We thank the leadership of both the IRSD and HAU for being reliable partners in this research project and for providing facilities that were used from the stage of conceptualising the work to the aggregation of results. Their assistance was crucial to the success of this project.

Lastly, I would like to thank both Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) for financial, material and technical support. Without this comprehensive support, the research project would not have become a reality. It is possible that I may have forgotten other people or organisations that supported this project in one way or another, either directly or indirectly. If so, I thank them for taking part in the journey with our research team and for their contribution towards the successful completion of this work.

Research team

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Acronyms

APROSOMA	Association pour la Promotion Sociale des Masses
AU	African Union
FAB	Forces Armées Burundaises
GDP	gross domestic product
IDP	internally displaced persons
IJR	Institute for Justice and Reconciliation
IRSD	Institut de Recherche Scientifique pour le developpement
ODK	Open Data Kit
PDC	Parti Démocratique Chrétien
PP	Parti du Peuple
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN	United Nations
UPRONA	Union pour le Progrès National


Executive summary

This report presents the results of a research project conducted in Burundi between October 2017 and May 2018. The aim of the research was to identify violations perpetrated in the context of political and ethnic conflicts and how they affect Burundian society, the degree of knowledge of Burundians regarding the violations and their perceptions of what should be done to reconcile the nation. It is a historical account of past violations that took place in the post-independence period (1965–2008) in Burundi. The results of the project reveal that the majority of present-day Burundians (70–90%) have been negatively affected by past violations at the individual, communal and national levels.

The past violations discussed were a result of interethnic conflicts, cleavages and tensions between the Bahutu and Batutsi – the two ethnic groups dominating the political realm in Burundi. Particularly, ethnic tensions escalated in 1965 following the assassination of Prime Minister Pierre Ngendandumwe (see Lemarchand 1994; Mugiraneza 1988). The killing of Ngendandumwe in 1965 was followed by summary executions of prominent Hutu leaders such as Paul Mirerekano, Gervais Nyangoma and Joseph Bamina and the exclusion of others from the political, security, economic and social systems of the country. After Burundi became a republic in 1966, and following the installation of a military dictatorship, violence and terror were used as tools to impose its authority. The military dictatorship lasted for more than 30 years, punctuated by massacres, ethnic cleansing and a wobbly foundation for the society. Violations that affected Burundian society for decades and destroyed the social fabric included: the murder of hundreds of thousands of people; the destruction of property; the forced exile of thousands of people to refugee camps; the executions of political opponents; and arbitrary imprisonments. The struggle to access or retain power, the volatile geopolitical context during the cold war, and the inability of successive



After Burundi became a republic in 1966, and following the installation of a military dictatorship, violence and terror were used as tools to impose its authority.



military regimes (Reyntjens 2000; Uvin 1999) to focus on consolidating social cohesion and creating better and equal living conditions for all, are some of the factors which led to the escalation and perpetuation of violence in Burundi over decades. Burundi is still grappling to repair the torn social fabric resulting from violations and traumatic events such as the 1972 Bahutu genocide – although it has not yet been recognised as such (Bowen et al. 1973; Chrétien & Dupaquier 2007; Lemarchand 1996); the assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye in 1993 as well as all the high-ranking personalities who could succeed him; and the interethnic killings that followed it (Kavakure 2015; Samii 2014; Vandeginste 2009a). The country is also trying to deal with a traumatic past that is already affecting new generations of Burundians eager to see a more peaceful and promising future.

The research findings show that:

- Memory and historical accounts pertaining to violent conflicts are widespread in Burundian society. More than 90% of Burundians possess information about the violence in the country in the period 1965–2008, or they still remember what they personally went through or witnessed during that time.
- Ninety-seven percent of all respondents directly witnessed the violent events they referred to during the interviews/surveys, pointing to the magnitude of past violence in Burundi. Between 27% and 37% of respondents from the targeted provinces indicated that they received additional information on past violations from parents or close relatives, illustrating the intergenerational transmission of memory.

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- The data from the three provinces targeted by the research show that 79–94% of respondents affirmed that they were negatively affected by the violence in 1993. Analysis of the aggregated data indicates that most of the respondents' knowledge regarding past violations is related to this specific and brutal period.
 - The former Burundi Armed Forces (*Forces Armées Burundaises*, or FAB) tops the list of perpetrators of violence. According to the data, the FAB committed around 50% of all violations and atrocities reported by respondents. Other perpetrators include civilians who committed atrocities against their neighbours (13% of committed atrocities). Crimes and violations were also committed by armed and militia groups. Members of the local administration were cited for collaborating with the army or some militia groups. However, the data show that the degree of involvement of each actor varied from one region to another.
 - Three in every four (75%) respondents who lost loved ones or friends in the violent conflicts of the past report that they were not able to bury them in a dignified manner. This remains a source of trauma for them, and a problem that needs to be dealt with.
 - The main consequences of the past violations identified during the data collection are: poverty has increased among Burundians; the interethnic violence has crystallised cleavages; a significant number of Burundians have been uprooted and now live in exile or in camps for internally displaced persons. The exile has also led to a brain drain, which is detrimental to the development of the country. These problems were identified at both national and local levels.
 - In order to address past violent acts, respondents suggested two main approaches: to forgive perpetrators once they have confessed to the crimes they committed and formally asked to be forgiven; or to bring them to book so that justice deals with each individual case. Surprisingly, more people advocate for forgiveness than for justice.
 - More than 50% of respondents from the three provinces who said that the process of reconciliation should focus on forgiveness rather than justice added that the decision to forgive perpetrators should happen in a context favouring inclusive policies in running the country, the rule of law and the protection of human rights.

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- With regard to remembering loved ones or friends and all victims of violence in general, respondents suggested putting in place one commemoration date for all victims. On such a date, the entire nation should come together to remember its daughters and sons who were sacrificed at the altar of violence. They also proposed the erection of a monument symbolising the suffering of everyone and acknowledging each victim's pain.
 - The research confirmed the pressing need to address the past. It also showed that the specificity of Burundi as a society should not be ignored in the search for adequate solutions. The research pointed to the importance of consulting the victims of violations and involving them in a larger process aimed at dealing with the traumatic past.

Introduction


The history of Burundi has been characterised by cycles of violence and human rights abuses on a very large scale. Violence has been the main “tool” used to secure, maintain and exercise political power (Vandeginste 2009a) and this has led to the perpetration of numerous crimes, as well as to tragedies. Some of the tragic events that have taken place in Burundi include the assassinations of several leaders, cycles of mass atrocities and a multitude of refugees flocking into neighbouring countries. Both Burundians and foreigners – especially some leaders of the former colonial power – have played a significant role in the unfolding of these tragedies. Today, as the country struggles to deal with its traumatic past, it is important to revisit Burundi’s history in order to understand and unpack what transpired.

The establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on 6 November 2018 by Burundi’s Parliament is an important step towards unpacking the truth about the past. It is also an attempt to heal the wounds of a traumatised society. Dealing with the past through TRC processes or other similar initiatives represents an important milestone and is a testimony to the pressing need to know the truth. The Burundi TRC has the delicate mission of uncovering what happened over the past century, from 25 February 1885, the date of the end of the conference of Berlin, until 4 December 2008, the date of the end of the belligerence in Burundi. However, particular attention is paid to the period beginning with the start of the colonial era to the end of the civil war that took hundreds of thousands of lives. This research focused on the post-independence period and is an important contribution to the truth-finding process.

From 1961 – when the first prime minister, Louis Rwagasore, was assassinated – to the current day, Burundi has been confronted by successive waves of

violence that have had a long-lasting and negative impact on the country's social fabric.

The violent events have increased ethnic and regional divisions, while deepening existing poverty (Brachet & Wolpe 2005). The political and ethnic conflict, which has been a main source of violence, has had a tremendous impact on Burundian society, leaving many people traumatised by the loss of loved ones, by rape and other forms of sexual violence, and by the destruction or looting of properties. As is the case in such circumstances, the cycle of conflicts has adversely affected Burundi's economy and hampered development. The widespread violence has created an unsustainable and fragile economy which cannot sufficiently resist the various shocks that affect the global market. For example, the percentage of people living below the poverty line went from 35% before the eruption of the civil war in 1992, to 60% in 2002 (Brachet & Wolpe 2005). The forced displacement of people (refugees and internally displaced persons, or IDPs) has had negative repercussions on agriculture, which represents 50% of Burundi's gross domestic product (GDP). There was a strong decline in agricultural production as farmers fled or died during the 1993 civil war and related violence. These examples point to the magnitude and negative impact of violence on the Burundian economy and society.



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In addition to the above-mentioned internal problems, the civil war had spillover effects. Across the Great Lakes Region, the number of refugees from Burundi seeking asylum increased significantly: by 2000, the number of IDPs inside Burundi and refugees in the neighbouring countries had reached 1.3 million people. The massive and uncontrolled influx of refugees created many other problems, such as relative ease in creating rear bases for armed groups, and illicit trade in and trafficking of weapons and drugs. These

factors increase the impact of violence in conflict-ridden areas. Besides security issues, the harsh conditions refugees lived in exposed them to infectious diseases. Furthermore, due to lack of occupations, sexual activity increased in refugee camps, leading to the proliferation of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV and Aids.

Although it paved the way to a ceasefire, the signing of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accords for Burundi in August 2000 did not put an end to the civil war and violence. In fact, there were costs of civil war that only started to appear once the violent period was over, as is generally the case in postconflict societies (Collier et al. 2003). The civil war inflicted serious damage on Burundi's already weak economy in terms of capital flight, coupled with investors' reluctance to launch their projects in a country still emerging from a period of violence, despite this being the time when sustained financial assistance was most needed. At the individual level, many Burundians came out of the civil war deeply traumatised and in need of psychosocial assistance.

The objective of this report is to present the results of a research project on past violations. The research was conducted from October 2017 to May 2018 in three key provinces: Muramvya, Gitega and Rumonge. Attention was focused on recalling important dates and events that shaped the history of the country and impacted social relations, as well as on some of the controversial facts surrounding the violence and who was involved in it. The report does not claim a monopoly on the truth. Rather, it aims to open a debate and to enrich what is known with new and additional facts and information. In this way, it hopes to contribute to shedding light on hidden truths about past violations and to break the silence that nourishes impunity.

Historical background

In 1925, the Belgian colonial power launched a controversial administrative reform that profoundly changed power relations in Burundi. Prior to this, the Bahutu and Batutsi were widely represented within the national administrative apparatus (*chefferies* and *sous-chefferies*).¹ The form of power sharing in the royal court and in the constituencies was on a clan basis. Tasks were equally shared according to clans. Ethnic cleavages became more salient after the administrative reform of 1925, which totally disrupted the existing power structures. With this reform, the Bahutu were stripped of their authority and the regions they were in charge of were put in the hands of Tutsis and royal family members, commonly known as *Abaganwa* (princes). In the eyes of the Belgian colonial administration, the Batutsi had superior capabilities for leadership and were in a better position to assist in running the country. According to the colonialists, the Bahutu were good for menial jobs. Whether it was intended to divide the Burundian society or not, the effect of this reform was devastating, especially in the political sphere. Ndikumana (2005) shows how this administrative reorganisation became a turning point by drawing attention to the increased role of ethnicity in shaping Burundi politics from the moment reforms were introduced. The devastating effects of the reform were evident in the distribution of local administration posts: while in 1929, 20% of the chiefs were Bahutu, they were progressively ejected, to the point that by 1945 there were no Muhutu chiefs left in the local administration (Ndikumana 2005).

The exclusion of Bahutu from the administration of the territory and at the royal court resulted in grievances and frustrations that would explode later, in the aftermath of struggles for independence. Although the shockwave was not felt immediately across the nation, the Belgium reforms should be

1 These were administrative entities similar to provinces and districts.

considered an important factor in paving the way to continuous instability and political violence.

Following the reforms, the colonial authority conducted an ethnic census in 1929. The census became a game-changer in social relations (Batungwanayo 2017) as it categorised Burundians as Bahutu, Batutsi or Batwa, with these so-called “races” being recorded on people’s identity cards. This census and classification of Burundi’s social components was based on Arthur de Gobineau’s racist theory on the inherent superiority or inferiority of social groups (Conyers 2002). Today, this census is viewed as the starting point of ethnic cleavages that have crippled Burundian society for a long time.

The period between 1932 and 1949 witnessed a series of structural changes implemented by the colonial power as it attempted to establish and affirm its authority on a territory then known as Ruanda–Urundi (current Rwanda and Burundi). The new power structures included the establishment of a royal council (*Mwami Council*) composed of the king, the Belgian territorial administrator and several chiefs, among whom were Pierre Baranyanka, Raphael Ndenzako, Charles Karabona, Louis Nduwumwe and Ignace Kamatari. The new royal council was composed only of members of the Batutsi and Baganwa clans, replacing the previous Banyamabanga (councillors), who represented a variety of clans, such as the Bahanza, Banyakarama, Bashubi, Benengwe and Bajiji. This fuelled excluded clans’ anger and increased their feelings of injustice. This and other similar decisions prepared the ground for future political violence, as became evident later on.



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In October 1943, the territories of Ruanda and Urundi were organised as two distinct entities with a specific hierarchy: the king at the top, followed by the royal council and the chiefs. However, above this hierarchy was the colonial authority – the governor – who had the power to remove the king and other indigenous chiefs from their functions. In 1945, a colonial law prevented the king from participating in other activities, such as business, mining or agriculture. The law specified that these activities were incompatible with the functions of a king.

Following the decision of the United Nations (UN) in 1948 to offer Belgium trusteeship over Ruanda–Urundi, new administrative reforms were carried out, resulting in the creation of Kigali as the capital of Ruanda and Kitega (current Gitega) as the capital of Urundi. These reforms were followed in 1952 by the establishment of a new institution: the High Council of the Country (*Conseil Supérieur du Pays*, or CSP), which played a role similar to that of a national parliament but with limited powers. Furthermore, the Belgian colonial power organised a series of elections at lower administrative echelons in both Ruanda and Urundi. The UN closely monitored these political and social dynamics, which would deeply affect the populations of the administered territories as the winds of independence started to blow across the continent.

Between 1957 and 1959, the situation in Rwanda deteriorated and political tensions escalated between the Bahutu and Batutsi. Nine Bahutu intellectuals published a document called the Bahutu Manifesto.² It discussed interracial relations and pointed to the marginalisation of the Bahutu population by the Batutsi in Rwanda. The document insisted on the need for social reforms, inclusivity and the correction of injustices of which the Bahutu were victims. The Bahutu Manifesto stirred political and social tensions in Ruanda and a lot of anxiety in Burundi. After this event, in December 1958, the then governor of Ruanda–Urundi, Jean-Paul Harroy, acknowledged the existence of serious problems between the Bahutu and Batutsi in both Rwanda and Burundi (Interview with Vyizigiro 2019). Contrary to what was happening in Rwanda, the situation in Burundi was relatively stable as the Bahutu–Batutsi antagonism was not as important as it was in Rwanda. Instead, there were cleavages between the ruling elites, especially between the Bezi and Batare royal clans.

2 See <http://jkanya.free.fr/manifestebahutu240357.pdf> (accessed 10 March 2019).

2.1. Winds of change

The year 1957 marked Prince Louis Rwagasore's coming to the political stage. Already in 1956, Rwagasore had started voicing the need for a law that could determine the legal status of Burundi as a nation. He elaborated a document that is viewed today as an attempt to establish the first constitution – and indeed, the document produced by Rwagasore was called *la Constitution Murundi* (the Constitution of the Burundian People). Nevertheless, the most important action he undertook was the creation of popular cooperatives for trade, which were used as political platforms at the same time. According to Christine Deslaurier (2013), who did extensive research on the life of Rwagasore, the colonial power considered the indigenous cooperatives to be real war machines. Because Rwagasore's cooperative project was very successful, he became popular across the country. This, however, created many problems between him and the colonial administration, which saw him as a primary public enemy.

When Rwagasore married Marie-Rose Ntamikevyo, a young Muhutu woman from the north of Burundi, on 12 September 1959, their union was perceived to have a political meaning: it was seen as a positive message of unity which transcended social cleavages.

In 1959 a lot of changes occurred within the territories administered by the Belgian colonial administration. This was a critical period, with the winds of independence blowing strongly over African nations seeking to cast aside the yoke of colonialism. Burundi was not left behind. Rwagasore was working with other leaders of the independence struggle, such as Julius K. Nyerere from Tanganyika Territories (currently Tanzania), Patrice Lumumba from Congo-Leopoldville (currently the Democratic Republic of Congo) and other stalwarts. Rwagasore was particularly close to the Tanzanian leader, who was considered his mentor. On 25 December 1959, a royal decree by King Baudouin of Belgium determined a new colonial policy that would be applied across the Ruanda–Urundi territories. It introduced the “Africanisation” of the local administration and suppressed the customary system of chieftaincy. It also introduced the election of members of the local administration. This electoral competition became a new source of political tensions.

2.2. First elections and first signs of political instability

In the lead-up to the elections in 1961, political competition increased. Between January 1960 and September 1961, a record number of political parties (25) were created and registered to participate in the elections. This proliferation of political parties is important to take into account in the context of a country confronted by limited resources. Many people within the elite were interested in politics not because they wanted to bring genuine change but because politics offered better prospects in their personal lives. Only three political parties, however, played a prominent role. The Union for National Progress (*Union pour le Progrès National*, or UPRONA) was a party created by Paul Mirerekano and his friends, including Prince Rwagasore. However, there is controversy around who the real founder was, with some people insisting it was Rwagasore. During the struggle for independence, Governor Harroy issued a decree according to which members of the royal family could not play any prominent role in a political party or in political life generally. Therefore, Rwagasore was a principal adviser to UPRONA and not the leader of the party. UPRONA demanded immediate independence for Burundi.

The other two parties – the Christian Democratic Party (*Parti Démocratique Chrétien*, or PDC) and the People's Party (PP) – were supported by the Belgian colonial administration. The leaders of the PDC, Jean-Baptiste Ntidendereza and Joseph Biroli, were both sons of Chief Pierre Baranyanka, who was in close ties with the colonial power. They were influential members from the Batare royal clan, which was fiercely opposed to Rwagasore, a member of the Bezi royal clan.



Many people within the elite were interested in politics not because they wanted to bring genuine change but because politics offered better prospects in their personal lives.



The PDC claimed that Burundi needed to be prepared before accessing independence. According to its leaders, Burundi first needed to be democratised, and those who would replace the colonial power needed to be prepared through education. Of course, there were no realistic grounds for such claims. In fact, at the time the whole country probably had fewer than 20 people with a university degree. How, in such conditions, could an illiterate population learn the principles of democracy, and in such a short time? This was not made clear.

The PP was created by the Bahutu, who were frustrated by the political exclusion they suffered as a result of the 1925 administrative reforms made by the Belgian colonisers. The party was backed by Albert Maus, a Belgian coloniser who had previously helped create a pro-Bahutu association called the Association for Social Promotion of the Masses (*Association pour la promotion sociale de la masse*, or APROSOMA), which became one of Rwanda's political parties. APROSOMA was a key player in the launch of the 1959 Bahutu Manifesto and its leader, Dominique Mbonyumutwa, was the first interim president of Rwanda before being replaced by Grégoire Kayibanda. Maus hoped that the same political dynamic observed in Rwanda could be repeated in Burundi, an assumption that Rwagasore dismissed vehemently in an exchange of articles published in *Burundi Infor* – a newspaper produced during the Belgian rule. Maus' intention had been to import the Bahutu–Batutsi antagonism into Burundi, a move which was unsuccessful. The PP insisted on defending the interests of what they described as simple Bahutu and Batutsi peasants, those living in the hills, which is why it was presented as a party belonging to *Abasanzwe* (simple or average people) as opposed to the elite. Maus' approach was rejected by most political leaders in Burundi, despite the diversity of their views vis-à-vis independence. As Deslaurier notes, “in 1960 the ethnic cleavages and all related political calculations did not have the same significance in Burundi as in Rwanda” (2013: 19). Burundi was thus more or less peaceful when it acquired independence.

2.3. Rwagasore at loggerheads with the colonial administration

The hostility towards Rwagasore became obvious in 1956 upon his return from Europe, where he had spent four years at university in Brussels. When he handed over the first draft constitution in the name of the Murundi people, the then vice-governor general of the Ruanda–Urundi territory, Jean-Paul Harroy (1956–1961), noted that Rwagasore was a potential threat to the

colonial power. Furthermore, as noted, his launch of the indigenous cooperatives in 1957 was met with hostility from the Belgian colonial power. Rwagasore had used a breach in the Belgian law to launch the cooperatives, which were legally autonomous and beyond the control of the colonial power. The objective of the cooperatives was to free Burundian trade from the ever-present intermediaries that hindered direct transactions between Burundians and business communities from other countries. The Swahili community played an important role in the success of the cooperatives and later in the larger struggle for independence.

Because of his involvement in the work of cooperatives for the benefit of Burundians, Rwagasore became a national hero in a very short period. His status as a prince and his proximity to the simple peasants on the hills, coupled with an unusual charisma and a spirit of leadership, increased his popularity across the country. But for the same reason, he also became the main target of the colonial power. Despite the threat of being incarcerated, Rwagasore continued to take risks for the liberation cause. He demonstrated this fearlessness during his visits to his struggle fellow and mentor, Julius Nyerere (Deslaurier 2013).

In 1958, the colonial administration successfully engineered new laws aimed at stopping the work of cooperatives. The move was aimed at reducing Rwagasore's influence on the Burundian population. It produced the opposite effect. The new coercive measures brought the conflict between the prince and the administration into broad daylight and, consequently, his popularity increased exponentially. He used this unexpected opportunity to mobilise the population to participate in a campaign of disobedience by refusing to pay taxes and boycotting foreign businesses in Burundi. The campaign evolved and became a national movement that would play an important role in the elaboration of UPRONA's ideology.

In 1960, the Belgian authority attempted to prevent Rwagasore from active participation in politics. As discussed, it created a new law prohibiting members of the Burundi royal family and their allies from exercising government functions or participating in political activities. Between 27 October and 9 December 1960, Rwagasore was accused of political subversion and placed under house arrest. This was the period when the first communal elections were taking place.

The elections were won by the *Front Commun* – a coalition of political parties supported by the Belgian colonial authorities, mainly the PDC and the PP.

Members of Rwagasore's party, UPRONA, who had participated on an independent ticket, came in at second position despite the Belgian support for the *Front Commun* coalition.

2.4. The thorny road to independence

Following the “rigged” elections of October 1960, UPRONA refused to acknowledge the victory of the political parties supported by the colonial power. It lodged a complaint at the UN, which created a commission for the Ruanda–Urundi territories. The leader of the UN commission, Max Dorsinville (Haitian), and Ernest Gassou (Togolese), were supportive of the struggle for independence in Africa, especially in Burundi. They therefore supported the cause of UPRONA and Rwagasore and went as far as to provide advice on how to lead the political struggle and the fight for independence. The colonial administration was not happy with Dorsinville and Gassou's action, but Belgium was not in a position to oppose the initiatives of a UN representative given that it was the UN that had offered Belgium trusteeship over the country.

On 18 September 1961, legislative elections were organised under the supervision of the UN commission. This time UPRONA won a landslide victory, with 58 seats out of 64 in the new national assembly. Following the victory of his party, Rwagasore was appointed the first prime minister of the Kingdom of Burundi. Unfortunately, he remained in power for only two weeks.



Rwagasore was appointed the first prime minister of the Kingdom of Burundi. Unfortunately, he remained in power for only two weeks.



On 13 October 1961, Rwagasore was assassinated at the Tanganyika Hotel and Restaurant while dining with members of his cabinet. Today, increasing evidence implicates Belgian authorities in his assassination. According to the investigations of the colonial administration, the murder was ordered by Jean-Baptiste Ntidendereza and Joseph Biroli, the leaders of the opposition PDC. The two leaders were from the Batare branch of the royal family and were the sons of Chief Pierre Baranyanka, who ruled in the northern territories of Burundi. In other words, the assassination of Rwagasore appears to have been the result of a power play within the same family, but the role of the colonial power should not be underestimated.

The death of Rwagasore led to unprecedented chaos and deep political crisis in his party. It was also the starting point of a long period of violence, political instability and bloodshed in Burundi. The internal crisis destroyed the ethnic and regional balance that the prince had created, as members of UPRONA struggled to fill the leadership vacuum left by his death.

Members of the PDC, the party whose leaders were accused of plotting the assassination, became the prime target of popular anger. They were considered traitors and attacked. Ntidendereza and Biroli were arrested and imprisoned along with Greek national Jean Kageorgis, who had shot the prince with a hunting rifle. A day before the declaration of Burundi's independence, Kageorgis was executed at the central prison of Bujumbura. His co-accused – Biroli, Ntidendereza and others involved in the plot – were executed after independence, as the national leadership took over from the colonial rulers.

After the death of the prince, political life in Burundi became unpredictable and difficult to control as most of the top leaders had no real experience in modern politics or in running a country. Soon, political violence became the norm. In January 1962, some members of the UPRONA youth organisation massacred Bahutu trade unionists in Kamenge simply because they were opponents and Bahutu. Similar violent actions increased as the country's woes deepened. Burundi gained its independence³ on 1 July 1962, but when the flag was hoisted for the first time, the country was in mourning, divided and wounded.

3 In reality, Burundi did not gain its independence in 1962 but recovered it. Its independence was lost in 1903 when King Mwezi Gisabo signed an armistice treaty with the German colonisers in Kiganda (the famous Kiganda Treaty), allowing them to establish a protectorate. When the first colonisers arrived in Burundi, they found a well-organised kingdom with a structured hierarchy: the king, the royal council of advisors, the governing princes, the chiefs, the army, etc.

2.5. Major violent crises in the post-independence era

The assassination of Prime Minister Rwagasore not only left an important power vacuum but also created a negative precedent for the political elite: it showed the possibility of using violence as a political tool against adversaries. In the years that followed independence and in the absence of the unifying personality of Rwagasore, Burundi was engulfed in a period of turbulence. This period of instability started with the numerous appointments of prime ministers who were unable to hold office for more than two years. In a period of only four years (October 1961 to September 1965), five prime ministers were appointed: Andre Muhirwa (in office for 18 months), Pierre Ngendandumwe (nine months), Albin Nyamoya (nine months), Pierre Ngendandumwe (reappointed – one week) and Joseph Bamina (eight months) (Ndikumana 2005).

A number of factors explain this dynamic, which had devastating consequences. The first factor was the quasi-impossible cohabitation between a traditional system of kingship based on absolute power control, and a new and modern democratic system. According to Burundian tradition, a king was not accountable to the people, as he was not elected but selected from among the dynastic princes. The new government established after Burundi recovered its independence, however, was based on a written constitution and on Western principles of governance, which required to be accountable to the people. As supreme leader, the king tried to navigate this complex system by resorting to multiple appointments; this only added to the political instability. The second factor explaining the numerous appointments was the reluctance for the Baganwa and the Batutsi to be ruled by a prime minister from the Bahutu. This problem caused splits within then-ruling party UPRONA to the point of creating two factions: the pro-Batutsi “Casablanca group” and the pro-Bahutu “Monrovia group”.⁴

The third factor prompting constant reshuffling was simply a clash between the younger, modern generation of leaders and the old traditional establishment. The king was constantly looking for a prime minister (among

4 The groups names were chosen arbitrarily based on then existing ideologies within African politics and the struggle against colonialism. At the Pan African level, the Casablanca Group favoured political integration as a prerequisite for economic integration and tended to adopt a socialist path to development. The Monrovia group on the other side, preferred a functionalist approach to African integration (see Wapmuk 2009).

the young leaders) who could adapt easily to the traditions and the old system, and this proved to be very difficult.

2.5.1. The 1965 crisis and ethnic radicalisation

The political instability was exacerbated by recurring killings of top leaders of the country. In January 1965 the assassination of Prime Minister Pierre Ngendandumwe by a Mututsi refugee from Rwanda brought the conflict between the Bahutu and Batutsi to a new level and reinforced the divide across ethnic lines. However, the situation went out of control in the aftermath of legislative elections organised in May the same year. Following the election results, 23 out of 33 members of the national assembly were Bahutu MPs (Krueger & Krueger 2007). Despite this victory, King Mwambutsa appointed his advisor, Leopold Bihumugani – a Muganwa – as prime minister, instead of a Muhutu. Reacting to this humiliation, a group of Bahutu officers from the defence and security forces (army and gendarmerie), along with some politicians, staged a coup on 19 October 1965, but it failed. The coup plotters were arrested, judged and executed or sentenced to life in prison. These included prominent politicians such as Paul Mirerekano and Gervais Nyangoma. The population of Muramvya reacted violently to the death of these leaders, in particular to that of Mirerekano, who was very close to the local peasantry (Vandeginste 2009a). Families of Batutsi were attacked and their houses burnt. Around 400 people were killed. The military, strongly dominated by the Batutsi, retaliated by killing around 5 000 Bahutu between Busangana and Bukeye communes. From this period onwards, Burundi politics became highly ethnicised.

2.5.2. The 1972 genocide against the Bahutu

The increasing violence pointed to the inability of King Mwambutsa to solve complex political problems and conflicts as he gradually lost legitimacy. On 28 November 1966, the king was overthrown, and the first republic of Burundi was declared. Captain Michel Micombero – a Mututsi from the southern province of Bururi – became the first president.

In 1972, the Micombero government set out to eliminate all educated Bahutu in what is today viewed as a genocide against the Bahutu population. Micombero and his close allies, such as ministers Arthemon Simbananiye and Shibura, thought that the Bahutu represented a threat to

his power and wanted to ensure that the Batutsi rule would be safe for at least the next generation (Krueger & Krueger 2007). It is important to underline that there are conflicting versions around what really caused the genocide. According to people close to the Micombero regime, there was an uprising aimed at overthrowing him. The revolt was led by Bahutu leaders supported by members of a Congolese rebel movement under the leadership of Pierre Mulele. The rebel movement attacked and killed Batutsi in Rumonge and Nyanza-Lac communes and attempted to seize the national radio station. In a counter-attack against the rebels, the army carried out a repressive and violent campaign that led to the killing of more than 100 000 people (Chalk & Jonassohn 1990; Ould Abdallah 2000).

However, according to victims' families, the narrative around the idea of a military coup was an alibi invented by Micombero to justify the extreme violence and the massacres he committed. They argue that if there was a real rebel group operating mainly in the southern part of the country, then there would have been no need to round up the Bahutu population from all over the country. There are even suggestions that the uprising was provoked by Micombero in order to have a plausible reason to carry out the genocide. This claim is based on the fact that many people were arrested as a result of pre-established lists that had been created months earlier, before the eruption of violence (Chalk & Jonassohn 1990)

Indeed, it is well known that after Micombero's genocide, at least 75% of all educated Bahutu were eliminated. These included army officers, politicians, students, businessmen, pastors and any people considered to be relatively wealthier than the rest of the population. It is estimated that between 100 000 and 300 000 people, mostly Bahutu, were killed between April and August 1972 (Chalk & Jonassohn 1990; Krueger & Krueger 2007).

Despite the magnitude of the 1972 genocide against the Bahutu, the international community barely reacted. Most governments opted to ignore what was happening, thus allowing the Micombero regime to continue the repression. Foreign aid continued to flow and, as noted by Chalk and Jonassohn, "it was almost as if all foreigners banded together in a conspiracy of silence" (1990: 389). The Catholic Church – the most important in Burundi – did not openly condemn the onslaught and the American embassy at the time kept stories of massacres in Burundi away from the American press. Thus, this extremely violent event was ignored by the world, but not by victims – the devastating effects and the trauma it caused are still felt today by many people.

In 1976, the rule of Micombero ended brutally in another military coup that brought to power Colonel Jean Baptiste Bagaza as the president of the second republic. He was also a Mututsi, from the same region as his predecessor. Bagaza's era was not characterised by any massive and open violence. However, he initiated discriminatory measures that limited the Bahutu from accessing secondary and tertiary education. He also attacked the Catholic Church, accusing it of providing education to Bahutu children and of being a place where opponents or subversive elements could meet to make plans against his regime. Despite his stated objective of promoting national unity, under Bagaza rule ethnic cleavages became more and more evident. Arbitrary arrests of people suspected of being involved in politics were common, and there was much suspicion as people were obliged to spy on their neighbours.

2.5.3. 1988: The Ntega and Marangara crisis

Like the two presidents before him, Bagaza was also overthrown in a bloodless military coup staged once again by a military officer from Bururi and from the same commune of Rutovu. Major Pierre Buyoya came to power in 1987 and was met by mounting pressure and calls for political and social reforms, especially from some Bahutu intellectuals who were tired of being marginalised. In 1988 ethnic tensions flared again. They took a particularly violent turn in two communes, Ntega and Marangara, in the north of Burundi. In June 1988, a misunderstanding between the local administration and the Bahutu community rapidly escalated into an uprising. When the administrator asked the army to intervene and restore order, the wounded memories of what had happened in 1972 resurfaced and the uprising turned violent. Batutsi families were eliminated and their properties burnt. The army came in and indiscriminately massacred the Bahutu, both those involved in the uprising and innocent citizens. According to Amnesty International, "Thousands of unarmed civilians appear to have been deliberately killed by members of Burundi's armed forces when they moved into the provinces to suppress the disturbances" (Amnesty International 1988: 1).

The government confirmed that 5 000 people had been killed but other sources suggest that at least 20 000 people lost their lives in the violence (Kagabo 1988; Meproba 1989; Vandeginste 2009a). Just as in the 1972 case, there were also differing interpretations related to the triggers of violence. The Bahutu version argued that violence was the result of provocations by local officers who were planning another large-scale massacre. The Batutsi version

pointed to the existing ideology stirred up by the Palipehutu political movement, which called for Bahutu to exterminate Batutsi. However, the reality seems to suggest that the fear, mistrust and trauma of the years of confrontations by both communities may have triggered the new wave of violence motivated by the security dilemma (Herz 1950).

Contrary to the indifference and silence in 1972, this time the international community reacted and condemned the massacres in Ntega and Marangara in strong terms. President Buyoya found himself under pressure from different governments threatening to suspend financial aid.

2.5.4. Reforms and resistance in the 1990s

In an attempt to respond to the mounting pressure, Buyoya embarked on a series of political reforms. He created a national commission tasked with analysing the problem of national unity, the origin of divisions and the ideology of violence and proposing recommendations.⁵ The commission was composed of both Bahutu and Batutsi representatives. He launched a process of democratisation which included the introduction of multipartyism, freedom of speech and independent media. The reforms were met with some hostility from the Batutsi establishment accustomed to ruling the country alone. For their part, the Bahutu did not consider the reforms profound enough and viewed them as superficial (Ould-Abdallah 2000).

In November 1991, President Buyoya tried to meet with the leadership of the Palipehutu based in Europe. But a more radical splinter group called the FNL-Palipehutu and led by Cossan Kabura reacted by attacking military and police infrastructures. As usual, the armed forces reacted brutally. A severe repression targeted the Bahutu rebels and civilians. However, the crisis was limited to three provinces: Cibitoke, Bubanza and Bujumbura. The death toll was estimated at between 500 and 3 000 people (Erlor & Rentjens 1992).

2.5.5. The 1993 crisis and the genesis of civil war

The 1993 violence was sparked by the assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye after only 102 days in office. Ndadaye was the first president in the history of Burundi to be democratically elected and was the first Muhutu to

5 Rapport de la Commission sur la question de l'unité nationale, Avril 1989.

access the presidential seat. His victory was unprecedented, with 64.75% of the vote, while his rival Buyoya garnered only 32.39%. The third candidate - Pierre Claver Sendegeya - garnered only 1.44%. The rest of the votes (between 0.90-1.42%) were nullified or unaccounted for.⁶

Ndadaye was committed to the ideals of unity, inclusion and democracy. Soon after he was sworn in as president, he announced the members of his government. He surprised many by establishing an inclusive government headed by Sylvie Kinigi as the first woman prime minister. She was from UPRONA, the party which had just lost the elections. He also appointed eight other ministers from the opposition with the hope that this team would join efforts in building what he often referred to as the “new Burundi” (*Uburundi bushasha*). However, there were some problems at the level of the local administration and in different government services or parastatal organisations. There was an attempt to replace people linked to the former regime with members of the Frodebu, a move which was perceived as a serious threat for the old establishment. Another serious problem arose in relation to former refugees who were returning home after almost 30 years in exile. When they arrived in Burundi, the first thing they did was to ask the government to give them back their properties, but most had been occupied since they left the country. These problems provoked heightened tensions and a lot of anxieties. It was in this context that a military coup was staged on 21 October 1993 and President Ndadaye was killed. Other high-profile personalities were also assassinated, including the speaker of the national assembly, Pontien Karibwami, and his deputy, Gilles Bimazubute. The minister of interior, Juvenal Ndayikeza, and the head of the national intelligence service, Richard Ndikumwami, were also killed. Most of these leaders, except for Bimazubute, were Bahutu. As Vandeginste notes,

once again, a cycle of political violence was set in motion. In an immediate reaction to the coup staged in Bujumbura, violent attacks were launched against the Tutsi (and Hutu supporters of Uprona), either as spontaneous popular reaction by Hutu or as a result of a systematic operation organised and supported by local authorities. (2009a: 58)

In what was labelled a pacification campaign, the armed forces retaliated and killed as many Bahutu as they could. Hundreds of thousands of people lost their lives in these interethnic massacres. Thousands more became

6 See Decision RCCB 20 de la Cour Constitutionnelle du 01 Juin 1993.

IDPs (mainly Batutsi) or refugees in neighbouring countries (mainly Bahutu). In the entire history of Burundi, no other human-made catastrophe had reached the magnitude of the 1993 political violence.

The military coup against Ndadaye was perceived as a clear signal that the Bahutu would never be able to rule the country without having the control of the army. Consequently, a rebel movement was launched in 1994 headed by Leonard Nyangoma, a former minister of the interior. The *Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie* (CNDD) had the mission of dealing with political issues while the armed wing, the *Forces pour la défense de la démocratie* (FDD), was in charge of military operations. “The CNDD and FDD declared their intention to be the restoration of democracy. Explicit in their strategy for achieving this aim, and voiced publicly as early as 1994, was the defeat and dismantling of the *armée mono-ethnique*,⁷ so called because the officer corps was the near exclusive domain of the southern Tutsis” (Samii 2014: 215). From this period the country entered a devastating civil war which lasted more than a decade. The civil war destroyed infrastructure, crippled the economy and tore the social fabric apart. More than 300 000 lives their lost and 800 000 were displaced, leaving behind a wounded nation.

The civil war came to an end after arduous negotiations leading to a series of agreements, including the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation agreement signed in 2000 in Tanzania; the Global Ceasefire agreement signed in 2003 between the interim government and the CNDD-FDD; and the Ceasefire agreement signed between the CNDD-FDD-led government and the last rebel movement, the *Forces Nationales de Liberation-Parti pour la liberation du peuple Hutu* (FNL-Palipehutu), in 2006.



*The civil war destroyed infrastructure,
crippled the economy and tore the
social fabric apart.*



7 This is how the Burundi armed forces were described because of the domination by the Batutsi – they were considered an army made up of one ethnic group only.

Rationale behind the research project and its importance

Why do Burundians want or need to know the truth? The reason is simple: for a very long time, it has been difficult and challenging to carry out a balanced and scientific investigation focused on shedding light on the history of Burundi. Currently, there are multiple versions of Burundi's history of violence as well as controversial perceptions of who the respective victims and perpetrators are. The various versions portray different social (ethnic) groups as victims. This polemic over who constitutes a victim is especially intense between the two main social groups, the Bahutu and the Batutsi. The Batwa seem to be more removed from this confrontation, although they have been involved in the conflict on specific occasions. This situation needs to be clarified in order to promote a common understanding of the violence that occurred over the past half-century of Burundi's political history. Such a process is important and can play a definitive role in clearing the way for a genuine reconciliation process to take place.

Currently, there are multiple versions of Burundi's history of violence as well as controversial perceptions of who the respective victims and perpetrators are.

The extent of the atrocities committed and the number and identity of victims are yet to be uncovered. The contested versions of history illustrate the challenge faced by the recently (2014) established TRC in uncovering the truth about the troubled history of Burundi. However, if Burundians are precluded from uncovering the truth, it will be even more difficult to reconcile them.

This research project seeks to shed light on the contradictions in historical accounts, on the pain of victims and on perceptions of how the violence affected the nation in general. Research projects such as this one are key components in the process of truth-seeking. Uncovering the truth, determining who is truly a victim, how he/she can be compensated or how past injustices can be repaired are important in the healing process at both individual and national levels. This is where the significance of this research project lies.

Two crucial facts should be borne in mind in all initiatives focused on dealing with the past in Burundi:

- Burundians need and want to know the truth in order to forgive and to reconcile;
- Burundians, especially victims of past violence, need a space to exteriorise their pain for a real healing process to take place.

Any projects focused on dealing with Burundi's violent past are thus significant and play a role in reconciling the nation.

Objectives of the research project

The principal objective of this research project is to contribute to uncovering the truth about the history of violence and ethnic conflict in Burundi from the 1960s to the present. This is an extremely challenging task, but not an impossible one.

4.1. Specific objectives

- To give an account of historical events that shaped the political realm and significantly contributed to cycles of conflict and violence in Burundi;
- To analyse how past violence is perceived and how the lack of mechanisms to deal with past atrocities affects victims, the community and society in general;
- To map mass graves across the national territory; and
- To propose ways to alleviate the enduring pain of victims of violence, and suggest solutions based on collected information.

Methodology

This research project used semi-structured interviews coupled with observations. In addition, face-to-face discussions with key informants took place. For the data collection, a survey tool called Open Data Kit (ODK) was used. The ODK is an information tool that uses Android-enabled mobile devices during data collection, classification, localisation and analysis. The system requires internet storage space to archive the collected data. The ODK system makes it possible to collect a lot of data over a relatively short period. It also allows a research supervisor to determine the location of research sites (such as places where mass graves are located) as well as the space already covered by the fieldwork team.



For the data collection, a survey tool called Open Data Kit (ODK) was used.



Fieldwork and research team

The fieldwork was initiated with the aim of obtaining first-hand information on the past violence in Burundi by talking to victims and survivors of that violence. Fieldwork was conducted in three provinces, namely Muramvya, Gitega and Rumonge, from October 2017 to May 2018. The data were collected through surveys and interviews with the local population, and respondents were chosen randomly. The initial plan was to collect data from 1 200 surveys, but the use of the ODK allowed us to increase the number of surveys. To ensure inclusivity, data were collected from 2 560 people, bearing different categories in mind: gender, age, profession, religious belief and social group. The field research team was composed of three groups: two groups were in charge of collecting quantitative data through surveys, while one smaller group was in charge of recording testimonies from key informants. The research team also included two supervisors, a psychologist and an IT specialist. The psychologist was included to ensure that participants suffering from past trauma would be assisted, if necessary, during or after the interviews. The IT specialist played an important role in terms of saving and organising the collected data and making sure that the information was kept in a secure environment. A sociologist helped compile the questionnaire and analyse the data. Consent was asked before the survey started and all interviewees were assured of confidentiality, both in terms of the information they provided and especially regarding their personal details.

Research results

7.1. Fieldwork sites

As noted, the fieldwork was carried out in the three provinces of Muramvya, Gitega and Rumonge, which were chosen for two reasons: historical factors; and limited funding, leading to our inability to cover all 18 provinces of Burundi. Historically, the three provinces have been affected to varying degrees by the different political crises and ethnic massacres in Burundi, especially in the postcolonial period. Gitega, for instance, is believed to have the largest number of victims of political violence in connection with the civil war that erupted after the 1993 military coup, but also during the 1972 mass killing because there were so many intellectuals from the Bahutu ethnic group in that region. Rumonge was at the centre of the 1972 ethnic crisis, while Muramvya was a hot spot during the years when the monarchy was coming to an end and the start of the first mass violence in 1965. Those events played a determining role in the choice of these provinces for the fieldwork.

7.2. Demographics

7.2.1. Age

Respondents were divided into four age categories in order to capture different generations' knowledge of Burundi's history. People aged 36–55 and 56–75 were prioritised. However, we also included the younger generation – those who were not directly affected by the trauma of war – in order to understand how memory is transmitted from older to younger generations, as well as the 76+ age category to capture their knowledge of historical events (Table 1).

Table 1: Percentage respondents per age group

Age category	Percentage
18–35	23
36–55	43
56–75	30
76+	4

7.2.2. Gender

In terms of gender, 57% of respondents were males and 43% were females. The disparity between the two categories is a result of cultural practices that prioritise men when there is a need to talk. According to a Burundian saying, “a chicken cannot sing in the presence of a rooster”. There is a tendency to marginalise women in public and sometimes also in private gatherings. A woman cannot talk to strangers when her husband is present unless he gives her permission. This is one reason why our research team collected more information from men than from women.

Within this category, 89% of males were heads of households, while only 11% of women played that role. In many cases, the women became heads of households when their husbands died. Regarding marital status, 75% of respondents were married, 9% were unmarried and 16% were widowed.

7.2.3. Education

Table 2 shows respondents’ level of education. The high number of respondents with no or little education can be explained by the general context of Burundi’s population. In the past, rural areas in Burundi were mostly marginalised and it was not easy for the rural population to access education. Secondary and higher education, in particular, were not accessible to all, especially for those who are currently 30+ years old. This situation can be explained by, among other things, historical and political factors: during the years of military rule, the education policy segregated the social groups, giving privileges to the Batutsi from the south (Bururi) and marginalising the vast majority of Bahutu and Batutsi, who were from other parts of the country. At the same time, the memory of the mass killings (the Bahutu genocide), specifically the killings that took place at the state

university during that period, affected many schools and left parents fearful of sending their children to get an education. As a result, many Bahutu children from rural areas were left without adequate education, although some had elementary reading and writing skills.

Table 2: Education level of respondents

Level of studies completed	%
No school	35.5
Can read and write only	18.6
Primary school	32.8
Secondary school	9.6
Technical school	2.3
University	1.2

7.2.4. Occupation

Of those who took part in the survey, 73.3% were peasants involved in subsistence agriculture; 14.0% were small business owners and workers; 4.5% were civil servants; and 4.5% were students. All other categories share the remaining 4.2%: unemployed people, pensioners, freelancers, etc.

7.2.5. Religion

In terms of religion, 79.9% of respondents were Catholic, while 18.7% attended protestant churches. A very small number (1.4%) belonged to other congregations established in the country or were without a particular religion.

Memory of various crises

8.1. Knowledge about past crises in Burundi

More than 90% of respondents said they knew, or had heard about, the different crises the country had been through (Figure 1). Although the degree of knowledge varied slightly from one province to another, the percentage of people who witnessed or were directly affected by the crises was very high. In Muramvya (where the study started), 98% of respondents said they were informed about past crises or had some knowledge about what happened. In Gitega and Rumonge, the figures were 99% and 96%, respectively. A small number of respondents, largely among the youth, did not know about the crises in the country's past.

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents who knew/did not know about violent crises in Burundi, by province



8.2. Most memorable violent crisis

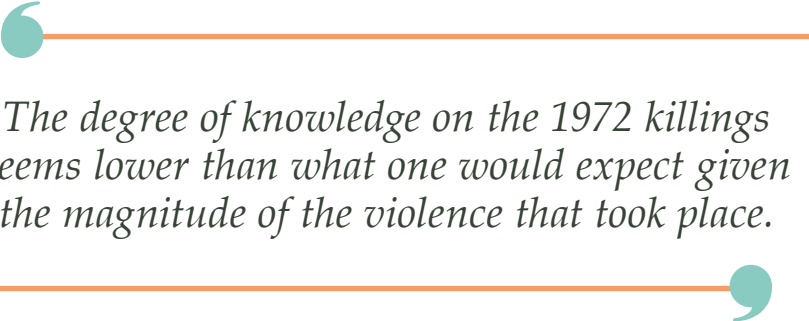
The crisis that the majority of respondents in all three provinces remembered most was that which emerged in the aftermath of President Ndadaye's assassination and the bloody military coup of 21 October 1993 by the then Batutsi-dominated army. In Rumonge, almost 80% of respondents knew about the 1993 crisis. In Muramvya and Gitega, well over 90% of respondents reported that they knew about it. The 1993 crisis and the violence related to

it lasted for more than ten years, and took the lives of hundreds of thousands of Bahutu, Batutsi and Batwa people (see Krueger & Krueger 2007; Reyntjens 2000). The crisis ended after the signing of a series of accords, including the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accords in August 2000, the Global Ceasefire Agreement in November 2003 and the ceasefire agreement with the FNL-Rwasa in September 2006 (Hajayandi 2015).

The 1972 crisis, well known as the genocide against the Bahutu population, was the second most remembered violent event. In Rumonge, 47% of respondents still remembered how this crisis had affected them and their families, while the figures in Gitega and Muramvya were 41% and 40%, respectively.

According to various sources (Chrétien & Dupaquier 2007; Kiraranganya 1977; Lemarchand 2002), the 1972 genocide targeted mostly Bahutu intellectuals, Bahutu military, businessmen, religious leaders and students, as well as other persons with a comparatively high status or influence in society. However, beside the massacres of hundreds of thousands of Bahutu by the armed forces, there have been reports of the killings of Batutsi living in the southern communes of Rumonge and Nyanza-Lac.

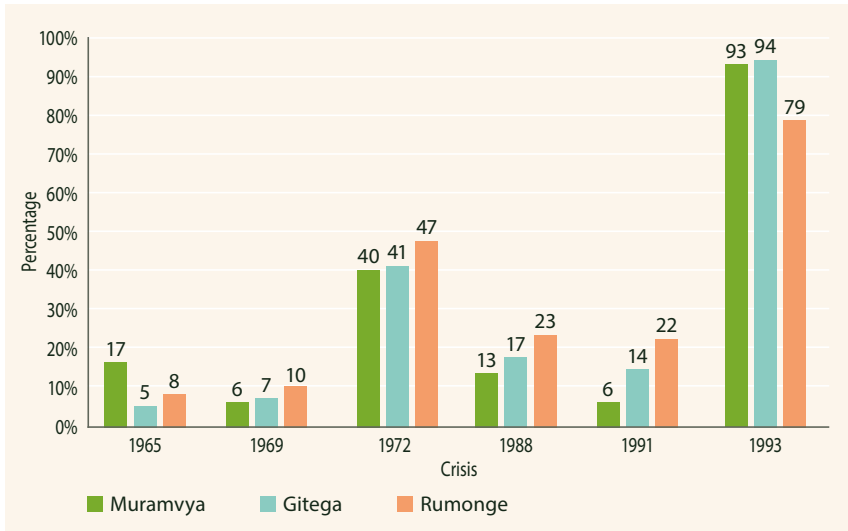
The degree of knowledge on the 1972 killings seems lower than what one would expect given the magnitude of the violence that took place. There is no clear explanation for this but it may be due to the imposed silence and the massive elimination of intellectuals who could have recorded what happened. Also, it seems that the generation of those who witnessed or were affected by what happened in 1972 is slowly disappearing. In sum, the memory of these two events is still widespread among Burundians and occasionally influences political speeches, positionings and even decisions.



The degree of knowledge on the 1972 killings seems lower than what one would expect given the magnitude of the violence that took place.

The other cases of violent events were limited both in scope and geographically, as some regions were more affected than others. This may explain why some respondents knew about them while others did not. In Gitega, for instance, 17% of respondents confirmed that they had heard about the crisis that occurred in 1988, while in Rumonge the figure stood at 23% and in Muramvya at 13%. The relatively low percentage of respondents with knowledge about this particular crisis is explained by the fact that it was localised in the Ntega and Marangara communes in the north of Burundi. Although extremely violent, it did not spread to other regions of the country. Other crises that affected Burundi and led to the loss of many lives included those that occurred in 1965, 1969 and 1991 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Crisis that affected respondents the most, by province



8.3. Principal sources of information on past crises and related violations

The data show that there are three main sources of information on past violence: what parents have told their children about the violence (22–26% of respondents); stories told by friends, or from books, newspapers, teachers or other sources (7–9%); and, the main source, what respondents experienced as direct witnesses (65–67%). Of the latter, some are survivors while others lost one or many family members and friends during the crisis in question. The place occupied by parents as sources of information on the past for their

children shows the degree of memory transmission from one generation to another. This may explain why the cycle of violence is not easy to stop. If parents still carry wounded memories, then they are likely to transmit a message that risks rekindling hatred and reinforcing cleavages. This highlights the necessity of working on memory healing in Burundian society.

8.4. Victims of past crises and endemic violence

Seven out of every ten (70%) respondents said that they were directly affected by the violence, especially during the widespread atrocities in 1993. The direct effects of violence include the loss of family members, being a victim or losing a very close friend. Several respondents reported that they lost at least one member of their family during the violence.

Respondents remembered the following victims (people who perished during the violence, especially in 1993), disaggregated by type of occupation:


- 845 peasants involved in subsistence agriculture;
- 152 secondary school pupils and 51 from primary schools;
- 134 small business people;
- 85 civil servants;
- 67 self-employed people doing various small-scale jobs;
- 46 members of the armed and security forces; and
- 10 administration employees.

These figures show that there were losses of loved ones on all sides, reminding us that no one can claim a monopoly on victimhood. All families were affected and the entire social fabric has been torn apart. However, the 30% of respondents claiming not to be directly affected by the violent crises do not view themselves as victims.


8.5. Perpetrators of violence

The question regarding the identity of perpetrators is very sensitive. Our approach to this issue was cautious as some of the people suspected of committing violent acts such as killings, looting or destruction of property may still be alive. There were cases where respondents were afraid to discuss the questions related to perpetrators because, according to them, some perpetrators are in powerful positions or are covered by some sort of immunity. Thus, we avoided finger pointing and revealing the names of alleged perpetrators. The investigation of perpetrators is part of the work of the TRC.

The data show that a variety of actors committed violence, although the primary perpetrator of atrocities was identified by respondents as the former Burundi Armed Forces (*Forces Armees Burundaises*, or FAB) (Figure 3). The FAB was composed of three entities – the army, the gendarmerie and the municipal police – and dominated by the Batutsi ethnic group. The second most identified perpetrators were neighbours who attacked other members of the community. It has been documented (Uvin 2009; Vandeginste 2009a) that in areas where the Bahutu population dominated, they attacked and killed Batutsi, sometimes wiping out entire families. In areas where Batutsi dominated or had the support of the army, they killed Bahutu and looted and destroyed their properties. Other perpetrators included several armed groups that were operating in the country during the civil war and criminals or militias/paramilitaries that operated in tandem with, or fought against, the

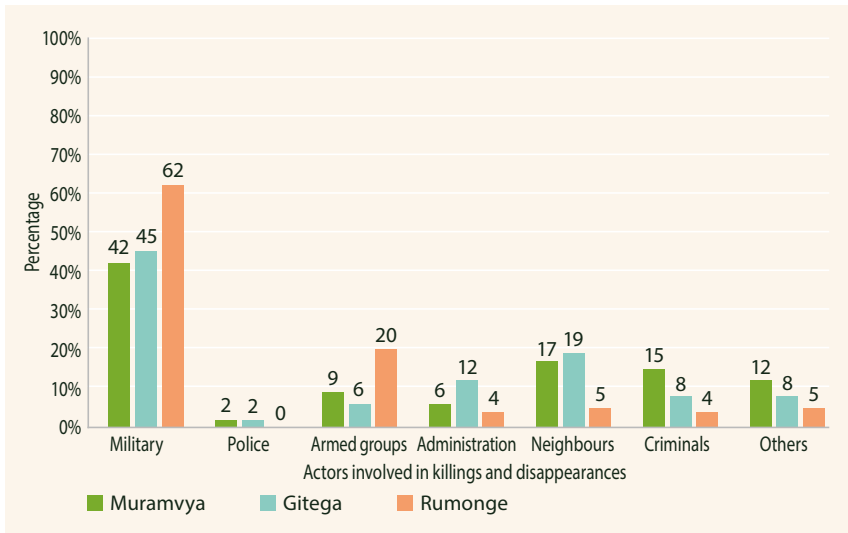


The data show that a variety of actors committed violence, although the primary perpetrator of atrocities was identified by respondents as the former Burundi Armed Forces.



armed forces. Some of these groups became very strong and formed the core of the Burundi rebel movement. They were mostly pro-Bahutu organisations. Those that operated as militias working hand in hand with the army were largely dominated by the Batutsi ethnic group. The most infamous were the *Sans Echec* and the *Sans Defaite*. Some members of the local administration also played a role in killing or denouncing people to be eliminated in what can be described today as extrajudicial killings. It is possible that there were other unspecified categories of people involved in perpetrating violence but those mentioned here were the most cited by respondents. The magnitude of violence and the degree of involvement varied depending on the region affected, the willingness of people to sacrifice themselves in order to preserve peace in their communities and the decisions made by influential and authoritative figures.

Figure 3: Perpetrators of violence




8.6. Burying the victims of violence and atrocities


Between 70% and 81% of family members were not able to bury their loved ones (Figure 4). In Gitega, 79% of those who lost members of their families or friends were unable to offer them a dignified burial; the figures were 70% for Muramvya and 81% for Rumonge. Unlike witnesses of the 1972 Bahutu genocide, however, these respondents know with certainty that the victims they are referring to have died.

In terms of the 1972 genocide, respondents stated that most people were taken to the provincial or communal office, where they were killed, although no one knows exactly what happened to them. When they were taken from their families by the police, the military or the JRR militia (the youth of the UPRONA party), the families were told that they were going for questioning and would return as soon as the investigation was over. However, most people arrested for questioning never returned home. Although these occurrences are considered forced disappearances, many families of the victims have no or little doubt that their loved ones were massacred soon after the arrest.

Many of the victims of the 1972 Bahutu genocide were accused of supporting or being part of a group that attempted to overthrow the Michel Micombero government on 29 April 1972. They were called *Abamenja* (people who dared to kill a ruler) and reportedly collaborated with a Congolese rebel group called *Mai-Mulele* (Chrétien & Dupaquier 2007). It is believed that most people who were killed in 1972 were buried in mass graves, such as the one discovered in 2017 in Mwaro province on an old tea plantation (Ndabashinze 2017). Many mass graves are thought to be in the vicinity of provincial or district offices or near military installations, such as military barracks and locations where military posts were established during the civil war. The members of armed forces involved in the killings hoped that mass graves hidden in those government-controlled places would not be discovered. Some mass graves have been hidden under government infrastructures such as the airport and government offices or other similar institutions. There are thus a lot of mass graves in different parts of Burundi.



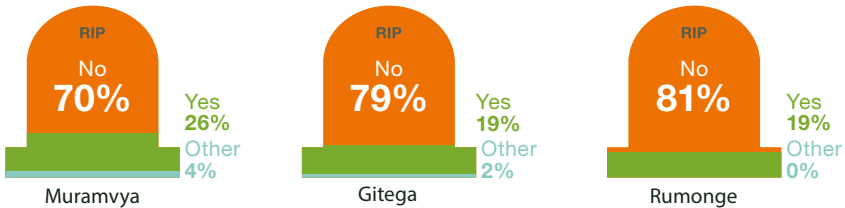
*Our research shows that, on average,
only 21% of victims were reported to have
been buried in a dignified way.*



Our research shows that, on average, only 21% of victims (largely of the 1993–2008 crisis) were reported to have been buried in a dignified way. Others were either not buried at all or were not buried in a dignified manner. Respondents shared many heart-wrenching stories, such as that of one man who saw the body of his wife being eaten by dogs. When she was killed, he was in a hideout as men were the prime target of the army. A small number (2%) of respondents did not know what happened to family members who disappeared after the 1993 violence. There is a high probability that they were killed during the mass violence.

Various reasons account for why a considerable number of victims were not buried by their families or friends: fear for their lives; perpetrators had buried victims in mass graves in an attempt to hide the crime; and the disappearance of some victims.

Figure 4: Percentage of people who managed to bury their loved ones



8.7. Burial location of victims of killings

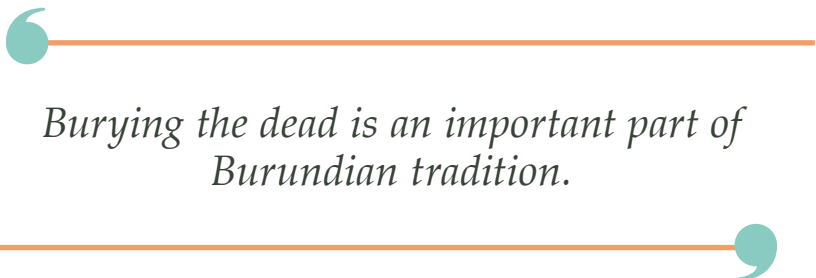
In Rumonge and Gitega, 68% and 58% of respondents, respectively, did not know where victims (including their loved ones) were buried (Figure 5). In Muramvya, the figure was lower, with 34% of respondents having no idea as to the whereabouts of victims. Thirty-two percent of respondents in both Rumonge and Gitega and 56% in Muramvya knew where victims were buried. Up to 10% of respondents were not able to answer this question either positively or negatively.

The killings generally took place while people were fleeing for their lives and dispersed in all directions. They would notice that some people were missing only after the massacre had ended, while they themselves were in hiding. In efforts to hide these crimes against humanity, the armed forces, supported by the militia, buried victims in mass graves. This explains why so many people still have no idea about the location of victims or about

places where their loved ones were buried. When the armed forces or armed groups attacked a location, the first reaction of the population was to run away. Those who were lucky managed to escape before the arrival of the killing squads. Unlike the FAB, however, armed groups tended not to hide the bodies of people they had killed, instead leaving them as a warning, a form of terror, or simply as punishment or revenge.

Nevertheless, the data show that the majority of victims ended up in mass graves. According to the 2018 Burundi TRC report (Commission Verité et Reconciliation 2018), around 4 000 mass graves have been discovered to date across the country. During our research in Gitega, we identified cases of people buried in 126 mass graves in this province alone, as well as 50 cases of people thrown into various rivers, such as the Ruvyironza, the Ruvubu and the Kaniga, and 103 cases of people buried in a cemetery. People have been buried in another 160 locations, including on farms and roadsides, under toilets, in home compounds, inside the houses of victims, under trees, in mining holes, churches and their surroundings, as well as schools or areas around them.

In contrast to Gitega and Rumonge, in Muramvya a relatively high percentage of people know where their loved ones have been buried. The explanation is that in this province the violence did not last for a long time, despite its brutality in the first days after the assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye, who was a native of Muramvya. Pio Ndadaye, his father, allegedly played a crucial role in preventing a bloodbath in this province and in restoring peace. Today, both men are counted among the Pillars of Ubuntu – a group of men and women who saved lives and protected their communities during the civil war’s bloody confrontations between the Bahutu and Batutsi (Batungwanayo 2018; Ntahe 2018).



*Burying the dead is an important part of
Burundian tradition.*

Figure 5: Percentage of people who know where victims are buried



8.8. Other people who were killed

Just over 63% of respondents affirmed knowing other people (apart from family members) who were murdered during the crisis-linked violence. About 29% did not know any other victims of the atrocities and 8% had no particular information to share on this issue. These killings of random citizens occurred mainly in rural areas during the first two days following the news of the assassination of the president. On the one hand, killings were perpetrated by the civilian population, mainly Bahutu peasants against their Batutsi neighbours. The province of Gitega seems to have suffered a lot from these kinds of killings. On the other hand, the armed forces perpetrated massacres as a form of retaliation against the Bahutu population. In both cases, the killings were massive and indiscriminate. There are also controversial reports on the possibility of organised massacres led by the local leaders of Frodebu in 1993, described by some as a planned genocide against the Batutsi. There is still not enough evidence to confirm an initial plan to eliminate the Batutsi. The extreme violence seems to have been spontaneous, triggered by popular anger, despair and loss of hope following the assassination of Ndadaye (Uvin 2009).

8.9. Burying neighbours

Burying the dead is an important part of Burundian tradition. It is the simplest way of paying tribute to the deceased and showing respect to the life lost. However, during the extreme violence that took place in 1993, it was nearly impossible to bury the numerous dead bodies scattered across the attacked villages.

The data collected in Gitega show that 80% of respondents did not bury their neighbours who were killed during the violence that erupted after the assassination of the president and during the ensuing civil war. In Muramvya and Rumonge, 70% and 81% of respondents, respectively, did not manage to bury their neighbours. Only 26% of respondents in Muramvya, 15% in Gitega and 19% in Rumonge helped to bury neighbours. Several respondents were not able to give an appropriate answer to the question around burying neighbours killed during the crisis: 5% in Gitega, 4% in Muramvya and 0% in Rumonge. Roughly 42% of respondents knew or had some information on where their neighbours were buried compared to 52% who did not know the location of the cemetery or mass grave or any other place where their neighbours were buried. The remaining 6% were unable to give an appropriate answer

8.10. People who saved others from violence

The violent context caused a deep sense of hatred and mistrust between the two main social groups, the Bahutu and Batutsi. After the assassination of President Ndadaye in a bloody military coup and the killings that followed, it became extremely difficult to maintain relationships between people or families from different social groups. Any attempt to protect a neighbour from another social group was thus essentially perceived as a betrayal in the eyes of your kin group and could easily lead to a death sentence.

Despite the high risks and against all odds, there are heroes who braved the threat and did the right thing by hiding and protecting their neighbours until the situation cooled down (Ntahe 2018). For example, Kana Mathias, a



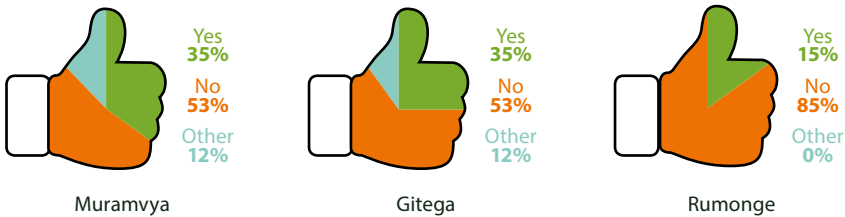
The violent context caused a deep sense of hatred and mistrust between the two main social groups, the Bahutu and Batutsi.



Mututsi from Nyabihanga, saved many Bahutu during the 1972 genocide. Among those saved was Pie Ndadaye who, as noted, protected many Batutsi after the assassination of President Ndadaye, including Mathias.

Indeed, 35% of respondents in Muramvya indicated that they knew at least one person who did the right thing by protecting their neighbour or hiding someone from the death squads that roamed the hills, whether they were security and military forces, armed groups or other criminals. In Gitega and Rumonge, the number of respondents who knew about people who saved other was slightly lower, at 25% and 15% respectively. These heroic acts occurred during the crisis and were in many cases related to the killings that took place in 1993 and after, as the civil war intensified. However, 53% of respondents in Muramvya, 65% in Gitega and 85% in Rumonge indicated that they did not know about people who managed to save and protect others during the crisis; the remainder, 12% in Muramvya and 10% in Gitega, were unable to respond (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Knowledge of people who saved others during violent periods



8.11. The most violent crisis and its consequences

The data show that 79% of respondents in Gitega and 86% in Muramvya considered the 1993 crisis to be the most brutal and violent crisis Burundi has ever known, whereas 8% and 3% of respondents in the respective provinces considered the 1972 crisis to be the most violent. In Rumonge, the trend was slightly different, but the 1993 crisis was still considered the most violent, with 61% of respondents confirming such a position. At the same time, 12% of respondents in Rumonge considered the 1972 crisis to be the most violent. Rumonge and Nyanza-Lac were the most affected communes during this crisis. The higher percentage of respondents considering 1972 the most violent crisis in this particular region is motivated by the degree of violence they witnessed.

Other crises had less impact as they affected only certain areas and not others – for example, the Ntega and Marangara massacres which affected mainly two communes in the north of Burundi. However, a considerable percentage of respondents differentiated between the first wave of the 1993 violence (military coup, popular massacres, retaliation by the army) and the years of the civil war that followed that wave. In this respect, 23% in Rumonge, 13% in Gitega and 11% in Muramvya highlighted the significance of the civil war as a form of violence and its devastating effects on the population. In Rumonge, 4% of respondents mentioned another violent crisis that was not widespread – that which occurred in 1991 between the Palipehutu movement and the regime of Buyoya. This crisis was limited in scope and affected only a few provinces, such as Cibitoke, Bubanza, Rumonge and Bujumbura. The rest of the country was not affected apart from some individual cases of incarceration or disappearance.

The 1972 crisis is commonly known as the “Genocide against the Bahutu” because most people who died were Bahutu intellectuals and others with a relatively important position within their communities. As noted, people who were targeted included politicians, officers within the security apparatus (military and police or gendarmerie), businessmen, religious and opinion leaders, teachers, students and secondary school pupils. Also, the 1972 killings took place under the guise of getting rid of *Abamenja*. Many people who thought they had no involvement in such political affairs, and thus no need for concern, were taken to jail and executed. During the same period, it is reported that around 5 000 Tutsis living in the southern communes of Rumonge and Nyanza-Lac were massacred by an armed group of Hutus (Chrétien & Dupaquier 2007). These killings have not been well documented and there are still doubts as to who masterminded them. Like the genocide committed against the Bahutu, these crimes have been obscured by years of silence. However, compared to 1972, the magnitude of the 1993 violence was much bigger and was the most devastating.

Interethnic killings erupted in a number of provinces and communes in 1993, after the announcement that the president had been assassinated and calls by Dr Jean Minani (then health minister in Ndadaye’s cabinet) for the population to stay alert. In some Bahutu-dominated communities, entire families of Batutsi were massacred, mutilated, orphaned or their properties destroyed. The electoral campaign had awakened ethnic demons and hate speech had played a negative role in reviving the collective memory and the wounds linked to the 1972 Bahutu genocide. At the announcement of the death of Ndadaye, some Batutsi made fun of the Bahutu and seemed to

rejoice at the turn of events. This attitude fuelled anger among the already frustrated and hopeless Bahutu. In that volatile climate of fear and anger, violence and massacres erupted in some parts of the country. The killings were an extremely violent expression of the anger and frustration felt by the population but were also a preventive action by some community leaders, who were trying to respond to a security and survival dilemma. In places where the Batutsi represented the majority population or had the support of the army, they massacred Bahutu, looted and torched properties and sent many other people into exile or into hiding in bushes and forests.

A UN commission of inquiry was established in 1994/1995 to discover the truth, and concluded that a genocide against the Batutsi had occurred in 1993. Nonetheless, it is believed that the death toll among the Bahutu was much higher than among the Batutsi because, at the time of the commission, many Bahutu were in hiding and their stories were therefore not taken into account. In fact, the commission of inquiry explained in its report that it did not manage to reach the areas where Bahutu were hiding in order to hear their stories. The number of Bahutu victims increases even more when one considers those who died in what were then known as *camps de regroupement* (Nazi-style camps installed by President Pierre Buyoya from 1996–1998 to control the infiltration of Bahutu rebel groups). Also, the UN commission's report is considered biased because its work suffered from interference from the ex-FAB and Buyoya's government.

“
Interethnic killings erupted in a number of provinces and communes in 1993, after the announcement that the president had been assassinated.
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The main consequences of these crises for Burundian society were an increase in ethnic divisions and hatred, the widespread killings that gripped the country for decades and prevented any sound development from taking place, as well as large numbers of refugees and IDPs. The precarious political context has led to multiple problems of bad governance, corruption and brain drain. This has had a serious and negative impact on the stability, cohesion and development of the country. With regard to the political context, the cycle of violent crises destroyed the foundation of state institutions and threatened to transform Burundi into a failed state. This is what prompted regional actors (Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya) and the international community to earnestly search for a solution to the Burundi conflict. In August 2000, an agreement between the warring parties in Burundi was signed followed by the elaboration of a new constitution and the preparation of a new round of elections. The new constitution allowed the resolution of ethnic cleavages through the introduction of power-sharing arrangements. These include, for instance, the allocation of 60% of government posts and parliamentary seats to Bahutu and 40% to Batutsi, as well as a 50/50 share in the Senate and the defence and security forces (Vandeginste 2009b). However, even now, the existing state institutions are still weak. The foundation they are built on is not sufficiently strong as the cycle of violence did not allow it to consolidate (see Cheeseman et al. 2018).



Even now, the existing state institutions are still weak. The foundation they are built on is not sufficiently strong as the cycle of violence did not allow it to consolidate.



Consequences of past violence on Burundian society

The many violent crises that occurred in Burundi have had a multitude of consequences for the country's social fabric and its cultural values, and have shaken its foundations to the core. Burundi as a nation and as a society has been traumatised for a very long time. Today, this unhealthy society needs to go through a healing process.

Respondents identified the following consequences emerging from political instability, civil war and violence: endemic poverty, increased fear, interethnic hatred, and hardships linked to forced migrations or living in exile. Concerning the effects of violence on children, they mentioned increased school dropout rates as a major problem, with huge consequences for the literacy rate in the country. As a result of war, violence and the exclusive policies of former military juntas dominated by the minority Batutsi, education and literacy have remained very low in Burundi, especially in rural areas where most of the population lives (Burundi is one of the less urbanised countries in Africa). However, since the end of the war there has been a significant improvement and notable progress in rendering education accessible to all Burundian children, thanks to the policy of slashing school fees for government-controlled primary schools. A recent World Bank (2018: para. 55) report on Burundi shows that "net primary school enrolment has grown in a sustained way, rising from 72 percent in 2006 to about 94 percent in 2015". This is one of the best indicators in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite the positive development in recent years, the general literacy rate is still relatively low at 58% of the total population. Such a low level of literacy has a negative impact on development.

The World Bank (2018) report on Burundi highlights the implications of violence on the overall living standards in the country. The report shows that

the Burundi population spent 11 of the years from 1971 to 2015 fleeing political instability and violence. This has significantly constrained the economy and prevented development. Alone, the civil war that erupted in 1993 displaced 1.2 million people. “It destroyed the capital, repressed investments and damaged the capacity of the public sector to provide basic health, education, water, electricity services” (World Bank 2018: viii). Between 1993 and 1999, the public debt rose from 50.9% to 112% of the GDP. The report underlines that without the 1993 conflict, Burundi’s GDP per capita would have been double the level of USD 219 realised in 2010. This points to the link between political stability and economic recovery or growth. Persistent poverty, the lack of sustainable development and a stagnant economy are all well connected to the cycles of violence that engulfed Burundi for decades. Healing the society and stabilising the political and social situation will play a definitive role in reviving the economy and thus improving the living standards of the population.

Some of the consequences of the violent crises in Burundi seem to be without limits in terms of time and space and are always present in the wounded memory of many Burundians. These stem in particular from the 1972 Bahutu genocide. The importance of this critical event in the history of Burundi is linked to the fact that there has never been official recognition of what happened and no responsibility regarding perpetrators has ever been established. Additionally, the victims of the 1972 Bahutu genocide have been prevented from mourning their loved ones for almost half a century, a situation which undoubtedly perpetuates their pain and trauma. Besides the approximately 300 000 people who were massacred, the Bahutu population was destroyed intellectually. Limited access to the schooling system

“*Some of the consequences of the violent crises in Burundi seem to be without limits in terms of time and space.*”

reinforced the marginalisation of the Bahutu, who were sidelined from political, economic and social spheres. Those Bahutu who were able to carve a space for themselves in the social fabric were found in sports and in the arts, mainly in the music industry: Canjo Amissi, Antoine Rugerinyange (nicknamed Africa Nova) and David Nikiza are a few renowned artists who emerged as Bahutu art icons despite a very limited and strictly controlled space of action.

In the aftermath of the genocide, which targeted Bahutu intellectuals, among others, many Bahutu parents refused to send their children to school, fearing a repeat of the massacres. Another consequence of the violence and killings was the uprooting of a part of the population. The killings and the looting of businesses and properties also had an undeniably negative impact on the economy. The political violence and war have played an important role in stemming economic growth, in the destruction of infrastructure and also in deterring investors from creating businesses that could eventually contribute to employment and poverty reduction. Despite its low intensity, the 2015 political crisis and connected violence provoked a 3.9% decline in GDP as economic activities dropped due to fear and uncertainty (World Bank 2018).

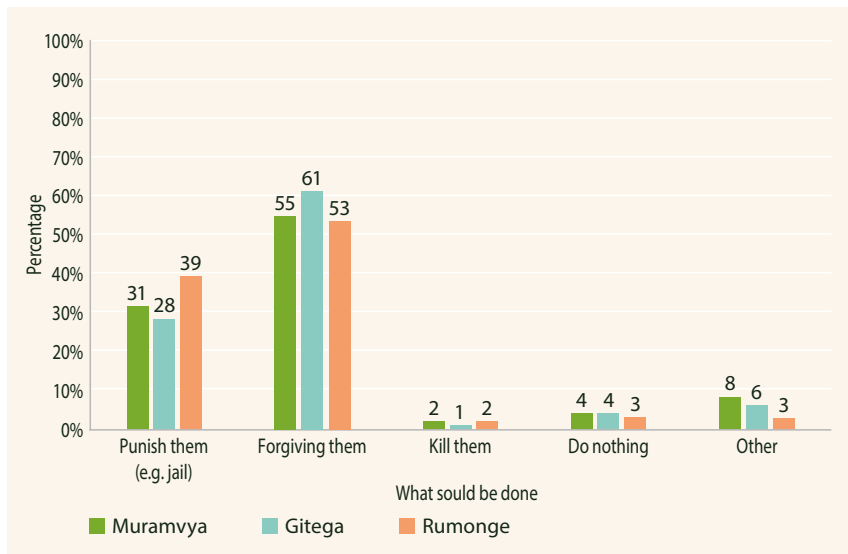
The violent crises have also widened ethnic cleavages and other forms of division. What started in 1965 as a political conflict among the elite filtered down through political manipulation and reached the masses. The consequences have been dramatic and today Burundi is still struggling to count its dead and deal with the perpetrators of violence. Apart from keeping the nation in a state of uncertainty, the cycles of violence, divisions and exclusive policies have, as noted, had a negative impact on the development of a sustainable economy. This is one reason why Burundi has remained heavily dependent on international aid. This has in turn created an attitude of dependence, which inhibits creativity. In sum, the continuous violence has hindered economic production, thus increasing poverty in Burundi. Violence and a traumatic past affect creativity and self-esteem, so playing a role in maintaining poverty.

Other consequences mentioned by respondents in all three provinces are bad governance and problems related to the rule of law. The local leadership and administration seem to have grown accustomed to the precarity of war and tend not to be accountable. They work in “emergency” mode, only solving day-to-day issues, with no long-term projects aimed at boosting development. Respondents also mentioned the recurrent problem of refugees as yet another serious consequence directly linked to the violence.

Addressing past crimes

Respondents were asked how crimes committed during the periods of violence should be addressed and how perpetrators of crimes and initiators of violence should be handled in a context of transitional justice. The answers varied slightly, depending on the location or the province where people lived during the crisis and what they experienced. Figure 7 shows their opinions vis-à-vis what should be done to perpetrators of violence.

Figure 7: Perceptions of what should be done to perpetrators of violence



Surprisingly, the dominant answer regarding how to deal with perpetrators was forgiveness. The research team did not go deeper to understand the motives behind this answer. However, respondents who insisted on

forgiveness offered the following explanation: they thought that punishments could revive the cycle of violence as children of perpetrators would seek to revenge their parents. However, forgiveness should not be considered a free pass for perpetrators – it is conditional on perpetrators telling the truth about what they did and asking for forgiveness.

Concerning possible punishment, a fairly considerable number of respondents strongly believed that punishing perpetrators was the route to follow. In their opinion, addressing impunity should be a guiding principle in dealing with people who were involved in committing atrocities. Therefore, they perceived punishment as the best solution to prevent violence in the future. A small number felt that the punishment should be equal to what the perpetrators had done, and that they should be hanged or executed, despite this not being possible in Burundian law.

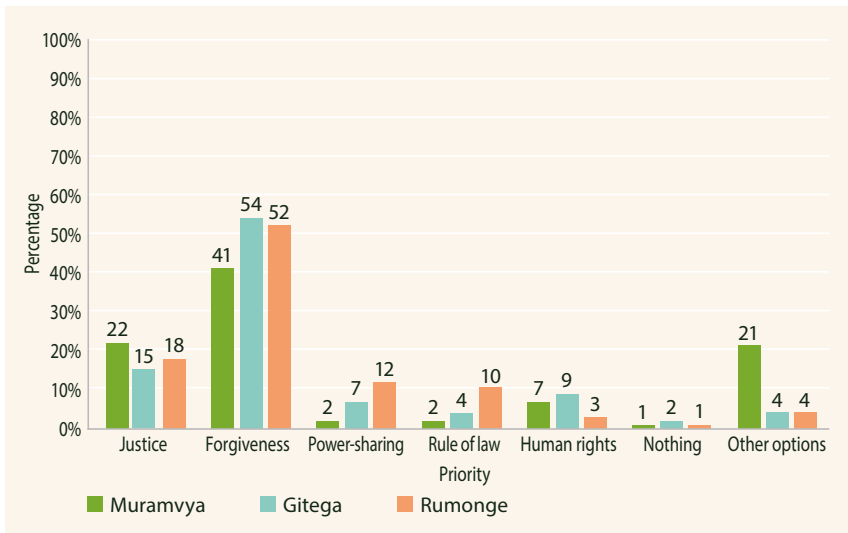
Reconciling Burundians as a nation and a society

As discussed, the cycles of violence destroyed the social fabric throughout Burundi. The need to reconcile and to heal the wounded memories remains very important for many victims of violence. However, some believe that revisiting the past is like “digging up what is rotten”, preferring to leave the past untouched. However, for a country that endured half a century of violence, such a standpoint cannot work for everyone. During the research, we tried to understand what could be done for the healing process to take place. Respondents offered a variety of answers, some unexpected but most of which appeared to be influenced by the level of trauma a respondent had endured.

Some believe that revisiting the past is like “digging up what is rotten”, preferring to leave the past untouched.

In response to the question of what should be considered a priority in the process of reconciling Burundians, many respondents in all three provinces insisted on forgiveness as a way of consolidating reconciliation (Figure 8). Once a perpetrator has admitted his crimes, he should be granted forgiveness. However, that forgiveness cannot be given to a person who refuses to confess and accept responsibility for his violent acts. In many cases, respondents also pointed out their urgent need to know the truth about the fate of their loved ones.

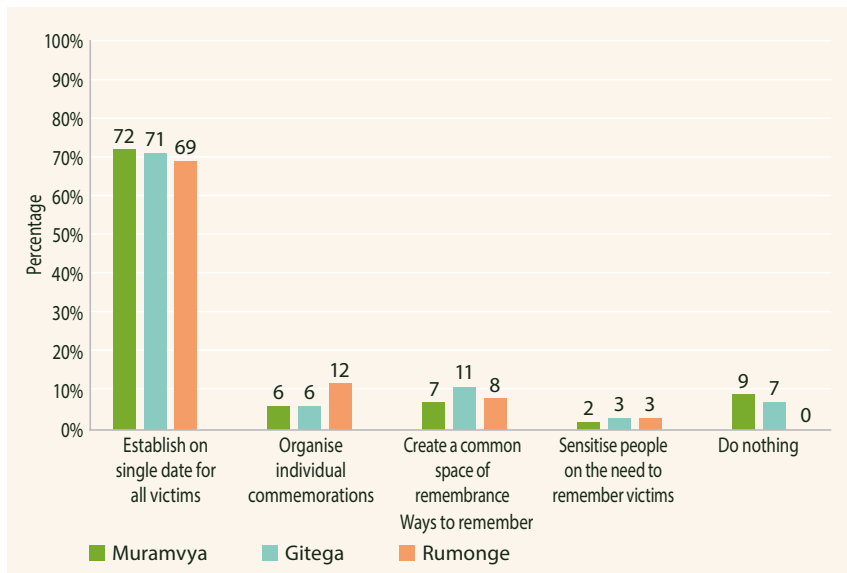
Figure 8: Perceptions of priorities in reconciling Burundians



Commemorations and remembrance of the victims of violence

In order to commemorate the fate of victims of violence in Burundi, many respondents (between 69% and 72%) suggested establishing a single date of remembrance for all victims (Figure 9). Many families or social groups in Burundi organise their own private commemorative ceremonies, which may in some instances appear exclusive. Having one common date of remembrance was considered by respondents as a way to bring people together and promote inclusiveness in the process of reconciliation.

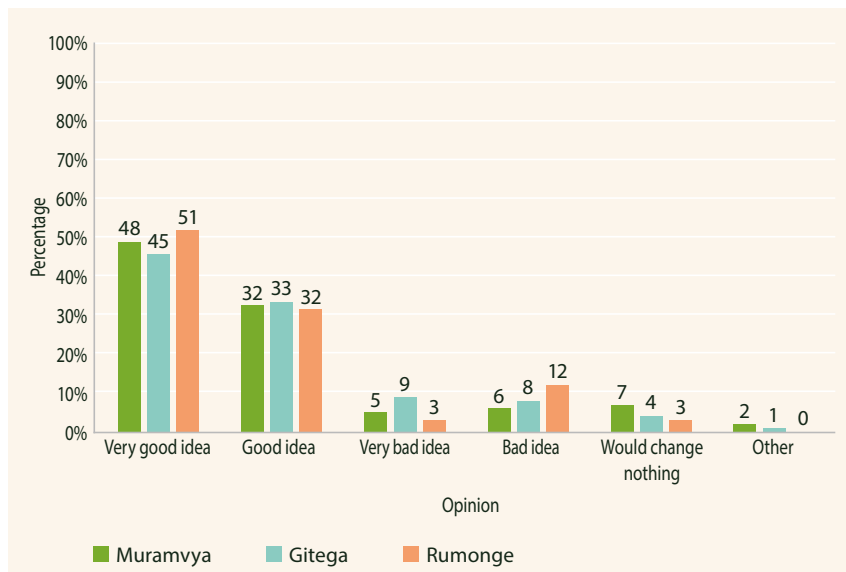
Figure 9: Ways to remember the victims of violence



Constructing a single memorial for all victims

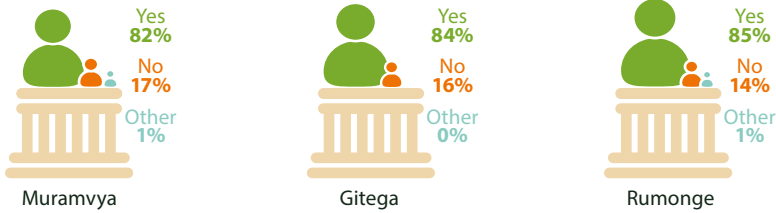
The idea of building one memorial for all victims received very positive feedback from respondents, most of whom said it was either a “very good” (45–51%) or a “good” (31–33%) idea (Figure 10). It is believed that such a monument will help pay tribute to and honour the many victims of violence in Burundi.

Figure 10: Perceptions on the building of a single memorial for all victims



The data showed that there is overwhelming support (above 80%) in all three provinces for building a single memorial for all victims of past violence; no more than 17% in each province disagreed (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Support for building a single memorial for all victims



Conclusions

This research project on perceptions of past violence, memory and perspectives of reconciliation demonstrated that a lot of Burundians have been affected by the violence resulting from the different conflicts. A majority remembers the violence experienced, in particular in 1993 after the assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye and the interethnic massacres that followed his death.

Memories about the past were transmitted in three main ways: many people witnessed the atrocities personally; for others, the information about what happened was transmitted by parents; and for the rest, the knowledge of what took place came from friends. Reading about past violence in books and newspapers or learning about it through teachers at schools were not common sources of information.

The data show that the former Burundian armed forces, dominated by Batutsi, were perceived as the primary perpetrators of violence, followed by people who took an active part in violent acts against their neighbours, and then criminal and armed groups, respectively. The ranking of armed groups in fourth place may surprise some analysts of the dynamics of violence. However, in the case of Burundi's rebel movement, the armed groups emerged from the local population. They consisted of sons and daughters, uncles, fathers, mothers and other relatives from the same villages, communes or provinces. Their prime target was not the population but the government forces. In fact, there are instances where the members of armed movements lived with the population, as in Bujumbura province (commonly known as Bujumbura rural). In such cases, the population provided food and shelter to the members of the armed movement and, in return, the armed movement protected them against attacks by the regular army.

The degree of involvement in attacks on neighbours varied depending on the region. For example, the percentage of people who killed neighbours in Gitega and Muramvya is much higher than in Rumonge. There was no direct explanation for this variation, but it is commonly believed that Rumonge's brutal history might have played an important role in stemming the possibilities for violence to erupt. The memory of the trauma endured in the past was a strong deterrent and prevented people from getting involved in violence in 1993. Indeed, in April 1972, Rumonge was the eye of the cyclone that fell on Burundi and was located at the epicentre of the unbelievable violence that led to the Bahutu genocide and the massacres of Tutsis in the southern regions. The memory of military retaliation and brutality may have prevented people from attacking their neighbours, as was the case in Muramvya and Gitega.

The findings show that past violence has had devastating consequences on Burundi as a nation. The years of civil war brought the country's economy to its knees as people fled the country for refugee camps in neighbouring countries. This also contributed to the brain drain, which represents another serious blow to the economy and development. In order to heal the nation, a reconciliation process needs to take place, one that insists on the role of forgiveness for perpetrators who confess and as an incentive to reuniting communities in conflict. To cement reconciliation, Burundians will need to sit together in a national commemoration for all victims of violence. Bringing all people together can be the first step towards genuine reconciliation.

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Interview

Telephonic interview with Jimmy Vyizigiro, historian and political analyst, Radio Labenevolencia Great Lakes, Bujumbura, 20 January 2019.

Partners in this research project

This report is part of the Burundi Memory Project and is a result of the collaboration between the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) based in Cape Town, South Africa, and the Institute for Scientific Research for Development (IRSD) based in Bujumbura, Burundi. Robert Bosch Stiftung (Berlin, Germany) financially supported the project.

About the IJR

The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (www.ijr.org.za) was launched in 2000 by officials who worked in the South African TRC and was awarded the 2008 UNESCO prize for peace education. The organisation works to stabilise postconflict societies by promoting a culture of peace, justice, reconciliation through research and analysis, sustained interventions, capacity development and education. It provides platforms for forging consensus on interventions including mediation and reconciliation. The IJR has been called on in various contexts to help inform national policy towards postconflict reconstruction in southern Africa. It also engages at the policy level with continental organisations such as the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), as well as international organisations such as the UN and the International Criminal Court. Specifically, briefings have targeted and included various regional bodies, such as the SADC Secretariat, departments of the AU, including the peace and security, political affairs, and legal departments, as well as the AU Panel of the Wise. The IJR has therefore established a niche for itself as a trusted advisor and source of information and knowledge to continental leaders on regional policies of conflict prevention, peacebuilding, reconciliation and reconstruction.

About the IRSD

The IRSD is both a research centre and a think tank that strives to promote knowledge generation and sharing around important sociopolitical challenges facing African societies. Its sphere of interest includes Burundi in particular, and the Great Lakes region and the African continent in general. The IRSD works under Burundian law and is hosted by Hope Africa University, a leading higher education centre in Bujumbura-Burundi. The IRSD works with partners from inside and outside the country on various projects related to dealing with the past and a transitional justice context, promoting youth inclusion in development processes and building capacities of local actors in peacebuilding and postconflict programming. The IRSD pays particular attention to the inclusion of youth in all its activities. It also collaborates with various international organisations and institutions, which allows it to access high-quality expertise in research, analysis and advocacy. International partners include the University of Lausanne in Switzerland and the IJR.

About Robert Bosch Stiftung

Robert Bosch Stiftung, based in Europe, is a non-partisan foundation associated with a private company. The foundation's work has followed the legacy of Robert Bosch for over 50 years, continuing his commitment to social and societal causes. It focuses mainly on issues related to health, science, society, education and international relations.

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ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) was launched in 2000 by officials who worked in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, with the aim of ensuring that lessons learnt from South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy are taken into account and utilised in advancing the interests of national reconciliation across Africa. The IJR works with partner organisations across Africa to promote reconciliation and socio-economic justice in countries emerging from conflict or undergoing democratic transition. The IJR is based in Cape Town, South Africa. For more information, visit <http://www.ijr.org.za>, and for comments or enquiries contact info@ijr.org.za.



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