

# INITIATIVE FOR PEACEBUILDING

International Alert and the local partner Dushirehamwe held local workshops in Burundi in the framework of the IfP gender cluster: in Gitega on 27 January and Ngozi on 29 January 29, 2009, followed by roundtable in Bujumbura with key EU Member States.

The focus of the meetings were Security Sector Reform and gender and an evaluation of the impact of the UN Peacebuilding Fund projects in relation to security as well as women's perceptions and needs of security in Burundi and ways to address these security threats. These activities were linked with the IfP security cluster initiatives and objectives.

Women rural leaders were presented with the key concept of security sector reform and the importance of the gender perspective. A consultation was facilitated on the security risks, needs and challenges faced by women and the ways and means to address this insecurity. In the wider goal of contributing to sustainable peace processes, these activities aimed at increasing the understanding of the interconnection between gender, security and development, increasing political participation, identifying local security needs and contributing to transforming behaviors. It was highlighted that peace cannot be sustainable if it is not sustainable for all. The need for increased political participation of women to transform behaviours to end the cycles of conflict in Burundi was also emphasized in the meeting.

The women rural leaders identified the following security risks:

Lack of property and inheritance rights, traditional role and perceptions regarding women, ignorance of their rights, police abuse, armed groups, proliferation of arms, corruption and impunity, illegal marriages, economic dependence and vulnerability, poverty of women, domestic violence, lack of participation and access in political decision making processes.

The leaders considered that the following was needed to increase the security of women in Burundi:

- the role of the police in the society needed to be clarified
- gender sensitive training in police forces was needed
- increase the quotas of women in police forces and provide adequate conditions
- advocate for equitable management of family resources between males and females
- advocate for a change in the inheritance and property laws
- advocate for laws that protect women's rights
- develop micro credits for women
- develop more solidarity amongst women
- develop women's political leadership in all sectors of public life
- increase women's political participation
- develop literacy programmes for women
- develop information campaigns for women to know their rights

The women rural leaders were also consulted on their experience and evaluation of the integration of gender into UN Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF) projects in relation to security. Feedback was given on some of the projects' impact on women's security, information that is part of reporting by the delegates of civil society to the Steering Committee of the UNPBF. Women felt certain positive impacts resulting from the UNPBF projects in areas such as strengthening justice and dialogue encouraging conciliatory cohabitation. However the impact was considered still limited in some areas as several projects still needed to be carried out.

The insights and recommendations drawn from these workshops were shared immediately with the majority of representatives of the EU member states in Burundi and the representative of the European Commission (governance and gender) aiming to contribute to the increased understanding and improvement of the gender sensitive peacebuilding donor policies and practices in Burundi.