



Twuzuzanye

Let's Build Each Other, Together

FINAL REPORT

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Project Information

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Acronyms

ACP	African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States
ADDF	Association for the Defence of Women's Rights
AFAPD	Association of Women Actors of Peace and Dialogue
AFRABU	Association of Repatriated Women of Burundi
AGB	Association of Guides of Burundi
APFB	Association for the Promotion of the Burundian Girl
APPM	Armed Political Parties and Movements
AST	Health for All Action
CFP	Communal Focal Point
CPAJS	Advisor in charge of Political, Administrative, Legal and Social Affairs
CNDD-FDD	National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy
CNL	National Congress for Freedom
CSOs	Civil society organisations
DDRR	Disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration
DH	Dushirehamwe
EAC	East African Community
EU	European Union
FAB	Burundian Armed Forces
FDN	National Defence Forces
FNL	National Liberation Force
FRAD	Reserve and Development Support Force
IW	Impunity Watch
JAPP	Youth affiliated to political parties
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
PFP	Provincial Focal Point
SPDH	Solidarity for the promotion of human rights
TJ	Transitional Justice
ToC	Theory of Change
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN	United Nations
UPD	Union for Peace and Democracy
UPRONA	Unity for National Progress



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1. Introduction

The present document is the Final Report of the *Twuzuzanye* project (Let's Build Each Other, Together) financed by the Belgian Development Cooperation.

Twuzuzanye was implemented from 1 January 2022 to 30 April 2024 by a consortium led by **Impunity Watch** with partners, **Association Dushirehamwe, SPDH**, and **YAGA**. Originally set for 12 months, a four-month no-cost extension was granted by the donor in December 2023.

The project was implemented in **four provinces**: Bujumbura Rural, Cibitoke, Makamba, Muyinga. In each province, the intervention strategy was executed in 16 communes, with a total of **48 collines** reached via project activities. The main intended participants (beneficiaries) in the project were women and girls, young people, youth affiliated with political parties, and ex-combatants. The project was also implemented in virtual spaces, seeking attitude shifts and changes in virtual civic space through a strategy producing online content chiefly targeting young Burundians.

Twuzuzanye's objective was to **Promote positive masculinities and women's political equality for sustainable peace**. Three specific objectives were pursued:

- SO1: Women's increased participation in post-conflict reconstruction.
- SO2: Violent masculinities become less of a risk factor for violence.
- SO3: Positive masculinities are promoted.

The project sought to bring about change via **three principal intervention strategies**:

- (1) Promoting women's leadership and political participation in post-conflict reconstruction.
- (2) Building awareness and resilience among youth to counteract manipulation and militarisation.
- (3) Promoting positive masculinities and gender equality.

This Final Report examines *Twuzuzanye* by analysing whether the ToC and its underlying assumptions held true in practice, evaluating the relevance of the intervention strategies, presenting the project's impact, and concluding with a number of lessons learned and recommendations for future programming.

The data and evidence used to develop this report was a mix of external information gathered during the final evaluation and through an audio-visual research project, and internal information from a variety of sources gathered by Impunity Watch, Dushirehamwe, SPDH, and YAGA.

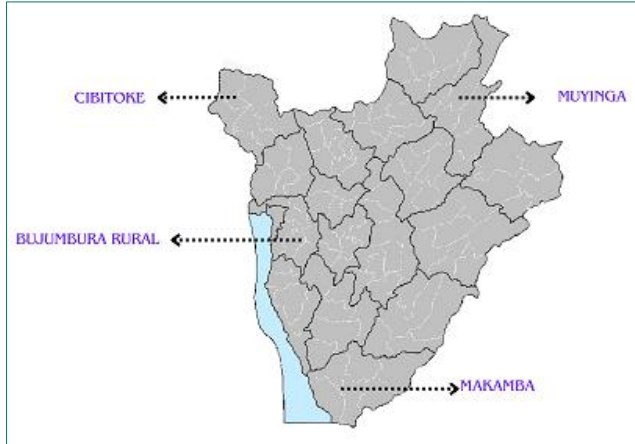
2. Context & Achievements

2.1. Political context

The implementation of the *Twuzuzanye* project took place in a political space marked by recurring challenges around human rights, democratic space, and good governance. The following provides a chronological overview from 2022 to 2024, highlighting key elements of the context in which project implementation took place.

2022: Post-pandemic context

Whereas 2022 began in promising circumstances thanks to the gradual exit from the COVID-19 crisis, the launch of *Twuzuzanye* took place in the context of fading hopes that had been aroused by the election of Évariste Ndayishimiye to the presidency in May 2020. This hope, particularly for a break in the cycle of human rights violations that had plagued Burundi, nevertheless led to gradual welcoming of Burundi back onto the international political stage following years in isolation after the 2015 crisis. The European Council lifted its Article 96 restrictions against directed support to the government, sanctions imposed on certain political actors were removed, and the authorities removed the ban prohibiting the BBC from broadcasting in Burundi.



In parallel, however, the monopoly on power exercised by the ruling CNDD-FDD was further entrenched, with its omnipresence demonstrated by the creation in April 2022 of a Reserve and Development Support Force (FRAD), which the opposition and civil society decried as the creation of a parallel army. Likewise, the *Imbonerakure* continued to intimidate opposition activists, restrict activities, and impose "security" across the country. This often made it challenging to identify young people for project activities, especially those affiliated with other political parties like the CNL, due to their fears of revealing their political affiliation. Likewise, in May 2022, three new commissioners were elected to the TRC, with criticism of the selection process as the commissioners are all affiliated with the ruling party. The TRC's work was also the subject of continued criticism, struggling to fulfil its mandate in a manner that demonstrated its impartiality and independence.

With a continued focus on fostering optimism, the President worked to enhance Burundi's reputation in the region following his election to the presidency of the East African Community (EAC). Domestically, in August 2024, the President announced the dismissal of corrupt magistrates accused of dishonouring the country's judicial system. Yet, despite promises of change, atrocities continued to punctuate the daily lives of Burundians. Civil society and the independent media struggled to exercise their mission freely, muzzled by a regime tolerating almost no dissenting voices or critique, thus reinforcing Burundi's restricted democratic space. Floriane IRANGABIYE, a Burundian journalist, has been wrongly imprisoned since 30 August 2022 for criticizing the government. She was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment and a fine of one million Burundian francs for "undermining the integrity of national territory".

In 2022, the country witnessed a significant political event in September. Gervais NDIRAKOBUCA replaced Alain-Guillaume BUNYONI as Prime Minister.

2023: Persistent human rights abuses & political instability

In early 2023, the government's strategy to rebuild the country's international reputation heralded a new chapter in relations between Burundi and Rwanda. After years of acrimony and the trading of allegations, the 20th extraordinary summit of East African Community heads of state saw President Kagame arrive in Burundi,

ending years of dispute. This thawing of relations proved to be short-lived. At the time of writing, relations have once again soured.

As in 2022, strategies aimed at reestablishing Burundi's international credibility contrasted to the strategies and practices implemented domestically. Throughout 2023, restrictions on political participation and freedom of expression continued, evidence by the suspension of activities of the country's principal opposition party, the CNL, in June 2023. Reports from human rights organisations and the UN's Special Rapporteur on Burundi documented cases of murder, enforced disappearances, and sexual violence, as well as the further tightening of civic space.

In a surprising move, the former Prime Minister was arrested in April 2023 and charged with terrorism offences. Seen by some as a purge of political opponents, he was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment in December. Once seen as one of the most powerful men in the country, the events marked a swift, remarkable fall from political grace.

Throughout 2023, the TRC continued its controversial work examining Burundi's past. Accusations that the Commission was attempting to re-write history were frequent, with the TRC presenting controversial and disputed historical accounts of the antecedents to the 1972 violence.

2024: Uncertain outlook and the need for inclusive dialogue

As *Twuzuzanye* entered its final phase in 2024, the political context was still marked by the persistence of human rights violations, restrictions on political space, and tensions between the government and the opposition. In the face of these challenges, the promotion of inclusive dialogue among all stakeholders is essential to find sustainable solutions to the Burundi's deep-rooted, structural problems. Strengthening the role of civil society is also crucial for supporting peace, justice, and development efforts.

This is particularly the case as the country heads towards elections in 2025 and 2027. Preparations for the elections – especially at the rhetorical level – have started in earnest, with fears that tensions are already mounting. Historically, election periods have brought violence, with communities reporting that the upcoming votes will revive past traumas, with hate speech and ethnic cleavages becoming more pronounced. *Twuzuzanye* has proven crucial to push back against these dynamics, building social cohesion. The successes of the project (detailed below) have been based on an ability to meet the challenges of the country's difficult political and social context. This is especially the case for women and girls, who continue to face challenges in accessing political space, but who have been supported to assert their place and exert their influence in traditionally male-dominated spaces.

Whereas the project was launched in a period of relative calm and optimism in 2022, it ends in the context of a political climate fraught with security concerns and with the looming elections set to pose a substantial challenge for security and for social cohesion. Throughout *Twuzuzanye*'s implementation in 2022, 2023, and 2024, the political context presented significant challenges. Yet, opportunities were created to promote positive change, including by encouraging inclusive dialogue, strengthening the role of civil society, and changing the mindsets of communities in the implementing provinces, as well as at the national level and in interactive, online spaces.

2.2. Twuzuzanye in numbers

Twuzuzanye: Innovation in the promotion of positive masculinities and women's leadership

The official start date for the *Twuzuzanye* project was January 2022. An implementation protocol was signed with the Ministry of National Solidarity, Social Affairs, Human Rights and Gender Equality, with the intervening period used to build capacities among project partners and key staff, develop project tools, and develop key methodologies. The project was officially launched in **August 2022**, with four provincial presentations organised to introduce the project to key local actors.



Twuzuzanye was innovative in its approach, using holistic, multidimensional strategies addressing the root causes of gender inequality and violence in Burundi at the individual and community levels. The project resulted in a **set of tools** to promote positive masculinities, consisting of a training manual, awareness-raising posters, and comic book – all of which are available in French and Kirundi, developed around the deconstruction of Burundian proverbs that are often used to reinforce traditional gender roles.

Increasing women's political participation

Twuzuzanye contributed to creating an enabling environment for women's effective participation in political decision-making and exercise their rights at the community level in particular, as well as the national level. This included raising women's awareness of their rights and capacities, trainings on the skills needed for political leadership, and addressing barriers hindering their participation, such as gender-based violence and discrimination, including among men.

- **68 women trained** out of an expected 48.
- **16 community forums** at the colline level among **620 women and girls**.
- **42 policy forums (32 communal, 8 provincial, 2 national)** bringing together local decision-makers and women leaders to discuss women's priorities around their political participation.

The two national forums were organised around the theme of women and the 2025 elections.

Strengthening civil society

The *Twuzuzanye* project strengthened the capacities of women community leaders and promoted women's political participation in Burundi through its CSO strategy. The strategy worked with community-based organisations as they are rooted in local dynamics and better understand their specific needs and challenges. In addition to capacity-building, *Twuzuzanye* supported **10** initiatives developed by the CSOs to tackle specific community challenges in their localities. Financial support to these micro-projects led to the following organisations being supported:

- Support to **3 CSOs from Muyinga**: ABATANGAMUCO, URISANZE, AMOJESII; **3 CSOs from Bujumbura Rural**: ADDF, AGB, AST; **2 CSOs from Cibitoke**: APFB and AFAPD; and **2 CSOs from Makamba**: ADDF and AFRABU.

The key achievements of these 10 organisations include the following:

- Capacity building of **230 local CSOs focal points: Abatangamuco (50), Afrabu (102), Afapd (12) and AGB (12), ADDF Makamba (54)**.
- **478 participants** in **29 trainings** among local administrators and leaders on women's participation in the community socio-political sphere.
- **4 radio programmes and 2 publicity spots** broadcast on two community radio stations to raise awareness of women's political participation.
- **24 posters** containing messages to raise awareness of women's participation in public life in Cibitoke.
- **16 awareness-raising actions** initiated.

Promotion of positive masculinities and dealing with the past

Twuzuzanye marked an important milestone in the fight against negative masculinities. For the first time, the theme of negative masculinities linked to the country's past was addressed in multiple settings.

- **12,367,348 online impressions** with the content reaching **10,588,424 people**.
- **10 CSOs** working in the four provinces trained to promote positive masculinities and TJ.
- **20 CSOs and 4 youth centres** receiving tools on the promotion of positive masculinities.
- **4 youth centres** trained on positive masculinities and transitional justice.

- **128 participants** in youth dialogues around positive masculinities.
- **120 young people** trained from **12 cultural clubs**.
- **24 artistic works**: songs, plays, and poems, by these cultural clubs
- **100 youth affiliated with political parties (57 men, 43 women)** from 9 parties trained on TJ, civic education, gender transformation.
- **496 participants** in youth forums on dealing with the past (**50% women**).
- **1,000 participants** including **96 elders and 904 young people** in intergenerational dialogues.
- **1 research** on positive masculinities and their link to Burundian culture.

Ex-combatants

In its work with ex-combatants, *Twuzuzanye* registered substantial impact. As the testimonies highlighted in this report demonstrate, most of the ex-combatants participating the project had never received any type of support since their demobilisation. A source of political and social insecurity, and source of fear for many communities, the lack of attention to their situation is remarkable. Moreover, the role of ex-combatants in political violence and in other forms of violence connected to shortcomings in the DDDR process makes their lack of involvement in previous projects all the more surprising. Thus, in collaboration with local authorities, including ex-combatant representatives, *Twuzuzanye* developed and implemented innovative strategies resulting in:

- **Trainings for 100 ex-combatants** in the 4 provinces
- **99 ex-combatants** benefiting from individual and collective MHPSS.
- **1 research** detailing the experiences of ex-combatants with the DDDR process.



3. Project Strategies: Analysis & Assumptions

3.1. Theory of Change & Intervention Strategies

Operationalisation of the ToC

Both internal M&E data and the external evaluation of the project allow us to assess the accuracy of the ToC and the intervention strategies underpinning *Twuzuzanye*. The external evaluation in particular surveyed project staff and participants to determine the adequacy of the project for its intended target groups and beneficiaries.

The convergence of responses collected among stakeholders (Dushirehamwe, SPDH, YAGA), target groups, and beneficiaries, including the administrative authorities, demonstrate *Twuzuzanye*'s pertinence. Notably, there was strong consensus on the following points: (1) *Twuzuzanye* brought solutions to the daily problems lived in the target communities; and (2) the activities carried out under the project, including trainings, community forums and intergenerational dialogues, were relevant and well suited to address the issues identified.

The sustainability assessment revealed that poverty poses a general threat to projects like *Twuzuzanye* working on social and behavioural change by weakening resilience against manipulation and creating certain conditions favourable to corruption. Despite this, the external evaluation found that the knowledge acquired and capacities built via the interventions of *Twuzuzanye* established a "momentum" that raises hope for sustainability at the individual and community levels.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS: 150

Breakdown by category:

- **Women/girls:** 40 people
- **Youth affiliated with political parties:** 60 people
 - 20 girls who participated in the focus groups
 - 20 young men who participated in the focus groups
 - 20 young people who participated in individual interviews
- **Ex-combatants:** 40 people
 - 24 who participated in the focus groups
 - 16 who responded to the individual interview questionnaire
- **Local authorities:** 8 people
 - 4 municipal authorities
 - 4 provincial authorities
- **Representatives of the Youth Centre:** 2 people

Adaptive Programming: Programmatic Consistency & Contextual Flexibility

The programmatic ToC guided the project's smooth implementation. From the outset, the ToC provided project implementing partners with an understanding of the project's objectives, strategies, and expected outcomes. By identifying the causal links between the activities and the expected results, the ToC guided effective planning and the definition of clear and measurable M&E indicators. The latter enabled project progress to be monitored and its effectiveness evaluated.

Likewise, the ToC underpinned the execution of project intervention strategies largely as planned. Some flexibility was required to ensure the project could respond to unexpected developments and new opportunities that presented themselves; flexibility was similarly essential to navigate an ever-changing context, maximising project effectiveness and its impact. To facilitate this, an adaptive programming approach was applied, using the ToC to ensure that adaptations were consistent with project objectives. This kind of adaptive approach is fundamental to projects like *Twuzuzanye* that aim at social and behavioural change, allowing flexible implementation with a view to determining the best adapted approaches to attain the objectives. This adaptability was made possible by regular feedback loops and the effective participation of implementing partners, local structures, and communities. It led to the following strategic adjustments:

Internal MHPSS

The implementation of *Twuzuzanye* had profound effects on the psychological and mental health of project staff. Partners reported being affected by the stories they heard during the implementation of activities. This was particularly the case for SPDH, whose staff led activities with the ex-combatants. Staff reported signs of secondary traumas.

In response to this concern, the project set up psychosocial care for SPDH staff. This care, similar to that offered to ex-combatants, proved important to ensuring the mental health of partners and allowing them to continue their work effectively. This type of internal MHPSS strategy is an important lesson learnt from the project. Future projects will ensure that budget is allocated for the provision of such support.

CSO Strategy

Twuzuzanye built the thematic capacities of CSOs around different themes linked to positive masculinities. Once trained, the CSOs were supported to prepare and launch community actions promoting positive masculinities. Project narrative plans and budgets were prepared by the CSOs to guide these actions.

The analysis of the proposed actions highlighted gaps related to the operational functioning of CSOs, including insufficient knowledge of M&E, limited understanding of results-based programming, and weak sustainability structures. To address these gaps and help increase the technical capacity of the 10 identified CSOs, IW organised additional trainings on project design (micro-projects) and the implementation of M&E plans. This adaptation proved to be a valuable step in strengthening CSO M&E capacities and improving their effectiveness at implementing community actions, as well as the importance of systematically connecting thematic capacity-building with technical and organisational capacity-building. By the end of the sessions, the CSOs were better equipped to propose community actions and micro-projects. The implementation of each micro-project suggests that this adapted strategy was crucial to the success of their community actions.

Youth centres

At the beginning of the project, challenges were identified with the youth centre strategy. Following the first thematic trainings, a number of participants at the workshops were found to have no connection to the youth centre they were supposed to represent. Relatedly, a number of tools distributed for use at the youth centres were found to have disappeared and were not available at their intended youth centres.

To remedy this, the youth centre strategy was redefined based on an internal strategy document. The strategy enabled staff to visit the various targeted youth centres to assess their operation, determine whether staff had started to integrate the knowledge acquired during the training, and to determine their needs. Thereafter, more targeted capacity-building was provided through additional trainings and through the provision of masculinities tools to youth centres. Finally, awareness-raising activities were organised with the youth centres in their localities.

3.2. Assumptions: Outcomes

Outcome 1: Women and girls influence post-conflict reconstruction and the international Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Assumptions

- *Women and girls use their influence and political space to bring about more transformative post-conflict policymaking.*
- *The positive influence of women and girls at the local and national levels is recognised by the wider public and political actors, shifting attitudes about women's political participation.*
- *Changes in attitudes among political actors and the general public of what makes a 'good' leader can be triggered by more information in the public domain that challenges traditional leadership ideas.*

Twuzuzanye contributed to creating an enabling environment for women's participation in political decision-making, particularly their ability to influence reconstruction at the community level, as well as the national level. This included raising women's awareness of their rights and capacities, trainings on the skills needed for political leadership, and addressing barriers hindering their participation, such as gender-based violence and discrimination, including among men. Whereas a modest assessment is required for a project limited to a two-year implementation period, there is evidence to demonstrate that the assumptions underlying the

project held true. This is especially the case at the output level underpinning Outcome 1, with indications that the same is true at the outcome level.

The project understood that by arming women with greater leadership capital, acumen, and skills, women and girls would be in a better position to influence policymaking. Relatedly, *Twuzuzanye* expected that women and girls would claim space for engaging with decision-makers and advocating for their rights, which would consequently lead to local and national authorities being equipped with concrete proposals and recommendations shaped by women and girls. And finally, the project understood that CSOs and the media have the capability to positively influence the population and provoke changes in attitudes if more information was available in the public domain to challenged traditional male-centric notions of leadership.

This proved to be the case at the community level in particular, with ***Twuzuzanye effectively building the leadership capacities of women and supporting them to build political acumen locally***, as seen from the quotations (see opposite). The project enabled women and girls to develop their leadership capacities, access political space, and make their voices heard. These actions have helped to change opinions of women's leadership among local stakeholders and foster constructive dialogue between women and policymakers.

At the national level, the evidence is more tenuous. Whereas the national political forums enabled women to claim space and equip policymakers with community-led demands, especially ahead of the 2025 elections, more intense actions would have been required to assess the assumptions with greater certainty. **Future projects should increase strategies targeting the national levels, without reducing those at the community level.**

Simultaneous to the work with women leaders, the CSO and media strategies began positively shifting attitudes around leadership ideals through increasing the visibility of women leaders via media coverage of women in leadership roles in various fields. **Project data shows that this strategy contributed to changing perceptions of women's leadership abilities and qualities.** Likewise, the awareness-raising campaigns helped to deconstruct gender stereotypes and encourage men to support women's political participation. In this way, *Twuzuzanye* demonstrates that investing in the availability of interactive information can contribute to changes in societal perceptions. The project developed diverse content including uncovering examples of inspiring female community leaders with values and leadership skills not traditionally recognised, as well as examples of positive masculinities and male allies of women. By increasing access to this information, participants and audiences were forced to rethink notions defining what it means to be an effective leader using examples from Burundian society of what may be termed "positive deviance" from social norms.

"I am proud to be recognised by the local administration as a result of the communal policy forums that we, women leaders, organised and to which local administrators were invited. They now approach me to get my opinion on different subjects, not only those related to women, which shows that our leadership is now recognised."
(Female leader, Nyabiraba)

"Organising the forums was a challenge at the beginning, because we were not used to inviting administrative figures. But through a simulation workshop and rehearsals, we gained confidence and created links with decision-makers. This also facilitated our advocacy efforts. I can now speak directly to the social counsellors on Cumba Hill, as I have met them at the forums and they are part of the committee monitoring engagements undertaken at the forums."
(Female leader, Muyinga, Muyinga)

"The community chief contacted me to ask me to support him in mobilising the community to participate in the hill meetings. This shows that my notoriety is recognised in my locality thanks to the project activities."
(Female leader, Kanyosha)

STORY OF CHANGE

Faida SANGWE – Women inspiring women

A native of Butihinda commune, Muyinga province, Faida embodies the project's tangible impact on perceptions of female leadership.

Prior to her involvement in *Twuzuzanye*, Faida was confronted with the stereotypes and obstacles that often hinder women's ascent in politics. However, her involvement in the project enabled her to acquire invaluable skills, particularly in the areas of peaceful conflict resolution and participation in decision-making processes. Faida has put her new skills to work for her community by mediating local conflicts. Her peaceful, inclusive approach is helping defuse tensions and find consensual solutions, earning her the recognition and respect of her fellow citizens.

Her commitment and achievements have helped to change perceptions of women's leadership in her community, inspiring another woman, Shadia NININHAZWE, to seek election as a mediator on her hill. Her successful election is perceived as a message of hope and encouragement for women in her community who also aspire to get involved in political life. In short, Faida's story illustrates the project's positive impact on perceptions of women's leadership and the tangible change in attitudes within communities.

Outcome 2: Burundian youth are more resilient to manipulation and militarisation by political actors.

Assumptions

- Youth actively use knowledge to resist political manipulation, and identity-based myths about the past, and renounce violence.
- MHPSS services and trauma-healing are effective among youth ex-combatants, reducing their role in the perpetration of violence.
- Dialogue and discussion about the past across society leads to mutual understanding between different ethnic and political groups.

Twuzuzanye sought to increase youth resilience to manipulation and militarisation by increasing knowledge about the political causes of conflict and violence, as such leading them to challenge assumptions and political narratives about the past. It sought to work with ex-combatants, using a combination of human-rights trainings, civic education, and MHPSS to increase their resilience to re-mobilisation and enhance their social integration. Finally, the project targeted building resilience to hate speech grounded in manipulation of past narratives by promoting dialogues and discussion about the past. The causal linkages and assumptions were that young people would therefore use their newfound knowledge to renounce violence, that mutual recognition would be promoted across ethnic and political lines among groups at the community level, and that MHPSS would reduce the role of ex-combatants in all forms of violence.

Data from the final evaluation points to the fact that these assumptions and the intervention strategy held true.

According to the final evaluation, **81% of youth participants affiliated with political parties report increased levels of resilience**. These young people acquired the tools and knowledge necessary to identify and resist attempts at political manipulation based on identity cleavages and hate speech. Their capacity to critically assess information has improved, allowing them to reject messages that incite violence or discord.

Likewise, YAGA registered significant progress in raising awareness among young people on digital platforms about the dangers of manipulation, generating a total engagement of **35,845 interactions across 12 posts on different forms of manipulation**. The diverse choice of messages made it possible to raise awareness of the different forms of manipulation youth commonly face, addressing themes such as ethnic and political manipulation, negative influences of parents and religion, media manipulation, and the impact on mental

health and social cohesion. Analysis of comments to the online content reveals a complex understanding of manipulation among youth. Some recognise the phenomenon, while others underestimate it. Yet the opportunity to openly discuss, share experiences, and learn from each other was particularly evident in online spaces. Encouragingly, the work of SPDH at the community level mirrored these online experiences, with youth affiliated to political parties taking advantage of safe spaces to discuss a range of topics related to political manipulation. Similarly, dialogue and exchange on the past helped to promote mutual understanding and reconciliation among different ethnic and political groups. These spaces helped to break down barriers erected via mistrust, enabling participants to recognise mutual suffering, thereby laying the foundation for peaceful coexistence.

Among the ex-combatants, the project achieved some of its most tangible results,

consequently proving the validity of the assumptions associated with the strategies targeting this group. For most of the participants, they had never before participated in a project with strategies directly designed to support them. By participating in a series of trainings on diverse themes, testimonies from the ex-combatants reveal important behavioural changes – at the individual, familial, and community levels – with reports from each of the intervention provinces of a reduction in the violence committed by ex-combatants. The impact must be examined long-term, but the immediate results are remarkable. Key to this impact of *Twuzuzanze* was the MHPSS approach. Access to psychosocial support services and trauma-healing had a beneficial effect on ex-combatants with **93% of ex-combatants reporting a reduction in their symptoms**. This approach, conforming the validity of the assumptions and in turn offering positive lesson for future projects, aided the ex-combatants in overcoming trauma, re-establishing community ties, and renouncing violence.

"Despite the opposition of those around me, I married the woman I love, even though she is not of the same ethnicity as me. Our history shows that ethnic prejudices have no place. We must learn to live together in tolerance and mutual respect to build a better future for our country."

(Dialogue Participant, Muyinga)

"My anger and violence were uncontrollable, but I didn't make the connection with my past as a combatant. Unfortunately, my son suffered a lot from my behaviour. From a young age, I would beat him and inflict extreme punishments, such as locking him in a cage, unconsciously replicating the punishments inflicted when at war. Today, as an adult, he has very bad memories of our relationship. I deeply regret my actions."

(Female ex-combatant, Cibitoke)

"Since my return to civilian life, this is the first time I have been able to talk about my painful past. The traumatic experiences during battle had a profound effect on me, to the point that I never wanted to tell anyone. What I have just shared here, even my wife doesn't know."

(Ex-combatant)

Outcome 3: Attitudes towards hegemonic masculinities begin to change

Assumptions

- Changes in attitudes emerge, leading to diverse, positive masculinities that challenge traditional socio-cultural norms.
- Civil society actors take the lead in challenging traditional notions of gendered identities and their links to violence.
- Changes in attitudes have reduced common risk factors for violence.

Twuzuzanze set out with the ambitious objective to shift attitudes around hegemonic masculinities and promote alternative, positive masculinities in a highly conservative socio-cultural context. The assumptions on which the intervention strategy was built were the following: interactive platforms would lead to greater youth engagement, stimulating critical thinking about dominant ideas of masculinity; CSOs, when seen as credible, legitimate, and non-partisan, and when properly equipped, can engage youth in community-based actions on masculinities; and youth centres can play a positive role in youth engagement. *Twuzuzanze* therefore understood that strategies on masculinities can lead positive masculinities to emerge and that risk factors for violence, including violence against women and girls, can be reduced.

Although a project with a two-year duration is extremely short, meaning one must be prudent about positive impact generated, data from partners and notably from the final external evaluation is encouraging. Globally, the assumptions appear to have held true, with a number of attitudes shifts reported with regards to more positive masculinities. Indeed, **89% of direct beneficiaries report changes in their attitude around masculinities** as a direct consequence of the project. These figures are striking, with qualitative data of participants reporting different expressions and forms of masculinities no longer based on domination and violence.

Once again, it is important to highlight that social change and attitude changes most often take place over a longer period of time. Nevertheless, *Twuzuzanye* appears to have laid certain foundations in the target communities that can be replicated in others, and which must be built upon in future projects in order to guarantee the sustainability of this impact.

"Before, awareness- raising for women's involvement in public life didn't achieve much. But with the workshops on positive masculinities, men understood that their violent and domineering behaviour was not the sign of a real man. They realised that the norms governing their behaviour can change, and this has allowed new forms of masculinities to emerge within the home."
(Hill chief, Muyinga province)

A key factor in this success was engaging men who exhibited violent or domineering behaviour within their homes. Invited by local leaders, these men participated in workshops that fostered behavioural change and challenged traditional gender roles. Women participants encouraged men to share household responsibilities, enabling greater female

participation in public life. This, in turn, empowered women to seek leadership positions, while also dismantling the stigma associated with men who collaborate with their wives in decision-making. The importance of involving men in strategies around negative and positive masculinities was specifically highlighted by the Hill chief in Muyinga (see above).

Finally, the same chief in Muyinga recognised the positive impact of awareness-raising led by women leaders. These actions reportedly helped to change the perception of women as leaders, breaking past resistance to their participation in public life and their election to positions of local responsibility.

4. Overall Evaluation

4.1. Project Relevance

To evaluate the relevance of the project, in this section we rely on both internal data and the results of the external evaluation. Internally, *Twuzuzanye* employed rigorous and comprehensive M&E data collection, involving both qualitative and quantitative data. The main methods used were: Outcome measurement of key

TWUZUZANYE	
Objective	Promote positive masculinities and women's political equality for sustainable peace.
Specific objectives	
SO1:	Women's increased participation in post-conflict reconstruction.
SO2:	Violent masculinities become less of a risk factor for violence.
SO3:	Positive masculinities are promoted.

performance indicators to assess the achievement of program objectives; Community-level testimonies of the perceptions and experiences of participants and beneficiaries within the communities; Documentation of initiatives at the community level by CSOs trained and supported by the project; Photos and videos illustrating project impact; Partner Reports compiling information and data from partner activities; and Field assessments to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. Externally, the Final evaluation provided an in-depth analysis of *Twuzuzanye's* impact on

communities, the level of achievement of objectives and the sustainability of the changes induced. The final evaluation placed particular emphasis on collecting testimonies from project participants, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders.

As already detailed, the strategies were aligned to local realities and analysis proves that the main assumptions underlying the project held true. Therefore, when asked to score the project's relevance to their community needs, more than **70% of respondents to the external evaluation gave a score between 80%-100%**. Qualitative testimonies recorded through internal and external data collection substantiate this figure, with the project's strategies proving relevant to the three broad target groups: women; youth; ex-combatants. Interestingly, the final evaluation noted that the percentage of women scoring the project was lower than for the other two groups, explained by their higher expectations and the fact that the WPS agenda involves objectives around participation, prevention and protection that require a much longer timeframe than the two-year *Twuzuzanye* implementation period. The figure that 74% of ex-combatants and 74% of youth consider the project to be of relevance for tackling political manipulation and for reducing the involvement of ex-combatants in violence is extremely promising for future interventions.

The expression commonly recorded through the project's internal monitoring was that, **"The *Twuzuzanye* project has come at exactly the right time"**. This statement was recorded among all stakeholders, from community participants and ex-combatants, to the local administration indirectly – and sometimes directly – involved with project implementation.

Promoting positive masculinities

The promotion of positive masculinities at the community level and online was among the most relevant approaches, as reported by project participants. Stakeholders to the external evaluation reported a high degree of acceptance of the importance and the interest of promoting positive masculinities in Burundian society, which are recognised as contributing to the persistence of violence against women and girls, and their exclusion from politics and decision-making. **While the theme was initially met with resistance both within communities and online, it ultimately gained significant acceptance among stakeholders as evidenced by the final evaluation.** These norms are deeply embedded in the

"The gradual online publication of diverse resources on positive masculinities and examples of harmful behaviours, both for women and men themselves, has helped to start an open dialogue on these issues. Initially, there was strong resistance among 'netizens', who claimed that this topic was not relevant to Burundian society. However, thanks to effective online awareness-raising campaigns, perceptions have begun to change."
(Project Manager, YAGA)

fabric of Burundian society. The project's holistic approach allowed for a coherent and impactful action for both the beneficiaries and administrators. The latter welcomed the community changes brought about through *Twuzuzanye*, which they report as having reduced the number of cases of violence.

Increasing women's space and political capital

The final evaluation, activity reports, and collected testimonies underscore the project's relevance for promoting women's leadership and building community support in addressing the persistent

"Twuzuzanye has made me aware of my potential and my ability to express myself freely, both in the private and public spheres. As a Muslim woman, I have long doubted my abilities and my voice. I wondered how other men and women were able to express themselves confidently and organize meetings effectively. Through capacity-building and regular coaching from the focal points, I gained the tools and confidence necessary to assert myself. I learned how to structure my ideas, how to express myself clearly, and how to advocate for the women around me. This transformation allowed me to run and be elected as the women representative of my party. Twuzuzanye has been instrumental in my personal growth and commitment to gender equality."

(Woman leader, Muyinga, Butihinda)

underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles and their lack of recognition as legitimate leaders. **Women participants expressed limited confidence in their leadership roles before the project.** As the emblematic case opposite demonstrates, *Twuzuzanye* enabled women to acquire the skills and confidence needed to become community leaders. Women's participation in policy forums allowed them to make their voices heard and share their perspectives on issues of national importance. Women reported that this increased participation helped to strengthen their visibility and credibility as political leaders. Likewise, the involvement of women in project activities led to

increased recognition of their leadership within communities, with both men and women members of target communities identifying them as key actors for change and development. As explored later in this report, the quantitative figures demonstrate a significant improvement in women's participation due to the project, and positive changes in attitudes towards women's leadership.

Building resilience among politically active youth

Identity-based manipulation, which exploits ethnic and political divisions, represents a major challenge to social cohesion and sustainable peace across communities in Burundi. The internal and external evaluation data demonstrate that **Twuzuzanye reduced identity-based manipulation and promoted social cohesion within communities.**

Evidence shows that this fact was recognised by the youth participants to the project and the local authorities, who each reported satisfaction with the strategies among young people affiliated with political parties. Concretely, examples include young people who were reluctant to participate together at the beginning of the project now reporting that they collaborate on economic activities, and youth now abandoning violence as a political strategy having both increased their understanding of political manipulation and built bonds with youth from different political parties.

"Before participating in the Twuzuzanye project, I could not sit with the young members of the other political parties in my locality. I considered them enemies or even strangers. But today, I don't feel any hatred towards young people affiliated to other political parties, because the choice of a party depends on convictions and as much as there are different religions, the same is true for political ideas."

(Young woman of the CNL, Makamba)

"Beyond reducing youth violence, the Twuzuzanye project has fostered broader community participation, with young people of all political persuasions actively involved in community service."

(Chief of Staff to the Governor, Muyinga)

Twuzuzanye thus shows the relevance of strengthening youth resilience to identity-based manipulation through targeted strategies that provide young people with the tools to develop critical thinking skills and the opportunity to dialogue in safe spaces, including on the ways that the past shapes identities in the present.

MHPSS among ex-combatants

At the beginning of the project, 20 years after the end of Burundi's DDRR process, reintegration of ex-combatants was an unfulfilled promise in the 48 target communities. *Twuzuzanye's* relevance for this group was profound. In addition to the internal and external impact data, research conducted among the ex-combatants and their communities further proved the importance of the strategies implemented. Tangible results were found at the level of the MHPSS provision in particular, with **93% of ex-combatants reporting a reduction in symptoms of trauma.**

"The Twuzuzanye project marked a turning point in our province by integrating ex-combatants and facilitating their community reintegration. Previously, it was common to see a line of ex-combatants seeking help from the provincial office. But since their participation in the project, those who took part no longer come because they have acquired the necessary autonomy to work and support themselves."
(Socio-cultural advisor, Cibitoke)

"I noticed a remarkable transformation in ex-fighter X. Since attending the therapy sessions in Gitega, she has let go of her anger and opened up to community life, actively participating in activities with the other women."
(Neighbour of an ex-FNL combatant in Muyinga)

Twuzuzanye's relevance in the way that it approached MHPSS was further proven by the strategy linking trauma and therapeutic support among the ex-combatants to the social- and community aspects of MHPSS. In this way, the project's success was to understand the crucial role of MHPSS for their reintegration and the

pursuit of sustainable peace in Burundi. At the heart of the project's success was the recognition of the shared experiences and unmet needs of ex-combatants. Their feelings of abandonment and resentment, stemming from a lack of adequate support since their demobilisation, had fuelled isolation and hindered their participation in community life. The MHPSS support provided by THARS took the form of group therapy based on memory healing techniques, which aimed to rehabilitate ex-combatants and facilitate their active participation in the socio-economic activities of their communities. The testimonies collected from the ex-combatants vividly illustrate the positive impact of the strategy on their psychological and emotional well-being, as well as the potential impact that this may have for their community reintegration and reduced levels of violence. *Twuzuzanye* therefore underscores the importance of a holistic and inclusive approach to MHPSS and to the reintegration of ex-combatants and building sustainable peace in Burundi.

Online content: Civic space and changes in attitudes

As we have seen, *Twuzuzanye* activities on positive masculinities were widely appreciated by project participants. Shifts have been observed at the community level, as well as through the online content. The sheer number of people engaging with the online content surpassed expectations and was extraordinary (measured using the #twuzuzanye hashtag). **The total number of impressions from the content produced by YAGA was 12,367,348, with data analytics showing that 10,588,424 people were reached via the content.** The number of comments, engagements, shares, and 'likes' reveal that the content – the majority of which was in Kirundi – was extremely relevant for Burundi's "netizens". In this respect, *Twuzuzanye* marks an important reference for the importance of virtual spaces when tackling issues of identity, social cohesion, and transformation, which should be implemented in parallel with community-based actions tackling the same subjects.

Local authorities

The local authorities emphasise that *Twuzuzanye* has brought positive change to local communities, providing concrete solutions to persistent challenges such as violence, the manipulation of young people, and the isolation of ex-combatants. The authorities are more actively working with women leaders, demonstrating the relevance and impact of strategies strengthening women's leadership.

The results of the final evaluation prove this further, with representatives from each province unanimously reporting that the strategies were

"Twuzuzanye serves as an inspiring model for future initiatives to promote women leadership, peace, reconciliation, and sustainable development in post-conflict communities."

(Municipal Administrator of Makamba closing session of the project April 2024)

relevant and efficient as responses to communities challenges. Likewise, the authorities lamented the fact that the project was of such short duration, ending just as the 2025 elections are on the horizon. **According to the authorities surveyed, *Twuzuzanye* would have been an effective approach to reduce the risks of violence and increase women's participation in the upcoming elections.**

4.2. Final Evaluation: Main Findings

The final project evaluation was conducted by an external consultant and her team among a sample of 190 people in the four intervention provinces. The following provides a snapshot of some of the main findings from the evaluation.

Highly relevant strategies

Evaluating the project's relevance, the study found that more than **70% of respondents scored the project between 80-100%**. The report notes that the project proved to be both relevant and tailored to the needs of the target communities, with effective interventions for women's political participation and hegemonic masculinities, manipulation of youth affiliated with political parties, psychological support for ex-combatants, and community engagement.

Lofty expectations around the WPS

Whereas the evaluation found that the project was favourably assessed by participants, the figures among women were markedly lower. According to the report, this reflects both the entrenched patriarchal norms that women perceive as not shifting swiftly enough, as well as **high expectations among women of the WPS agenda** that are difficult to achieve within the short project time frame.

Effective approaches

The evaluation concluded from its comparative analysis of target indicators that *Twuzuzanye* represents a highly effective strategy worthy of being scaled-up throughout the country. **The target indicators were all surpassed**, with the following being noteworthy:

- 88% of indirect beneficiaries reported the positive contribution of women and girls.
- 81% of direct youth participants reported increased levels of resilience to political manipulation.
- 93% of ex-combatants reported a reduction in their symptoms of trauma.
- 89% of direct project participants report changes in their attitude towards masculinities.

Completing the quantitative data, the report presented qualitative evidence to conclude that a considerable proportion of direct participants report actively contributing to social reconstruction processes and that changes in attitude towards female leadership had occurred thanks to the project. In addition, the report found that *Twuzuzanye* strengthened the resilience of young Burundians, especially ex-combatants, and made a significant contribution to shifting attitudes towards hegemonic masculinities.

Impact – Individuals

The evaluation summarised the main impact of the project at the **individual level** as follows:

- Women gained self-confidence and now ignore stereotypes to engage with political parties, providing them with access to the local political space as leaders and mediators in charge of conflict resolution.
- Ex-combatants have benefited from individual MHPSS, resulting in more peaceful social relations and contributing to their social reintegration, all of whom report that their lives have positively changed as a result of project interventions.
- Ex-combatants are now rejecting previous behaviours characterised by taking whatever they desired by force, assaulting or killing people who disrespected or taunted them, and committing violence

against their spouses and children; many of them are now engaged in local development activities such as savings and credit groups within their community.

- Youth and ex-combatants now have full knowledge of the manipulation tactics used by political party leaders and the impacts of manipulation on their development, and on peace, security, and community cohesion.
- “Netizens” following online debates and consuming online content report changes in their perceptions of masculinities in Burundian society.

Impact – Communities

The evaluation summarised the main impact of the project at the **community level** as follows:

- Community perceptions of women’s place in society have positively shifted.
- Communities are now strongly committed to the sharing of household tasks between spouses, to the idea of mutual collaboration in the management of household property; men now begin to get involved in the education of children.
- Social cohesion has been reinforced through the strategies targeting ex-combatant reintegration and reduction in violent relations among politically active youth.
- Ex-combatants, once considered among the main actors and architects of various forms of violence as shown by the *Twuzuzanye* baseline study, have become less violent and are re-establishing family and community ties, and are now accepted as active participants in community affairs.
- The gradual return of trust between young people from different political parties.
- Young people from political parties with divergent political views come together in joint security committees in their hills and in economic development initiatives.

Impact – Gender & Violent Masculinities

The external evaluation dedicated attention to uncovering *Twuzuzanye*’s impact on gender norms and violent masculinities. The study found that hegemonic masculinities, traditionally associated with violence, domination, contempt for others, and a certain emotional detachment, seem to have been challenged by the project. The following impact was emphasised within target communities:

- **Reduction in violence:** Among the youth and the ex-combatants in particular, participants reported a significant decrease in violence due to the project strategies. The ex-combatants, for example, reported that they no longer resort to violence within their families and in the community, preferring non-violent communication and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.
- **Strengthening empathy and tolerance:** Ex-combatants and the politically active youth show greater open-mindedness, increased respect for others, especially those of different political persuasions. They are also more likely to listen to others and consider their views.
- **Gender roles:** The men targeted by *Twuzuzanye* seem to adopt more egalitarian behaviours within their households, sharing household chores and considering the opinion of their wives.

Accordingly, the evaluation found that these changes reflect a shift in masculine norms, resulting in a more egalitarian, respectful, and engaged masculinity. This was reported as having a positive impact on gender relations, with the project thus contributing to:

- Reducing **domestic violence:** Reducing domestic violence is a major step forward for gender equality.
- Strengthened **equality within couples** and for **women’s political participation.**
- **Women’s empowerment** through strategies working to open space and opportunities for women, *and* through working with men to shift their attitudes and work as allies to promote women’s empowerment and participation in social and political life.

Sustainability & Lessons

Evaluating project sustainability, the evaluation report set the project in the context of extreme poverty, which risks becoming a threat to its positive impact, as well as the limited geographical coverage of *Twuzuzanye*. Nevertheless, the report found a certain “momentum” had been created, among both individuals and communities, giving hope for sustainability. Satisfaction levels among the main project participants and the local administration were cited as evidence of impact on which sustainability could be built. The evaluation concluded that, “project stakeholders stress the importance of setting up long-term mechanisms for self-management and monitoring, in particular through mutual aid and exchange networks.” In this light, the report summarised four long-term positive impacts of the project:

1. Increased **participation of women** in local political decision-making.
2. Enhance **resilience of young people** to political-identity manipulation.
3. Changing **male attitudes and behaviours around masculinity** towards more respect and empathy.
4. Strengthening **peace, security, and social cohesion** in the community

According to the evaluation, participants valued the following strategies most highly: the **trainings on transitional justice and democracy**, enabling participants to acquire knowledge about the past and political manipulation that they consider directly relevant for the upcoming elections; **MHPSS** strategies, having an individual impact (trauma-healing) and a community impact (cohesion, reintegration); **women’s political empowerment** strategies; and finally, cohesion among families based on **tackling violence and negative masculinities**.

With a view to broader sustainability, the report suggests that the lessons learned, recommendations, and success stories contained in the report constitute the broad lines that should guide future actions seeking transformation. In particular, it recommended that ***Twuzuzanye* should be considered as a “pilot” project**, with the results from the internal and external evaluation employed to elaborate a new project covering the remaining collines in the four provinces. This would respond to the call from communities and the local administration for the project to continue.

5. Twuzuzanye: Impact and Effectiveness

5.1. Outcome 1: Women and girls influence post-conflict reconstruction and the international Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Indicator: 1a. Proportion of women and girls effectively participating in post-conflict reconstruction and WPS processes, disaggregated by province.		
Target	Target	Final Value
% of direct beneficiaries (women/girls) report making an effective contribution to post-conflict reconstruction and/or WPS processes	75%	95%
% of indirect beneficiaries report the positive contribution of women and girls.	50%	88%

By working for the promotion of positive masculinities and women's political equality, *Twuzuzanye* played a decisive role in the participation of women and girls in post-conflict reconstruction processes. The final evaluation data and collected stories of change testify to a profound transformation of women's roles and influences within the target communities as evidenced in the earlier sections of this report. A more detailed analysis of the two indicators associated with Outcome 1 further substantiates these findings.

As shown in the table, for Indicator 1a, each of the targets were surpassed. **95% of women and girls directly participating in project reports that they are now able to make an effective contribution to post-conflict reconstruction efforts and local decision-making.** This testifies to *Twuzuzanye's* effectiveness in empowering women.

Similarly, **88% of indirect beneficiaries reported that women and girls are making a positive contribution to reconstruction** compared to the targeted value of 50%. The figure suggests a growing recognition of the crucial role of women in building sustainable peace in the intervention zones. The figures are substantiated by the testimonies gathered among beneficiaries, which point to the immense potential of initiatives addressing gender inequalities and patriarchal structures in simultaneous strategies.

Examples include women and girls now accessing political space at the community level, men encouraging women to seek election, and shifts in perceptions regarding gendered norms that previously restrained women from political action. In particular, albeit limited in geographical focus, *Twuzuzanye* has stimulated rural women to make their voices heard and influence other women and girls to follow suit. These same women have led campaigns to raise awareness among their peers and inspire a new generation of women leaders.

To this end, **Indicator 1b (Evidence of changes in attitudes about women in leadership and women's political participation)** found numerous examples, but the following two case studies are emblematic of *Twuzuzanye's* impact:



STORY OF CHANGE: Shadia NININHAZWE, elected on her hill

Twuzuzanye's impact extends beyond the women directly participating in project actions. We uncovered stories of women (indirect beneficiaries) inspired and encouraged to assert themselves and engage in political life.

Shadia NININHAZWE is one such example, who was inspired by one of the women leaders to seek – successfully – election herself.

"Faïda, an inspiring woman leader of the Twuzuzanye project, has been my mentor and source of inspiration. Her unwavering support during my campaign allowed me to believe in my abilities and to run with confidence, even against male candidates. She instilled in me the importance of self-esteem and reminded me that the first victory lies in the belief of being able to contribute positively to the community."

STORY OF CHANGE: Vincent MISAGO – Chief of the CAGIZO hill in Muyinga

Context: Cagizo Hill faced significant obstacles in terms of women's leadership and domestic violence. Traditional gender norms severely limited women's participation in public and political life. Men often exercised excessive dominance over their wives, reinforcing gender inequalities.

Twuzuzanye: Awareness-raising on gender and women's leadership; building women's capacities as leaders; involving men in the process, with hill leaders implicated in the identification of male participants.

Transformation of gender norms: The project succeeded in changing men's perceptions of women's roles in society. Awareness-raising workshops enabled men to understand the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Increased political participation of women: Vincent MISAGO reports that women now stand for community elections and other leadership roles, becoming more active in public life in CAGIZO without facing systematic opposition from their husbands.

Reduction of domestic violence: The promotion of positive masculinities has contributed to a reduction in cases of domestic violence in the community. Men learned to resolve conflicts peacefully and respect their partners' rights.

Success factor: men's participation: According to the testimony, a key factor leading to these changes is the involvement of men, including through exploring notions and expressions of masculinities.



5.1.1. Outputs

OUTPUT 1.1. Women and girls have increased their leadership capital.		
Indicator	Target	Final Value
1.1a. Number of women and girls participating in trainings, disaggregated by province.	48	68
1.1b. Number of community forums organised by women community leaders, disaggregated by province.	16	16 forums
1.1c. Policy document produced after participatory workshops	1	1 policy document
OUTPUT 1.2. Women and girls access political space to make their voices heard.		
Indicator	Target	Final Value
1.2a. Number of communal policy forums organised by women community leaders.	32	32 communal forums
1.2b. Number of provincial policy forums organised by women community leaders.	8	8 policy forums
1.2c. Number of women participating in national forums.	48	16 women
1.2d. Number of women community leaders participating in debates.	50%	11 women
OUTPUT 1.3. CSOs and the media promote women's post-conflict political participation.		
Indicator	Target	Final Value
1.3a. Number of CSOs trained on gender transformative approaches.	8	10 CSOs
1.3b. Number of community campaigns initiated, disaggregated by province.	50%	100%
1.3c. Number of online and radio campaigns initiated, disaggregated by media.	2 online 2 radio	2 online 2 radio

5.1.2. Strategies & Activities

Examining the principal strategies that contributed to the realisation of Outcome 1 starts with analysing the three outputs contributing to women and girls influencing post-conflict reconstruction and political decision-making spheres. The above table shows the **level of attainment for each of the three contributing outputs**.

The information demonstrates that a larger number of women leaders were trained than originally planned (Output 1.1), with those leaders subsequently participating in the implementation of the various policy forums at different levels of society (Output 1.2). Complementing these strategies, 10 CSOs (target: 8) worked to promote women's participation, with campaigns launched as planned online on the radio, and within communities.

Shortcomings were nonetheless recorded for indicator 1.2c, with not all of the women leaders able to participate in the national forums, and at the level of 1.2d, with only 11 women leaders participating in the online debates. Upon reflection, greater coordination among partners was needed to facilitate this synergy given the logistical challenges it entails.

Policy Forums

In addition to the capacity-building among women leaders, the activities that contributed to the observed results are the 16 political forums at the communal level, 4 at the provincial level, and 2 nationally, organised to facilitate access to decision-making spaces and to facilitate women's leadership and advocacy. Feedback and observations reveal that the forums have made it possible to raise awareness among local actors, including communal authorities, community leaders, and women's organisations of the importance of women's inclusion in peace and security processes. They have helped build women's capacity for leadership and political participation, equipping them with the tools and skills to actively engage in decision-making processes. **The forums provided a unique opportunity for community women to engage directly with local decision-makers, sharing their concerns, needs, and aspirations.** This direct interaction has allowed women to break down hierarchical barriers and make their voices heard in spheres of power. The forums also served as advocacy platforms for the promotion of the agenda developed by the women leaders and the adoption of more inclusive policies and practices. By uniting and presenting clear and coherent demands, women have been able to give their input in political decisions.

The mix of capacity-building, practical simulations, space to put skills into practice at the forums, and the development of an advocacy document (agenda) has proven a very beneficial strategy. It led to women and girls increasing their leadership capital and contributing to the development of a policy document that can serve as an important advocacy tool ahead of the 2025 elections.

Crucially, the women leaders themselves affirm that women's needs have been taken further during the policy forums and that commitments have been made by local decision-makers in response to shared needs. The participating women leaders are now more likely to engage in social and political activities. They have not only taken the lead in advocating for women's rights, but have also **initiated community level awareness-raising actions to encourage women's participation in the upcoming 2025 elections.**

Amplifying women's voices

Alongside their participation in communal, provincial, and national forums, the project amplified the voices of women leaders through the online debates. In total, 6 online debates were organised by YAGA with 19 panellists, including 16 women leaders, on women's political participation. **Online debates on women's participation proved to be powerful tools to bring women's voices across physical borders and transform perceptions.**

These virtual platforms play a crucial role in the fight against gender stereotypes that hinder women's access to the political sphere, which was in evidence from M&E data and analytics gathered around the debates. The content aimed at deconstructing social clichés around Burundian women, highlighting little-known female figures who have marked Burundi's history, the portraits of women leaders at the local and national levels, and giving a voice to men and women who question traditional leadership linked to the patriarchal system. The opinions collected on the published content show **broad support among young people for women leaders to persevere and defend their rights despite the socio-cultural obstacles** they face.

On the other hand, **prejudices and stereotypes related to gender norms were highlighted through the comments made to the online debates**. These opinions demonstrate the urgency of continued activism about women's political participation among wider audiences.

Strengthening civil society

Twuzuzanye's CSO strategy was another contributing factor towards Outcome 1. As noted, a larger number of community-based CSOs participated in the strategy than originally planned. These CSOs, with their roots in local community dynamics, were supported to prepare and launch community actions after receiving capacity-building trainings. *Twuzuzanye* therefore supported 10 initiatives (micro-projects) developed by the CSOs to tackle specific community challenges in their localities. Financial support to these micro-projects led to the following organisations being supported:

- Capacity building of **230 local CSOs focal points**: Abatangamuco (50), Afrabu (102), Afapd (12) and AGB (12), ADDF Makamba (54).
- **478 participants in 29 trainings** on women's participation conducted by the CSOs among local administrators and leaders.
- **4 radio programmes and 2 publicity spots** broadcast on two community radio stations to raise awareness of women's political participation.
- **24 posters** containing messages to raise awareness of women's participation in public life in Cibitoke.
- **16 awareness-raising actions** initiated.

As noted earlier in the present report, adaptive programming was applied to the original CSO strategy, as it was found that the organisations had common shortcoming with respect to their operational functions, M&E knowledge and skills, and limited understanding of results-based programming. To remedy this, IW organised additional trainings on project design (micro-projects) and the implementation of M&E plans. This adaptation proved to be a valuable step in strengthening CSO M&E capacities and improving their effectiveness at implementing their designed community actions. The modifications proved the importance (lesson learned) of systematically connecting thematic capacity-building with technical and organisational capacity-building.

5.2. Outcome 2: Burundian youth are more resilient to manipulation and militarisation by political actors.

Indicator: 2a. Proportion of youth reporting higher levels of resilience to manipulation based on greater understanding, disaggregated by age, sex, and province.		
Target	Target	Final Value
% of direct beneficiaries reporting increased levels of resilience.	50%	81%
Indicator: 2b. Proportion of ex-combatants benefiting from MHPSS services reporting reduction in symptoms, disaggregated by age, sex, province.		
Target	Target	Final Value
% of youth ex-combatants reporting a reduction in their symptoms.	50%	93%

Data collected throughout project implementation by partners, M&E strategy, reporting, and data collected during the final evaluation make it possible to assess the achievement of Outcome 2. The figures in the above table testify to the project's significant impact on the resilience of youth to manipulation and militarisation by political actors in the target communities.

Indeed, on both measures of the attainment of this Outcome, the final reported values exceed the targets. The number of **direct project participants (beneficiaries) reporting increased levels of resilience as a consequence of Twuzuzanye was found to be 81%** (target: 50%), with **93% of ex-combatants reporting a reduction in their symptoms as a result of MHPSS** (target: 50%). The results from the external evaluation are remarkable, putting in context the earlier assessment of the relevance and effectiveness of the project for the lived realities of people in the target intervention communities.

Complementing these findings are the qualitative stories of change collected from across the four provinces, including audio-visual testimonies presented alongside this report. The latter, in particular a film documenting Twuzuzanye's effects among ex-combatants, demonstrates its clear impact on the lives of individuals and the wider community. Likewise, it should be noted that beyond the beneficiaries within the intervention communities, the community of "netizens" was also reached by the online publications produced by YAGA.

With respect to **Indicator 2a (youth resilience)**, the above figures underpin the following impact within the targeted communities, reported via internal and external sources:

- **Strengthened social cohesion:** The combined strategies enabled young people affiliated with different, and even rival, political parties to better understand the dangers of identity-based manipulation and to promote peaceful coexistence within their communities. Evidence of this impact comes from the young people affiliated with different parties now working together in joint initiatives.
- **Increased participation and reduction in violence:** The local authorities welcome the impact of the project, indicating that participation in community work has increased and fewer violent incidents between rival youth party members.
- **Countering radicalisation and extremism:** Trained youth are better equipped to resist hate speech and messages of radicalisation, contributing to conflict prevention. As noted earlier, participants reported that trainings on transitional justice and the role of the past in shaping identities as among the most impactful initiatives, helping them to better understand how political actors manipulate youth, especially during election periods.

STORY OF CHANGE:

Egide NSANZAMAHORO, young member of the CNDD FDD

Living in Giteranyi, Muyinga, Egide admitted that before Twuzuzanye he held a deep mistrust of other young people, especially those of the CNL. Rivalries between their respective groups were exacerbated during election periods, often leading to violent clashes. The project strategies allowed him to put these divisions into perspective and to understand the need to live together despite political differences. He realised the importance of dialogue and peaceful coexistence, even in times of political differences.

"Twuzuzanye was a turning point in my life. I understood that political violence made no sense, and by sharing this knowledge with other young people, I helped create a more serene environment. Today, I am a member of several associations that bring together young people from different parties – proof that collaboration is possible."

Similarly, among online participants, the following impact was reported:

- **Raising awareness of the dangers of online identity-based manipulation:** YAGA's publications reached a wide audience, raising awareness of the risks of identity-based manipulation on social media and online platforms.
- **Promoting critical thinking and information analysis:** The content shared by YAGA encouraged viewers to take a critical approach to online information and enhance their ability to identify trusted sources.
- **Strengthening inter-community dialogue and tolerance:** The messages conveyed by YAGA have fostered inter-community dialogue and the promotion of tolerance among the different components of society.

With respect to **Indicator 2b (ex-combatants)**, the above figures demonstrate the importance of holistic MHPSS that focuses on individual trauma-healing and community social cohesion when tackling issues of militarisation and social reintegration. The strategy was not only relevant and effective, but led to some astonishing results above and beyond the 93% of ex-combatants reporting a reduction in their symptoms. By analysing the testimonies of the participants, and considering the activities implemented, we can identify several key factors that contributed to this success:

- **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS):** Group therapy sessions played a crucial role in allowing veterans to verbalise their trauma, understand it, and develop coping strategies. Memory healing therapy was particularly effective in promoting resilience.
- **Strengthening democratic values:** Training on democratic values allowed veterans to develop new perspectives and engage in community projects. This has contributed to their social reintegration and sense of purpose.
- **Deconstructing militarised masculinities:** The focus on deconstructing gender stereotypes has allowed veterans, especially men, to question their violent behaviours and develop healthier relationships.
- **Creating a safe space for sharing:** The therapy sessions provided a safe environment where veterans could express their emotions and experiences without judgment.

The net effect of this was that group cohesion was fostered and a sense of belonging strengthened. Indeed, the final evaluation demonstrates the importance of investing in MHPSS to promote social reintegration and contribute to the construction of sustainable peace. This impact was further confirmed by the research (see Output 3.1) into ex-combatants that found that their social reintegration after DDRR had failed. **Encouragingly, the impact of *Twuzuzanye* among ex-combatants proves the importance of designing projects based on research and prior experiences: the ex-combatant strategy was developed based on research findings from a previous Impunity Watch project into the role of ex-combatants in political mobilisation of young people and the shortcoming of DDRR processes when it comes to MHPSS and the lack of attention to “demobilising mindsets”.**

This impact data from *Twuzuzanye* confirms the effectiveness of the strategy working with ex-combatants, which should be scaled-up across Burundi especially with the forthcoming elections.

Whilst these findings at the Outcome level are significant, it is fundamental to acknowledge that working with these target groups and on MHPSS strategies are long-term processes. While the project experience is positive, it is far too early to conclude that the ex-combatants have definitively overcome their traumas, reintegrated into their communities, and completely renounced violence. **Much greater investment is required to maintain this positive impact and ensure long-term sustainability.**

Moreover, we learnt important lessons about the participation of female ex-combatants, especially the additional stigma they face at the community level. **The strategy needs to be adapted to ensure greater participation of women ex-combatants.** We faced difficulties in reaching the 30% participation target

because women were reluctant for their communities to find out that they had been combatants, or no longer wanted to be identified as such. This is an important lesson for future projects.

5.2.1. Outputs

OUTPUT 2.1. Youth have information on diverse platforms about identity-based manipulation.		
Indicator	Target	Final Value
2.1a. Number of youth engaging with online content about identity-based manipulation.	20,000	35,845
2.1b. Number of youth engaging with radio content about identity-based manipulation.	20 programmes	20 programmes
OUTPUT 2.2. Youth ex-combatants are exposed to democracy and human rights principles and supported to deal with traumas.		
Indicator	Target	Final Value
2.2a. Number of youth ex-combatants trained, disaggregated by age, sex, and province.	100	100
2.2b. Number of youth ex-combatants benefitting from MHPSS services, disaggregated by age, sex, and province.	100	99
OUTPUT 2.3. Youth participate in youth forums and intergenerational dialogues.		
Indicator	Target	Final Value
2.3a. Number of youth forums and intergenerational dialogues, disaggregated by location of platform and type of platform.	16 forums 32 dialogues	16 forums 32 dialogues
2.3b. Number of youth from political parties trained, disaggregated by sex, location, and political party.	40	100

5.2.2. Strategies & Activities

Analysing the three outputs contributing to Outcome 2 we find that **all of the indicator targets were achieved** with respect to youth consuming information on diverse platforms about identity manipulation (Output 2.1), ex-combatants participating in periodic civic education trainings and MHPSS (Output 2.2), and youth participating in forums and intergenerational dialogues about the past (Output 2.3). Towards this, flagship actions were carried out at different intervention levels.

Online content creation

The online activities and social media content played a crucial role in raising awareness among young people about different forms of manipulation. The **35,845 interactions** generated by YAGA's publications around political manipulation demonstrate a strong interest in these topics. The reality of manipulation based on politico-ethnic identity in Burundi is a major concern among young people, especially in pre-election periods. What emerges from the content published by YAGA is that young people are the targets of politicians and influential people seeking to exploit them for personal, or often political, ends. Young people living in extremely precarious situations, including unemployment, are more easily subjected to this manipulation, as it is often associated with financial promises or other economic benefits.

YAGA therefore published content aimed at informing, educating, and raising awareness among young people on this subject, highlighting the different forms that politico-identity manipulation can take, including political-identity discourse and stereotypes conveyed with the aim of inciting hatred and ethnic division. The comments collected online and analytical data show that the intended purpose of the published content is being achieved. Indeed, the content has increased young people's awareness of politico-identity manipulation and the harmful consequences that result.

However, the analysis of the comments also highlighted the complexity of perceptions regarding manipulation among young people. **Although they are aware of the phenomenon, they often feel**

powerless in the face of its mechanisms. This provides important lessons for the design of future content on this subject, especially as the history of Burundian conflicts has shown the active role played by young people, which is why the non-recurrence of violence can in part be supported by such content.

Youth forums and intergenerational dialogues

The political context in Burundi is marked by political intolerance, which is evident among members of the various political parties, especially among their youth leagues. Political intolerance and mistrust between the youth can be explained by the politico-identity manipulation they are subjected to, resulting in conflict and having direct consequences on available political space and political intolerance. For this reason, **Twuzuzanye's value – as seen from the data and testimonies – was to execute strategies enabling youth to engage in constructive discussions and develop mutual understanding.**

The organisation of the youth forums and the intergenerational dialogue, and crucially the 100 youth from political parties (target: 40) who were trained together, were therefore important strategies contributing to the attainment of the project outcomes.

Actions contributed to reducing political intolerance, through trainings on civic education, non-violence, TJ, and positive masculinities carried out by SPDH among the 100 youth. The young people thus increased their resilience to manipulation by political actors and build trust with members of other political parties. At the beginning of the project, for example, opposition party youth were afraid to speak out, fearing reprisals from CNDD-FDD youth; the *Imbonerakure* youth for their part confirmed that they were intolerant of other youth.

Likewise, the **496 (50% women) youth participants** to the communal forums and the **1,000 participants at the 32 intergenerational dialogues** focused on increasing spaces for cross-identity and cross-generational dialogue, enabling constructive discussions to diminish mistruths around militarisation and violent masculinities. The data shows that youth have consequently increased their understanding of the roots of violence, building resilience to hate speech through mutual understanding and trust.

Participants reported that trainings provided space for dialogue and for sitting together despite their ethnic and political diversity, exchanging on their role as actors for development, rather than continuing to be manipulated by political actors. In the run-up to the 2025 elections, **this type of space is crucial for reducing tensions, counteracting the types of political and ethnic hate speech that habitually increase during electoral cycles**, and for building connections that can prevent violence

Ex-Combatants

The preceding sections have devoted significant attention to the impact of this MHPSS strategy among the **100 ex-combatants** at the individual and community levels. The following case study is an emblematic example of the strategy in practice:

CASE STUDY: Francine NIYIBITANGA, Nyabiraba, Bujumbura Rural

Context and issues: Francine NIYIBITANGA, a former FNL combatant, was feared in her community because of her violent past. Her involvement in an armed movement had left deep scars, both psychologically and socially. She was perceived as a threat and was marginalised by her community.

Twuzuzanye: The project intervened by offering Francine a package of training and psychosocial support services. These interventions focused on: **Civic education** – enabling Francine to develop a civic conscience and to understand the importance of respecting human rights and the law; **Non-violent communication** – showing her how express her emotions and needs in a constructive way without resorting to violence. **Transitional justice** – promoting dealing with the past constructively; **Group therapy** – facilitating a safe space to express her emotions, share her experiences, and find support.

Results and impacts: As a consequence, Francine reported a profound transformation:

- **Social reintegration.** Francine is now accepted and respected by her community.
- **Improved mental health.** She has managed to overcome her past traumas and regain inner peace.
- **Development of social skills.** She communicates in a more peaceful way, resolving conflicts constructively.
- **Change in perceptions.** She has developed a more positive outlook and has re-joined society as an active citizen.

Key success factors:

- **Personalisation of support:** The interventions have been adapted to Francine's specific needs.
- **Creating a safe and trusting environment:** MHPSS allowed Francine to feel safe and express herself freely.
- **Holistic approach:** The different project strategies of the project addressed the root causes of Francine's trauma.
- **Community support:** Francine's acceptance by her community has boosted her resilience and self-confidence.

5.3. Outcome 3: Attitudes on hegemonic masculinities begin to change.

Indicator: 3a. Proportion of people reporting changed attitudes on masculinities, disaggregated by age, sex, province.		
Target	Target	Final Value
% of direct beneficiaries reporting changes in their attitudes towards alternative, positive masculinities.	50%	89%
Indicator: 3b. Signs of alternative masculinities being publicly discussed.		
Target	Target	Final Value
Two representative case studies documented.	2	Multiple

Much like the other Outcomes, *Twuzuzanye's* strategies brought about tangible shifts in attitudes towards masculinities within the target communities (Outcome 3). The final evaluation data and the stories of change testify to the transformation of attitudes and behaviours. This impact is quantifiable: the key indicator (3a. Proportion of direct beneficiaries reporting changes in attitudes) had an initial **target value of 50%, which was significantly exceeded by reaching 89% in the final assessment**. Data was gathered among the direct project participants for this indicator, demonstrating the value and importance of the intervention strategies.

Relatedly, the stories of change collected around positive masculinities offer concrete evidence of this contribution. Men questioning their abusive behaviour, young people engaging in inclusive community development projects, and women speaking up and becoming more involved in local politics are all illustrative examples of shifting gender norms and changing mindsets recorded via the project.

To this end, Indicator 3b (Signs of alternative masculinities being publicly discussed) found numerous examples, including the following testimony:



STORY OF CHANGE: Jésus-Marie NZIMENYA Butihinda, MUYINGA

"Before Twuzuzanye, I was an irritable and violent man, towards my wife, my children, and those around me. The trainings on positive masculinities have opened my eyes: it all starts at home, in the way I behave with my family. Today, before acting, I take the time to talk to my wife. Violence no longer has a place in my life, neither at home nor at work. Those around me have noticed my change and I'm proud of it."

As the external evaluation demonstrated, *Twuzuzanye's* impact on gender norms and violent masculinities was particularly apparent through impact registered in the following areas: **reduction in violence, strengthening empathy and tolerance, and shifting gender roles**. The evaluation noted shifts in attitudes and masculine norms within the target communities. We have noted in the preceding sections how the online content was an important strategy for shifting attitudes within online spaces among youth.

5.3.1. Outputs

OUTPUT 3.1. Youth have information on diverse platforms about positive masculinities.		
Indicator	Target	Final Value
3.1a. Number of youth engaging with online and radio content about violent masculinities.	60,000	156,670
3.1b. Number and description of awareness-raising campaigns initiated.	6	144
3.1c. Number studies produced on "positive deviance".	3	3
OUTPUT 3.2. CSOs undertake community-level actions to promote positive masculinities.		
Indicator	Target	Final Value
3.2a. Number of CSOs trained on tackling violent masculinities.	10	10
3.2b. Number of community action plans developed by CSOs after the trainings.	50%	100%
OUTPUT 3.3. Youth centres engage youth in discussions about masculinities.		
Indicator	Target	Final Value
3.3a. Number of youth centres trained on violence masculinities.	4	4
3.3b. Number of plans by youth centres for community discussions, disaggregated by location.	4	4

5.3.2. Strategies & Activities

The indicators associated with the three Outputs contributing to Outcome 3 were all achieved or surpassed. This was particularly the case for the targets seeking to engage participants through targeted information on positive masculinities. For indicator 3.1a, the disaggregated data shows that **156,670 youth actively engaged with online content** (against a target of 20,000) through likes, shares, and comments; similarly, for indicator 3.1b, the targeted number of 6 community campaigns on positive masculinities was exceeded, with **144 community campaigns initiated** after adapting the CSO strategy.

Online content creation

Similar to Outcome 2, the online content played a pivotal role in shifting attitudes around masculinities. The **12,367,348 online impressions** with the content reaching **10,588,424 people** are striking figures. The

external evaluation reported that even YAGA, the partner in charge of producing and moderating the content were surprised at the level of engagements and that online consumption of the masculinities content has exceeded expectations.

Innovative tools

As theme of masculinities is a relatively new concept in Burundi, especially linking it to systemic violence and historical root causes that remain unaddressed, it proved crucial to develop innovative masculinities tools including a training guide on positive masculinities, awareness-raising posters, and comic books. These tools tap into **Burundian culture by using proverbs that have traditionally been used to justify male dominance and violence, and entrench traditional gender roles**. The tools were made available in Kirundi and French, and distributed to partners, CSOs, and youth centres trained in the project.

In doing so, the number of youth accessing culturally relevant and targeted information will increase even after the project's end. During *Twuzuzanye's* the tools were used in the various training workshops and awareness-raising campaigns within communities.

CSOs & Youth Centres

Twuzuzanye's strategies among the provincial CSOs and the youth centres was outlined in the preceding section on adaptive programming. The 10 CSOs all developed and implemented community actions promoting positive masculinities; similarly, the 4 youth centres were trained and then supported to implement awareness-raising activities in their localities.

Participants unanimously attested that it was their first time engaging with the subject of masculinities, with the strategy therefore provided a framework for the participants, particularly men, to question negative stereotypes and behaviours, and to make the link with socially constructed gender norms.

Action research

Three action research studies were conducted within the *Twuzuzanye* project, each seeking to uncover examples of positive deviance and identify key societal factors for extending the project's impact and better understanding the role of masculinities in Burundian society. The first, a research examining Burundian cultural markers, **identified proverbs that go against traditional notions of gender norms and instead promote positive masculinities**. The second research was conducted among ex-combatants and women, identifying the **key challenges to their social reintegration after demobilisation**. Finally, an **audio-visual research** was conducted around masculinities, uncovering cases from the project participants of positive deviation from social norms.

Shortcomings: resistance to change

The implementation of several key actions described above promoting positive masculinities encountered challenges that are important to consider in future interventions. Chief among these was the **resistance to change** encountered by all project partners. Gender stereotypes and hegemonic masculinities are deeply rooted in Burundian culture, as elsewhere, with the claim that Burundian traditions are incompatible with the principles of positive masculinities and women's rights often used to justify the continuation of discriminatory and unequal practices. However, as the research into positive proverbs found, this does not reflect the reality of Burundian culture, which is rich in values and practices that promote respect, equity, well-being, and positive masculinities. The achievement of Outcome 3 was thus in part based on the adaptation of strategies (including online) to emphasise that culture is not a static concept, but rather something dynamic that evolves, including the way social norms are constructed.

6. Learning

Section 3.1 of this report on Adaptive Programming: Programmatic Consistency & Contextual Flexibility outlined several important lessons learnt around the strategic interventions that will not be repeated here.

6.1. Internal

After an in-depth reflection around internal learning processes, several key elements have played a decisive role in the implementation of *Twuzuzanye*. These factors, presented below, are fundamental pillars of the implementation strategy and deserve special attention for future optimisation.

MHPSS

The results obtained through the integration of MHPSS into the project intervention strategies confirm the importance of this strategy at the individual and societal (community) levels. The impact of therapy sessions on ex-combatants, including the reduction of some symptoms, has been significant. An important lesson was how the treatment of individual trauma has a broader effect on the prevention of violence within the wider community. Too often, MHPSS is narrowly construed as synonymous with trauma-healing. *Twuzuzanye* proves that the social elements and community approaches to MHPSS are fundamental to interventions seeking to bring about systemic change.

Positive masculinities

The promotion of positive masculinities is not only about men who need to change their negative behaviours. Project activities highlighted the fact that Burundian women also need to be sensitised to this issue, as they can (often inadvertently) reinforce negative masculinities through the education they give to their children. For this reason, interventions that systematically engage men and women together, to deconstruct and demystify the origins and social construction of masculinities are crucial for these types of interventions to bring sustainable change.

Gender and Burundian Culture

Linked to the previous, the integration of culture into gender transformative strategies is extremely important. The appropriation of positive cultural markers (proverbs, expressions valuing female leadership, women's contribution to society, and gender equality) can be used to empower women and tackle harmful gender norms. As the construction of masculinities takes place via processes of socialisation from an early age, it is important to promote positive forms of masculinity among children and adolescents.

Ex-combatants

Ensuring the participation of women ex-combatants requires a dedicated strategy. The women ex-combatants targeted via *Twuzuzanye's* strategies were reluctant to participate in the project because they did not want their community to know that they had been combatants. Strategies must be devised to adapt activities to this reality that women face.

6.2. External

Reflecting on external learning, the following are key lessons:

Ex-combatants

The strategy among the ex-combatants was piloted by IW for the first time in the *Twuzuzanye* project. The experience shows that this group encounter enormous problems of stigma, MHPSS, and poverty, in part due to their lack of support following demobilisation, and in part due to their negative behaviours towards the wider community. Much greater programming is needed, particularly from a conflict prevention and social cohesion perspective. Key to this programming is the integration of MHPSS.

Community collaboration

The project activities confirmed the importance of promoting positive masculinities at the community level, as they are among the principal causes of violence against women, connected to unaddressed historical legacies of violence. To do so, it is important to collaborate with community actors who are closest to participants and grassroots communities, as well as with the local administration. Support from the latter is important for partners' activities and CSO initiatives, contributing to achieving the desired impact through the different interventions.

Men as allies

Men need to be involved in the promotion of positive masculinities, in order to ensure the success of the various interventions. It is important to create spaces where men can express themselves freely and reflect on their own behaviours.

Safe spaces

Creating safe spaces for young people in antagonistic, conflictual relations due to perceived political and ethnic differences to simply sit and discuss remains fundamental for reducing tensions and building trust.

7. Budget

The total project expenditures are as follows:

Financial Report (01/02/2022-30/04/2024)	
Budget:	€799,999
Total expenditures:	€724,277
Balance:	€75,723

This represents a consumption of **91%** of the original budget. The slight underspend is largely explained by the direct costs and office costs of implementing partners reaching only 80% of the original budget.

For other budget lines, the adoption of an adaptive programming approach to the project facilitated flexible implementation and enabled modification of project activities to meet changes in the local context, which also explains the slight underspend on various budget-lines. Adopting this approach led, for example, to certain activities under Outcome 1 being combined, including the holding of two conjoined national forums rather than three separate forums to align with the community-based policy agendas of the women leaders. Similarly, the chosen methodology for the third research study under Outcome 3 was based on an audio-visual approach, combining research with uncovering cases of positive deviancy via the project's MEL strategy. For selected other activities, notably the Outcome 2 provincial trainings of politically active youth, the activity strategy was altered to support the training of 100 young people rather than the 40 originally planned, which also ended up reducing the budget needed for the trainings.

8. Conclusion and recommendations

8.1. Conclusion

This final report highlighted the significant impact of the *Twuzuzanye* project. The impact and shifting attitudes brought about by the three intervention strategies in a short period of time were remarkable. The thirst expressed by multiple actors – from project partners to the communities, to ex-combatants, to the local administration – for the project to be extended is testament to change we have sought to convey in this report.

Drawing from the final evaluation report, we can state with confidence that *Twuzuzanye* was a relevant and effective response to the needs of the target communities. According to the same external evaluation, the project was wholly aligned with the needs and priorities of the recipients (relevance), saw planned activities completed on time and achieve their expected results (effectiveness), produced positive results in terms of both quantity and quality (impact), and is likely to produce effects beyond its close (sustainability).

The quantitative and qualitative data show that the principal objectives have been achieved in the target communities, for the various outputs and consequently for three project Outcomes. Among the most important changes are the effects on women's political participation, the reintegration of ex-combatants, and attitude shifts around positive masculinities. Furthermore, through the diverse strategies and by working with multiple stakeholders and actors, a number of important lessons have been learned and programming adaptations made that serve as important reference for future projects.

Shortcomings have been reported nonetheless, including the limited geographical of the project. This necessarily limits impact to the target communities, though some of the data from the various evaluations indicate that *Twuzuzanye* had an impact beyond its immediate intervention zones. Relatedly, as with all interventions targeting behavioural shifts and social change, questions of sustainability and long-term impact are important to bear in mind, but they should also guide engaged actors and stakeholders to develop new interventions that can sustained the reported results.

This notwithstanding, the overriding conclusion is that *Twuzuzanye* has initiated social changes that should be both consolidated in the target communities and expanded across the country.

8.2. Recommendations

Important recommendations are found in the external evaluation report complementing the following:

Belgian government & donor partners

1. Respond favourably to stakeholders' demands and extend the *Twuzuzanye* intervention strategies through longer-term programming across Burundi.
2. Integrate the promotion of positive masculinities into programming around social cohesion and peacebuilding, using lessons learnt from *Twuzuzanye* as entry points.
3. Continue supporting women's political participation via long-term strategies that build capacities, open political spaces, and give greater attention to strategic advocacy by women leaders.
4. Support programmes and projects focusing on the needs of ex-combatants, including via strategic approaches designed around MHPSS.
5. Urgently allocate funds for projects working with youth affiliated to political parties, ex-combatants, and women leaders to reduce the risk factors for violence ahead of the 2025 and 2027 elections.

Civil society & international actors

1. Design new programme and project interventions that draw on the positive impact and lessons of *Twuzuzanye*.
2. Advocate for the integration of masculinities and civic education into school curricula in Burundi, to promote women's participation and strengthen youth resilience to political manipulation.
3. Appropriate and integrate the tools designed through *Twuzuzanye* to conduct community actions on positive masculinities among men, women, and young people.
4. Harness the potential of interactive and virtual spaces for influencing attitude shifts and for opening civic space for discussion in Burundi.

Authorities & political parties

1. Develop internal gender strategies to reform party procedures and structures to guarantee the participation of women in all aspects of political life.
2. Design and implement, in collaboration with civil society, a strategy to bring youth from diverse political parties together to discuss and find solutions to common problems at the community and national levels.
3. Elaborate projects supporting the social integration of ex-combatants and end the reliance on ex-combatants for ensuring security and political mobilisation of youth at the community level.
4. Analyse community dynamics and produce action plans for how best to ensure the active and meaningful participation of women and girls in decision-making processes and political forums.

