

Burundian refugees, recently returned from Tanzania, look in at the doorway of a house in a resettlement camp in Musenyi, southern Burundi, November 2012.

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Unprotected

YOUNG PEOPLE IN POST-CONFLICT BURUNDI

INTRODUCTION

Although civil war in Burundi ended more than a decade ago, the country remains deeply affected by insecurity. Many of the underlying conditions that led to the outbreak of armed conflict persist, including poverty, unemployment, a lack of access to basic social services, and a narrowing political space. While young people in Burundi demonstrate strength and resourcefulness in coping with these adversities, they face an uphill struggle.¹ Forced to ‘live more in the present and to discount the future’ (Wood, 2003), many young people in Burundi are coping with these adversities by adopting high-risk survival tactics. A history of conflict and its effects on their families fundamentally shape their understandings of their current lives, including conditions of poverty. As one youth summarized: ‘The problems here are poverty and the war—they influence each other’ (Seymour et al., 2014, p. 35).

This chapter reviews the circumstances and capacities of young people in Burundi and, in particular, the deleterious effects of years of violence and poverty on the protective factors that would otherwise have safeguarded them from involvement in violent activities. It examines the relationship between armed violence and material adversity and the ways in which young people experience and cope with the daily challenges of survival. Based on original fieldwork conducted with young Burundians between 2012 and 2014, the chapter builds on a literature review and previous research conducted by the Small Arms Survey in 2005 and by the Geneva Declaration in 2008 (Pézard and Florquin, 2007; Pézard and de Tessières, 2009).

The chapter’s main findings include the following:

- The threats posed by young people’s involvement in armed violence remain significant in Burundi, influenced by widespread poverty, land disputes, manipulation by political parties, and the availability of arms from the civil war era.
- Data on the use of firearms in Burundi is limited, but new monitoring mechanisms suggest that more than one-third of all incidents of armed violence involve the use of small arms and grenades.
- Banditry is perceived as the main security risk in Burundi, yet it is unclear to what extent banditry is politically or economically motivated.
- In the absence of family support, young Burundians adopt high-risk coping strategies, including those that lead to involvement in armed violence.
- Major international assistance projects in Burundi in the post-conflict period have tended to neglect the provision of support to young people, who are most at risk of becoming involved in violent activities.
- Local and national party-based politics play a significant role in provoking and sustaining youth violence in Burundi. Interviews show that for many young Burundians, joining youth wings of political parties represents one of the most easily accessible and effective short-term coping tactics, but one with long-term risks.
- Providing young people with opportunities to earn an income and ensure their own livelihood is likely to improve their prospects significantly, while also reducing their chances of adopting high-risk coping tactics.

This chapter is organized into four main sections. The first provides an overview of Burundi's legacy of conflict, describing both the conflict era and more recent violence. The second section highlights major internationally supported peace and security initiatives, including investments in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), peacebuilding, and security sector reform. It also describes how, despite significant international interventions, the structural causes of violence remain largely unaddressed. The third section presents young Burundians' perspectives on their everyday lives, the challenges they face, their coping mechanisms, and their understandings of the multiple types of violence affecting their lives. The fourth section considers the prevailing risks and protective factors for young Burundians within the ecological model of human development and suggests strategies for strengthening protective factors to support and protect Burundi's youths.

BURUNDI'S LEGACY OF CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

Conflict and its aftermath

Burundi has long been afflicted by successive waves of extreme violence. Having gained its independence from Belgium in 1962, the country witnessed cyclical outbreaks of mass violence in 1965, 1972, 1988, 1991, and 1993, which resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, the displacement of millions of others, and the perpetuation of a climate of distrust, fear, and extreme underdevelopment (Lemarchand, 1996; Nindorera, 2012, pp. 33–34). All of these episodes were rooted in unresolved grievances and contestations for control of power and resources (Ngaruko and Nkurunziza, 2000, p. 379); they also reflected a political landscape in which deep ethnic divides pitted a Tutsi minority, whose elite controlled power, against a marginalized Hutu majority. Throughout this period, the political elite repeatedly fabricated suspicion and fear to mobilize the population to engage in extreme violence (Oketch and Polzer, 2002, pp. 123, 133).

The stage for violent transitions of power was set in 1961, even before independence, with the assassination of the leader of the



A Burundian soldier watches over a mass grave, subsequent to the massacre of more than 160 Congolese refugees, Gatumba, Burundi, August 2004. © Finbarr O'Reilly/Reuters

Union pour le Progrès National (Union for National Progress, UPRONA), Prince Louis Rwagasore, an event that coincided with the revolution in neighbouring Rwanda and contributed to the establishment of ethnic identity as the key driver for the violent contestation of power in the independence period. Four years later, the assassination of Prime Minister Pierre Ngendandumwe, a Hutu, further fomented ethnic-based distrust and resulted in mass killings of Tutsi and then Hutu civilians (Nindorera, 2012, p. 10). A military coup in 1966 initiated a period of Tutsi-led military rule that would last until the 1990s. During this period, multiple attempts by Hutu leaders to overthrow the Tutsi leadership were thwarted, only to be followed by further violent attacks on the Hutu population. A Hutu-led rebellion in 1972 in the southern part of the country involved the massacre of an estimated 1,000 Tutsi civilians and a brutal crackdown that eventually led to the killing of some 200,000 people and the flight of 300,000 others (Chrétien and Dupaquier, 2007; Ngaruko and Nkurunziza, 2000, pp. 375–76; Pézard and Florquin, 2007, p. 199).

As the successive military regimes tightened their hold on power, Hutu grievances grew, leading to popular revolts, killings of civilians, and further repression. An upsurge in violence in 1988 claimed the lives of several thousand people and eventually elicited concerted international pressure on the Burundian leadership to begin inter-ethnic dialogue. This process ushered in a political opening, the drafting of a new constitution, and the organization of the first multi-party elections in 1993. The Hutu Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi (Front for Democracy in Burundi, FRODEBU) earned 80 per cent of the vote in those elections (Nindorera, 2012, pp. 11–12). Yet, in line with historical precedent, antagonized elements in the national army assassinated the first democratically elected president of Burundi, Melchior Ndadaye, only three months after he took office, unleashing retaliatory massacres that progressively escalated into civil war. By 2003, the fighting had claimed some 300,000 lives and displaced at least 800,000 people (Vircoulon, 2014; Voors et al., 2012, p. 944). In 1996, former president Maj. Pierre Buyoya orchestrated a military coup, overthrew the interim head of state, and reassumed the presidency.² The main actors in the ongoing war included the military government and its



locally mobilized militia—the Gardiens de la Paix (Guardians of the Peace), composed mainly of young people—which fought against the largely Hutu opposition actors, including:

- FRODEBU;
- the Conseil National Pour la Défense de la Démocratie (National Council for the Defence of Democracy, CNDD), a FRODEBU offshoot;
- the CNDD–Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (Forces for the Defence of Democracy, FDD), the CNDD’s armed wing; and
- the Parti pour la Libération du Peuple Hutu–Forces Nationales de Libération (Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People–National Liberation Forces, Palipehutu–FNL), which had long organized outside of Burundi (Nindorera, 2012, pp. 14–15).

Although classified as a post-conflict country, Burundi still has high levels of armed violence.

In response to sustained rebellion and mounting international pressure on President Buyoya to address the conflict, peace negotiations were opened in Arusha, Tanzania, in 1998. These negotiations culminated in the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement of August 2000, which included provisions for reform of the security forces to ensure an ethnic balance, and assurances for the integration of members of the former rebel movements. Signatories included FRODEBU and UPRONA, as well as the political wings of the CNDD and Palipehutu, whose armed wings—the CNDD–FDD and Palipehutu–FNL—continued their rebellion.³ In 2003, the CNDD–FDD signed the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement and the Pretoria Protocol on Political, Defence, and Security Power-Sharing, which set the conditions for the integration of the CNDD–FDD into the army, police, and government administration (ICG, 2004).

The CNDD–FDD subsequently entered the FRODEBU-led transitional government and began to prepare for the 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections, which it won easily, with Pierre Nkurunziza taking power. Although the 2005 elections technically brought Burundi into a post-conflict era, the Palipehutu–FNL rebellion continued for several more years (ICG, 2009). In September 2006 Palipehutu–FNL and the government signed a ceasefire, and a process of peace negotiations continued until the group declared an end to the armed struggle in 2008 and shortened its name to FNL. Legislative and presidential elections took place again in 2010 but were boycotted by the opposition. The CNDD–FDD won and Pierre Nkurunziza remained leader, although the lack of participation by the main opposition parties weakened the legitimacy of the process (UN, 2010). In the lead-up to the 2015 elections, numerous members of the international community expressed serious concerns about the free participation of the opposition and the threat of an upsurge in political violence (UN, 2014).

Recent violence

Although Burundi has been classified as a post-conflict country (RULAC, 2012), it has continued to experience high levels of armed violence. Documenting this unrest has proven challenging; in post-conflict and non-conflict settings, it is generally difficult to ascribe and disaggregate types and motivations of armed violence, which are often multiple and overlapping (De Martino and Dönges, 2012, p. 9). In Burundi, the act of reporting on violence can itself entail significant risks to personal security.

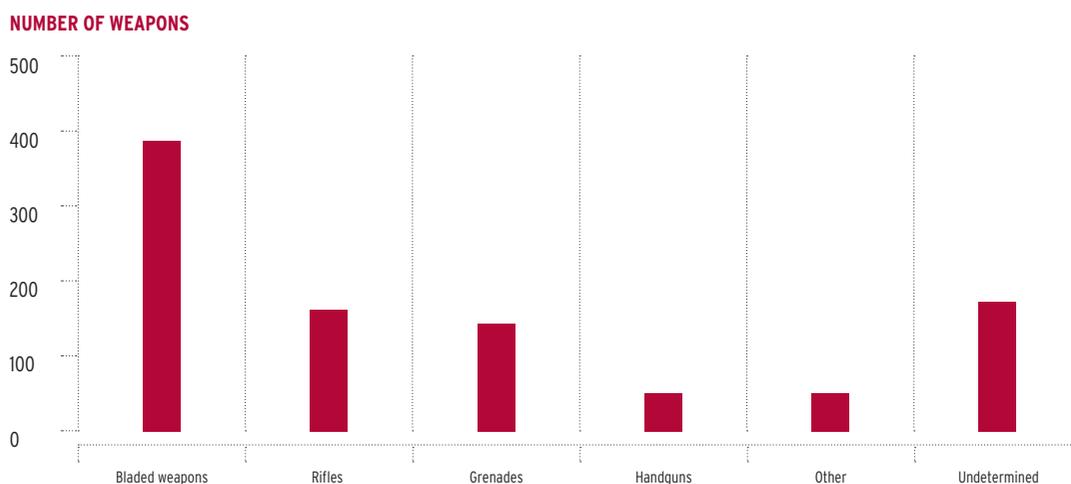
Despite such challenges, the Burundi Armed Violence Observatory is compiling and analysing national data on violent incidents.⁴ Initial data collected by the observatory provides useful indications on current patterns of armed violence. For example, data collected in the first eight months of 2014 shows banditry to be the most prevalent form



Grenades removed from police armouries are prepared for destruction, Burundi, 2009. © MAG Burundi

of violence (BRAVO, 2014a, p. 15). Burundians have long perceived banditry as their main security threat (Pézard and de Tessières, 2009, pp. 56–57); yet in the current context of heightened political tensions, it is not clear whether such incidents are being perpetrated by ‘simple bandits’ who seek economic gain or by politically motivated youth militias that have allegedly been trained and armed to instigate violence ahead of the 2015 elections (RFI, 2014a; 2014b). According to the local media and interviews conducted in Burundi in November 2014, a surge in armed violence in Bujumbura was attributed to young men wielding machetes, who attacked homes and civilians walking in the streets at night. Although it was not possible to establish the perpetrators’ identities or motivations—or indeed whether their acts were politically motivated, as interviewees contended—fear and perceptions of insecurity were notably higher at the end of 2014 than at any time in the 2012–14 research period (Seymour, 2014, p. 3).

The observatory also documents the types of arms used to perpetrate acts of violence. Data collected in the first eight months of 2014 suggests that bladed weapons—including machetes—are the most commonly used weapons, followed by rifles and grenades—arms that have been circulating since the civil war era (Pézard and Florquin, 2007, p. 198). Of the 966 weapons used in violent incidents recorded, more than one-third (37 per cent) involved rifles, grenades, or handguns. Due to incomplete reporting, information on the type of arm used was not available in 18 per cent of the cases (see Figure 9.1).⁵

Figure 9.1 **Distribution of 966 weapons used in violent incidents, by type, January–August 2014**

Sources: BRAVO (2014a, 2014b, 2014c)

In addition to banditry, the rise of youth wings of political parties is an important security concern in Burundi today (Seymour, 2014, p. 1). This is a particularly sensitive issue in the pre-electoral period, as political parties are reinforcing their youth wings to mobilize popular support throughout the country. In these contexts, the young people are especially vulnerable to becoming engaged in armed violence. In 2013 and 2014, multiple confrontations between government party and opposition groups were reported to have degenerated into violent confrontations (AI, 2014).

The mobilization of youth for political violence is not a new phenomenon in Burundi; historically, political elites have recruited youths to carry out acts of violence and intimidation (Berckmoes, 2014, p. 137). In 1972, for example, the *Jeunesse Révolutionnaire Rwagasore* (Rwagasore Revolutionary Youth)—a primarily Tutsi youth wing affiliated with the ruling party at the time—played an important role in reprisal attacks on the Hutu civilian population that left several thousand Tutsis and an estimated 200,000 Hutus dead (Ngaruko and Nkurunziza, 2000, p. 375). Subsequently, young people were widely mobilized for violence in the 1993 war: FRODEBU's youth wing—the *Jeunesse Démocratique du Burundi* (Democratic Youth of Burundi)—attacked Tutsi civilians following the assassination of the Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, as did the *Jeunesse Patriotique Hutu* (Patriotic Hutu Youth) of the Palipehutu–FNL. Meanwhile, Tutsi extremist groups such as *Sans Échec* (The Infallible) and *Sans Défaite* (The Undeclared) became notorious for acts of extreme violence and predation (Berckmoes, 2014, p. 141). As the war gained momentum in the second half of the 1990s, large numbers of young people enrolled in the fighting forces, including the national army (UN, 2003).

In Burundi's current political configuration, the youth wing of the ruling government party—the *Imbonerakure* ('Those Who See Far' in Kirundi)—presents specific concerns for armed violence. The group first drew the attention of international media and human rights actors in late 2008 in relation to reports of intimidation and demonstrations by youths who were wielding sticks and clubs while chanting slogans such as, 'Those that are not with us will be sent into exile or die' (Ghoshal, 2010, p. 16). In the first half of 2014, the UN reported on a range of politically motivated incidents involving the *Imbonerakure*, including the prevention or disruption of opposition party meetings, assaults on members of political parties, threats and intimidation against people accused of refusing to join the ruling party, and plain extortion and robbery (UN, 2014, p. 8).

The cascading effects of this violence include the mobilization of larger numbers of young people to opposition party youth wings. Increasingly, members of these groups are claiming that their only recourse is to defend themselves through violence. In the words of a 30-year-old leader in the Mouvement pour la Solidarité et la Démocratie (Movement for Solidarity and Democracy):

Violence has become inevitable. We youths are courageous, we need change. We cannot remain with our arms crossed [. . .]. We are ready to confront [the government] and the Imbonerakure. . . . We will use stones, batons against their guns if we need to. In 2010 we saw how the elections were stolen from us. This time we will not let it happen again [. . .]. The hope we used to have has run out (Seymour, 2014, p. 3).



Imbonerakure members march in the stadium of Gitega, Burundi, September 2014. © Damien Roulette

INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTIONS TO MITIGATE VIOLENCE

Investment in peacebuilding and security

In the past decade, international aid and development actors have invested heavily in Burundi's peace and security, including by supporting the Arusha peace process and by deploying various peacekeeping and peace support missions since then.⁶

Burundi was one of the first countries to be designated a recipient of the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), the multi-year standing trust fund established in 2006 to support post-conflict peacebuilding (UNPBF, n.d.a). PBF interventions have included support for the implementation of peace agreements, political dialogue, and peaceful conflict resolution; economic revitalization and the creation of peace dividends; and the rebuilding of administrative services and capacities (UNPBF, n.d.b). By 2014, the PBF had allocated more than USD 49 million to peacebuilding projects in Burundi, including USD 35 million to the first Peacebuilding Priority Plan in 2007 (UNPBF, n.d.c). An independent evaluation of PBF support to Burundi between 2007 and 2013 deems the programme innovative and timely, particularly in its support for political negotiation processes that led to the transformation of the FNL into a political group, and for logistical preparations ahead of the 2010 elections (Campbell et al., 2014, pp. 5–6). At the same time, the evaluation concludes that some projects were not of consistently high quality and may even have produced negative effects, as plans for sustainability and follow-up were not sufficiently considered (Campbell et al., 2014, p. 6).

Another notable large-scale investment in Burundi's security was the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme (MDRP), a regionally focused, multi-donor framework managed by the World Bank to support the DDR of ex-combatants in the Great Lakes region.⁷ In Burundi, the MDRP funded the executive secretariat of the National



A young man waits in a demobilization camp, in the province of Bubanza, north of Bujumbura, May 2009. © Jean Pierre Aimé Harerimana/Reuters

Box 9.1 DDR for children

The war that began in 1993 saw large numbers of children and young people engaged with all fighting forces. As documented in the November 2003 UN Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly, the Burundian armed groups that recruited and used young people under the age of 18 included the national army—the Forces Armées Burundaises—as well as the CNDD-FDD and the Palipehutu-FNL (UN, 2003, p. 20). Moreover, the Gardiens de la Paix were primarily made up of young people (Ntiyibagiruwayo, 2003), while less prominent rebel groups also included children in their ranks.

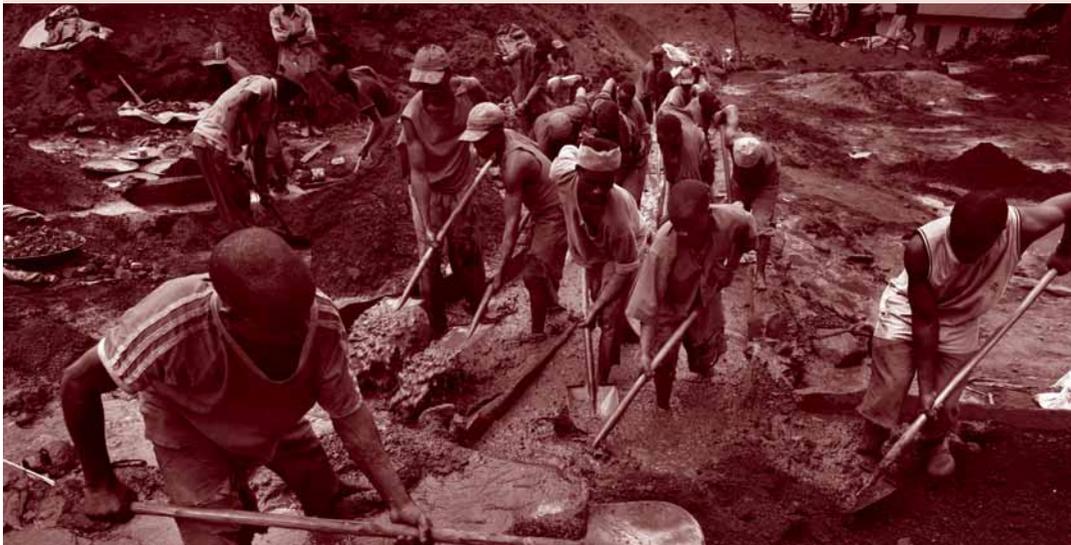
Two phases of children's DDR occurred in Burundi, the first between 2004 and 2006, and the second in 2009. The first phase witnessed the demobilization of more than 3,000 children, including those associated with the Gardiens de la Paix, the Forces Armées Burundaises, and the various rebel groups (Seymour, 2012). With the support of the World Bank MDRP programme, projects were implemented to assist communities and families; to enhance educational opportunities, provide psychosocial support, organize apprenticeships, and help to set up small businesses; and to make sports and cultural activities available to demobilized children and youths (World Bank, 2010, pp. 68–69). The second phase of the children's DDR occurred after the end of the FNL rebellion and led to the demobilization of more than 600 children. In total, between 2004 and 2009, well over 3,600 children were demobilized (see Table 9.1).

The children's DDR process in Burundi suffered from two notable weaknesses. First, the programme did not reach large numbers of young combatants. One reason was the highly bureaucratic listing process, as ex-combatant status could be validated only by local authorities and senior commanders, who often chose to exclude young people in their disfavour (Seymour, 2012, pp. 22–23). As these excluded young people could not formally enter the DDR process, they did

not benefit from social and economic reintegration support, nor did they receive any psychosocial follow-up.⁸

Among those excluded were the many girls who had been affiliated with the armed groups. Although the precise number of girls who were involved as combatants, assistants, cooks, 'wives', dancers, singers, or informers is not known, interviews with local authorities, parents, NGOs, and young people indicate that many had been involved with the various armed groups. One NGO was working with 500 self-demobilized girls in two provinces alone, a striking contrast to the 53 girls who actually went through the formal national DDR process (Seymour, 2012, pp. 22–25). The challenges inherent in reaching girls in the context of other DDR processes have been well documented; they include girls' fear of social stigma, potential damage to the family honour, and a negative impact on future marriage possibilities (Verhey, 2004). These factors were foreseeable in Burundi, yet the children's DDR programme failed to integrate a community-based approach that would have provided girls with reintegration and psychosocial support while protecting them from stigmatization.

A second weakness was the lack of economic reintegration support. While the Paris Principles on children associated with armed groups hold that reintegration covers the acquisition of 'dignified livelihoods' (UNICEF, 2007), an evaluation of the first phase of the children's DDR programme finds that 'the economic situation of the child soldiers has reverted pretty much back to the situation they left years earlier' (Uvin, 2007, p. 13). A subsequent evaluation of the second phase shows that most of the ex-combatant youths were not gainfully employed but rather survived through daily wage labour, working on farms, carrying loads to markets, or digging for gold. They were generally angry, disillusioned by their experiences, and had little hope for improved prospects (Seymour, 2012, pp. 25–27).



Young men dig in a gold mine in the village of Rusoro, in the province of Cibitoke, Burundi, September 2010. © Abbie Trayler-Smith/Panos Pictures/Felix Features

Table 9.1 Number of children demobilized in Burundi, by armed group and sex, 2004–06 and 2009

Phase	Armed group affiliation	Boys	Girls	Number of children
Phase 1 (2004–06)	Gardiens de la Paix			1,387
	Forces Armées Burundaises			891
	Other political parties and armed movements			644
	CNDD-FDD			106
	Total for phase 1	2,982	46	3,028
Phase 2 (2009)	Palipehutu-FNL	619	7	626
Totals for phases 1 and 2		3,601	53	3,654

Source: Seymour (2012, p. 18)

Commission for DDR with USD 74.8 million in 2004 to demobilize some 55,000 combatants—including the national army, the Gardiens de la Paix, and the various rebel movements—and to support their reintegration into civilian life (World Bank, 2010, p. 64). The DDR effort also included the demobilization of children (see Box 9.1 on previous page).

Although the continuing rebellion by the Palipehutu–FNL slowed the DDR process, the project reportedly demobilized well over 26,000 combatants between 2004 and 2008 (World Bank, 2010, p. 24). A second tranche of funding to the Burundi Emergency Demobilization and Transitional Reintegration Project after the closure of the MDRP allowed for the DDR of nearly 7,000 additional ex-combatants by the end of 2012 (World Bank, 2013). The World Bank judged the programme a success even though the demobilization of more than 35,000 combatants from all sides had yielded only 6,000 surrendered weapons by the end of 2007 (World Bank, 2010; GICHD, 2012, p. 19).

Significant international support has continued to flow into Burundi’s security sector, primarily within the framework of the Burundi–Netherlands security sector development programme. Based on an eight-year memorandum of understanding signed by the two governments in April 2009, this programme is organized according to the three pillars of public security, defence, and governance. Its provisions include training, organization, and planning support; logistical support and equipment; building of infrastructure; financial management; internal and external control mechanisms; and forums for dialogue (DSS Burundi, n.d.). The programme’s key priorities are to ensure political buy-in to the security sector reform process and to build trust among the various government security actors (Ball, 2014).⁹ According to security sector actors in Burundi, this project represents a significant innovation in the way international donors engage with security sector reform in post-conflict countries, primarily in its acknowledgement of the extreme complexity of the work, the high political stakes, and the extended length of time needed to build trust and to begin effecting change (Seymour, 2014, p. 3).

Gaps in international approaches

As noted above, despite significant donor investments in peace and security programming, armed violence remains a serious threat in Burundi. While post-conflict peacebuilding is always challenging, there have been two noticeable shortcomings in Burundi: too weak a focus on the structural causes of violence, and too little attention paid to the needs and experiences of young people.

In the first instance, with the exception of the PBF, the international interventions described above have tended to ignore the structural causes of violence in Burundi. Anchored in historically entrenched inequalities and reinforced through violent, often identity-based politics, these causes include limited access to basic services such as health and education, and a lack of sustainable livelihood opportunities.¹⁰ In 2013, Burundi ranked 180 of 187 countries for the indices of ‘a long and healthy life’, ‘access to knowledge’, and ‘standard of living’ (UNDP, 2014, p. 2);¹¹ the country’s gross national income per capita stood below USD 750 (UNDP, n.d.b).

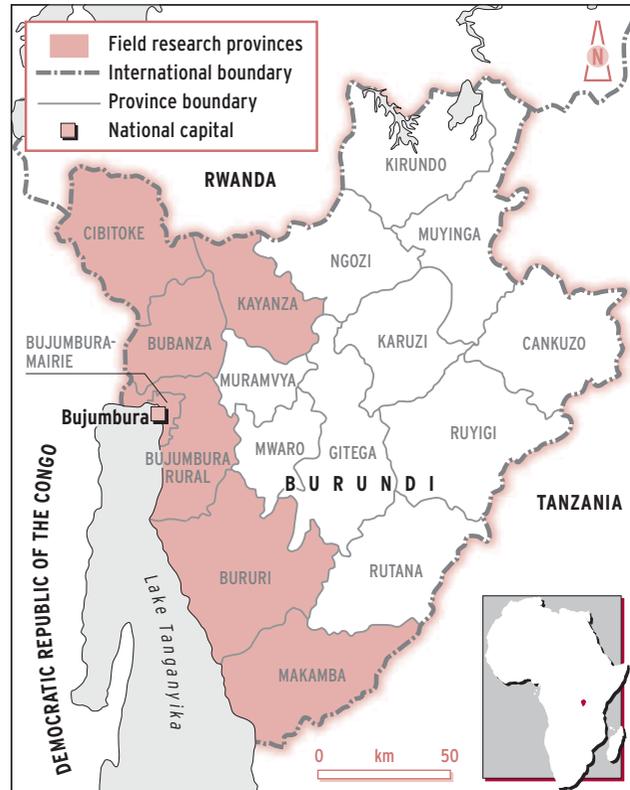
These socioeconomic challenges are aggravated by diminishing access to land, increasing fragmentation of land ownership, and over-exploitation of land. The consequent competition over land sparks frequent conflicts within families, between neighbours, and between communities and returning refugees (ICG, 2014).¹² Land-related conflict and declining resources are having an acutely negative effect on the prospects for political stability and peaceful development.

The second key gap in international peace and security interventions is a lack of focus on young people. PBF project interventions, for example, did not target youths affiliated with political parties—even though youth-related violence has long been identified as one of the greatest security threats in Burundi (Campbell et al., 2014). Moreover, 18–25-year-old combatants were not covered in the children’s DDR process, which also failed to provide adequate reintegration support to child combatants once they turned 18 (Seymour, 2012, pp. 27–28). While young people in post-conflict contexts are often expected to contribute to the rebuilding of their societies, many young Burundians have not received the support they need to do so. Instead, they are forced to expend all their energies on basic survival.

VOICES OF YOUNG BURUNDIANS

Before effective steps can be taken to protect young Burundians, it is essential to hear their own opinions, ideas, and perspectives about the challenges and risks they face. The self-reported perceptions described in this section are drawn primarily from interviews and focus groups held in 2012–14 with almost 500 young people aged 10–25 in Bujumbura as well as in town centres and rural villages of six provinces (Bubanza, Bujumbura Rural, Bururi, Cibitoke, Kayanza, and Makamba) (see Map 9.1).¹³ In 2013 and 2014, three young people formed an integral part of the core research team, while adolescent researchers were also trained and conducted interviews among their peers. In addition, more than 200 adults were interviewed during the fieldwork.

Map 9.1 Field research locations in Burundi, 2012–14



Surviving the everyday

In Burundi, young people's agency—their ability to act within and influence their situation (Bourdieu, 1977)—has been severely constrained by the hardships associated with war, and by the risks inherent in their everyday survival, including a lack of access to basic services. As in many contexts of violent conflict and entrenched poverty, young people's agency involves navigating the constraints on everyday life and seizing opportunities in a frequently changing environment (Vigh, 2006, pp. 10–11). For many young Burundians, meeting even basic needs presents profound challenges (Sommers, 2013); yet, despite these constraints, they are doing their best to make the most of their capacities and skills to improve their survival outcomes.

Many young people in Burundi today bear the heavy responsibility of ensuring their own livelihoods as well as those of their families. Most of the young people who participated in this research reported that they earn BIF 1,000–2,000 (USD 0.65–1.30) per day. Many of them are involved in cultivation, usually as day labourers, as transporters of goods and materials, as assistants in informal commercial activities, or as casual labourers in the construction industry. Although both young men and women reported doing all types of work, they tended to refer to cultivation as a 'girls' job', whereas work relating to transport and construction was perceived as more suited to boys. In almost all cases, young people reported being involved in more than one income-generating activity, taking advantage of any opportunity presented to them, and diversifying to increase chances of being able to afford food, medical care, and school fees and materials for themselves, their younger siblings, or their own children (Seymour et al., 2014, pp. 20–21).



Young women work in the fields, in the province of Cibitoke, northern Burundi, March 2010. © Thierry Bresillon/Gadong/Corbis

Box 9.2 High-risk coping tactics

Why do Burundian youths let themselves be mobilized for violence? In part, their involvement should be seen as a form of coping, but one that comes with high risks. During the war, for example, large numbers of young people joined armed groups of their own volition, yet that 'volition' was deeply constrained. In their own words, young people who joined the army often did so for their physical safety, as army positions were thought to offer greater protection than one's home village (Ntirandekura, 2003; Uvin, 2007). Others joined the Gardiens de la Paix—a paramilitary force organized by local administrators—to protect local community interests (Ntiyabagurwayo, 2003), or the CNDD-FDD or the Palipehutu-FNL for ideological reasons (Seymour, 2012). Often young people's choices were based on a combination of motivations that were at once economic and ideological, or based on a desire for revenge. As described by one 20-year-old:

I joined the FNL in 2007 because I had no means of surviving. I thought that even if I died in combat it would be better than living in such misery. I wanted to fight against injustice, know freedom (Seymour, 2012, p. 17).¹⁴

Such mixed motivations for joining armed groups are consistent with findings from other conflict-affected contexts (HealthNet TPO, 2011).¹⁵

Even in the post-conflict period, young people's agency and attempts to improve their survival outcomes may lead them to make choices that increase their likelihood of becoming involved in violence. For example, young men who joined the Imbonerakure youth wing reported doing so for reasons linked to protecting their families—especially in cases where they or their family members were formerly affiliated with the FNL or other opposition political movements (Seymour, 2014). Other youths (of both sexes) reported joining the youth wing of a political party in order to increase their chances of securing patronage support (Berckmoes, 2014, pp. 154–55). In the lead-up to the 2015 elections, young people's main motivation for political involvement was to increase their chances of accessing

money or material goods: 'We might be offered BIF 2,000 (USD 1.30) for being at an event. Why not go?' (Seymour et al., 2014, p. 38).

Although girls are also involved in political activities and thus also at risk of becoming involved in armed violence, some of them have adopted other high-risk coping tactics, largely because their options for meeting their survival needs, as well as the needs of their younger siblings and their own children, are severely limited. During the interviews conducted for this study, young women—as well as young men, parents, and other adult interviewees—repeatedly reported that girls were increasingly engaging in sexual activities in exchange for food, money, or other material support. According to one girl, material need is the main motivation:

There is no money at home. We ask our parents for soap but they insult us: 'Are we a bank?' they ask us. But we need to wash our clothes so that we can look clean like the others. Then they tell us that we are wasting soap. Then a boy or a man comes to offer money for sex. . . . Girls will go to him. Girls might get 1,000 or 2,000 franbu [USD 0.65–1.30] each time. There is nowhere else to get the money (Seymour et al., 2014, p. 28).

While joining an armed group or a political youth wing may offer some young people a broader range of options—and thus facilitate their survival in the short term—it puts them at considerable long-term risk of becoming involved in armed violence. Similarly, for young women, the short-term benefits of engaging in transactional sex might include being able to pay school fees, buy food, or pay for medical care, but the long-term risks include not only contracting sexually transmitted infections or becoming pregnant, but also enduring psychosocial effects and poorer longer-term survival outcomes. Examining how young people cope with pervasive violence requires both short- and long-term perspectives, with an appreciation for the complexity of coping processes whose outcomes might not be measurable for many years.

Such efforts are extremely demanding. As one 17-year-old boy explained: 'Sometimes I'm just so tired, and I don't manage to earn enough so that I can eat enough [. . .] or even eat at all' (Seymour et al., 2014, p. 21). Many young women face the added responsibility of caring for younger siblings, their own children, and household tasks. A 19-year-old mother of two young children explained:

I wake up in the morning and go to the fields to cultivate because that is my job. I work until 11:00. Then I return to prepare food for the children so that they have something to eat when they return from school. After that, around 15:00, I go to the roadside to sell tomatoes so that I might have the means to feed the family. I return home at 20:30 and do the necessary housework before going to bed (Seymour et al., 2014, p. 21).

In response to the question, ‘What are the biggest worries you face?’ young people’s most common responses were variations on a theme: ‘falling ill, being hungry, not being able to pay school fees or materials’ (Seymour et al., 2014, p. 21).

With survival such a challenge, young people often have little hope of emerging from entrenched poverty. Young Burundians’ ‘low horizons’ (Sommers, 2013, pp. 40–41) have a marked impact on their aspirations and contribute to feelings of humiliation and hopelessness, particularly among those unable to continue formal schooling or secure sustainable livelihoods. Consumed by the demands of the daily fight for survival, many have few reasons to aspire to a brighter future. This outlook can influence their adoption of high-risk coping tactics, such as joining armed groups or youth wings of political parties, or engaging in unsafe sexual activities (see Box 9.2 on previous page).

Breakdown in family support capacities

With survival such a challenge, youth have little hope of emerging from entrenched poverty.

Social support is a crucial aspect of young people’s capacities for coping, yet, as recent studies have shown, ‘young Burundians today are on their own, with less assistance from families and communities than ever before’ (Sommers, 2013, p. 14, citing Uvin, 2009). This decline in support is largely attributable to factors associated with the long history of war and crippling macroeconomic conditions—which are not likely to be overcome in the near future.

In the absence of parental support, young people are left to find their own ways of meeting their basic needs. Asked whom they would turn to for support, many young people in group discussions initially replied, ‘No one’. As one youth summarized: ‘There is no one who can support us because mostly everyone is poor’ (Seymour et al., 2014, p. 30). According to the research participants, the support needed by young people is above all material; as their families are not able to help them, they feel they have no one to turn to. Parents’ inability to meet the basic needs of their children is mainly attributed to the war. In the words of one official: ‘Since the war, poverty has prevented parents from caring for their children. As they don’t give their children what they need, the children go astray.’ Another local authority observed: ‘Parents are too busy, they don’t have the time to talk to their children, they are just overwhelmed with survival’ (Seymour et al., 2014, p. 30).

Without adequate social support, young people are left to fend for themselves. One 15-year-old boy explained how, when he was younger, his parents would provide him with food and clothing; over time, however, they were no longer able to assure his basic needs. The inability of his family to provide this support led him to adopt alternate coping mechanisms:

Three years ago I still lived with my family. But because in my family we have nothing, I preferred to come and live on the streets. My family has a small parcel. We are eight children and my father would sideline me. I’m still in contact with my family, but I prefer to live on the streets. I am still close to them, I hear their news. If my mother is sick, I can go to be with her. My father too, I see him every now and then and if he has some money, he might give me something to eat. I left home because I wasn’t satisfied. I worked so much without receiving something in return—you understand how hard that can be. They didn’t even buy me underwear. Today, if I can earn a little bit of money, I can buy myself underwear, a shirt or something else. I can also have something to eat. My day is spent searching for money. I earn money carrying bags and merchandise to and from the market. This is what takes up my whole day. At night, I play cards with the others and wait for the day to end and to sleep. I don’t set myself objectives because my first priority is right now: How will I get my food today? What will I cover myself with if there is rain tonight? (Seymour et al., 2014, p. 31).

This breakdown of families' capacities to support their children has important implications for potential youth pathways to violence. As the young man quoted above also noted, members of political parties frequently approached him and his peers who were living on the streets about participating in rallies and events. Payment in the form of food, clothes, or money of up to BIF 2,000 (USD 1.30) exceeds what they might have received from their families or earned from a day of labour. Political patronage is one of the main avenues for accessing material support or protection in Burundi, and thus one of the main channels for mobilizing young people for violence.

Cycles of violence and poverty

According to the young Burundians who participated in this research, armed violence both emerges from poverty and leads to poverty. For the majority of young people, the connection between past violence and present-day experiences of economic adversity is direct; the violence experienced by them in their childhood and by their parents lays the foundation for their current hardships. Certain young people related that the war that began in 1993 led to the death of one or both parents and thus the obligation to abandon school, which drastically narrowed future employment possibilities. One youth underscored the cyclical nature of this predicament: 'Violence happens because of poverty. Our parents died during the war. If they were alive today, we'd be okay. The war caused all this suffering' (Seymour et al., 2014, p. 35). One participant in a group of parents elaborated on the connections between contemporary material hardship and the legacy of the war:

Political patronage is one of the main avenues for accessing material support or protection.

Children live with nothing. Growing up in a poor family, they will stay poor. Boys just spend their days drinking, they've lost their vision for the future. Young people today are only looking at the now—what can they gain now [. . .]. We are moving house all the time, unable to pay the rent and having to find somewhere more affordable. These changes are caused by the war. We left our land, lived in the forest, in refugee camps [. . .]. Before the war it wasn't like this. First it was the war, now it's the hunger (Seymour et al., 2014, p. 39).

Young people's narratives describe the extent to which past waves of armed violence have shaped their precarious present and restricted future possibilities. While people's memories of violence experienced in the past live on into the present, ongoing threats of armed violence are also directly linked to earlier waves of violence. One example concerns the rising levels of fear and uncertainty in relation to the return of hundreds of thousands of Hutu refugees who were displaced during the massacres of 1972. Another, related source of unease and growing mistrust revolves around land distribution, which has become increasingly politicized since the end of the conflict. Young people described how conflicts over land often involve the threat or use of machetes, batons, lances, and grenades to scare people off land. As one young person observed:

Overpopulation is a problem, many displaced people are now returning. They are coming back with their children. The [government] will give them back the land, and we will be forced to leave, even if we show our papers to the authorities. If we go to the justice authorities, we will be threatened. We will be told that we will be killed or that we will have our teeth pulled out. [. . .] Now someone is living on my father's land. Because of this I now have hatred in my heart (Seymour et al., 2014, p. 36).

Based on young people's descriptions, past violence grew out of ethnic hatred, whereas ethnic identity no longer features as the principal explanation for ongoing violence. Indeed, young people identify the 1993 war—and the violence

preceding it—with hostilities ‘between Hutu and Tutsi’, as distinct from today’s tensions and violence, which they link to ‘politics’. According to many of the young people interviewed for this study, belonging to the current government party is a precondition for achieving or preserving their family’s access to land, gaining employment, and assuring one’s personal security (Seymour, 2014; Seymour et al., 2014). In fact, the threatened or explicit use of violence—a core element of Burundian politics—has been fully integrated into young people’s processes of making sense of their experiences. For them, contemporary political violence is just one dimension of the violence affecting their everyday lives; it cannot be dissociated from long-standing inequalities and poverty. These perceptions have major implications for Burundi’s prospects for long-term development and peace.

PROTECTING YOUNG PEOPLE FROM INVOLVEMENT IN ARMED VIOLENCE

Risks, protective factors, and the ecological model

Contemporary political violence cannot be dissociated from long-standing inequalities and poverty. According to their own narratives, young people in Burundi are confronted by multiple risks on a daily basis. The risks that were associated with direct militarized violence during the war—including death, injury, and displacement—have been followed by the structural risks of a lack of access to basic social services, unemployment, and limited livelihood opportunities. Burundi is not unusual in this regard. In a wide range of war-affected contexts, chronic political, cultural, economic, and social stressors have been shown to have a significant effect on young people’s coping capacities (Kostelny, 2006). In such places, the ‘daily stressors’ of material hardship and reduced access to social services often have a more detrimental impact on young people than the direct experience of militarized violence (Miller and Rasmussen, 2010, p. 7).

The narratives also indicate that traditional protective factors that were once core elements of their coping processes are no longer available or effective. Research in other war-affected contexts has shown that the role of the family is of singular importance in protecting young people’s well-being (Panter-Brick and Eggerman, 2012, p. 374). In Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere, the death of a primary caregiver during violent conflict has been a key determinant in young people’s developmental outcomes (Betancourt et al., 2013; Catani, Schauer, and Neuner, 2008), while the long-term impact of poverty on parental care capacities can be especially damaging (Catani, Schauer, and Neuner, 2008).

The ecological model of human development considers how a child’s development is influenced by the multiple systems in which he or she is embedded (Bronfenbrenner, 1986); it is conceptually useful for analyses of the risks and protective factors influencing young people’s coping processes and possibilities for well-being in highly complex and multifaceted contexts of violence.¹⁶ In this multi-level model, the individual is situated within social networks made up of family, peers, teachers, and religious actors. Those community actors are embedded in a broader system influenced by socioeconomic and political dynamics. Each level fits within a macro-system that is rooted in culture and subject to change over time.

Child-focused research and humanitarian practice in war-affected contexts is increasingly adopting a socioecological perspective, influencing current thinking on young people’s resilience to adversity (CPWG, 2012; Ungar, Ghazinour, and Richter, 2013; Wessells, 2009). Although this more holistic approach is gaining ground, further analysis is needed to determine how the various levels of the ecological system are affected and transformed by protracted violence, and what impact these transformations are having on young people’s capacities for coping. According to young Burundians,

the protective factors of their social and material environment have been completely eroded by violence. As discussed above, most families can no longer offer them support or protection, while educational, health, and employment opportunities are inaccessible for the majority of youths. In the near absence of protective factors, some young people migrate towards high-risk survival tactics, which may allow them to cope effectively in the short term; at the same time, the corresponding way of life significantly increases the risks to their well-being in the long term.¹⁷

The field research presented here suggests that the role of local and national party-based politics in Burundi requires specific attention in analyses of violence and young people's coping processes. Party-based politics currently permeate all levels of life—much as ethnic identity did until the end of the war. Youths' narratives indicate that it is only through political patronage that one might hope to access material resources, future livelihood opportunities, and enhanced physical security. As young people repeatedly stated, joining the youth wing of a political party is today considered the essential first step in increasing one's chances of gaining such patron support. Young people's engagement in politics is not necessarily problematic—indeed, their political engagement occasionally contributes to improved well-being and a sense of individual control (Barber, 2009; Blattman, 2009); in Burundi, however, party politics have a long history of manipulating young people to engage in violent activities.

Strategies for strengthening protective factors

Understanding the extreme challenges confronting young Burundians as well as their lack of protective factors is essential to developing more effective policies and interventions to respond to their needs and improve their prospects. Confirming findings from earlier research on the severe economic constraints facing young Burundians and the consequent lack of opportunities (Sommers and Uvin, 2011, p. 1), the narratives presented in this chapter demonstrate the extent to which young people are struggling to surmount adversities such as poverty, hunger, unemployment, and illness. While they exhibit great resourcefulness in coping with these challenges, their capacities to cope are not to be confused with resilience, which would require the availability of health-sustaining resources (Ungar, 2008; see Box 9.3).

Box 9.3 Resilience as a psychological construct

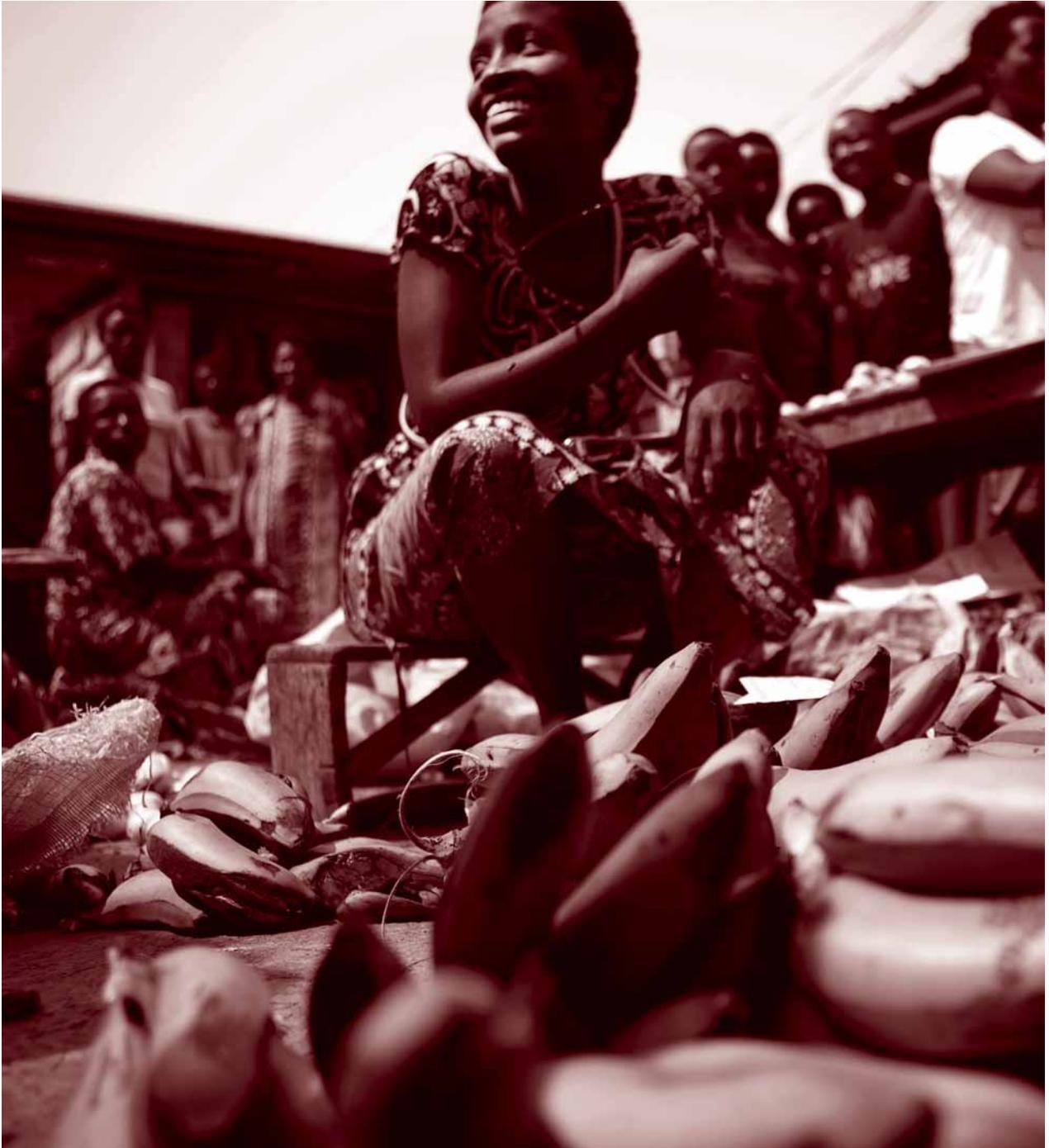
The field of psychology has led resilience research since the 1970s (Elder, 1974; Garmezy, 1985; Rutter and Madge, 1976). Early studies focused on children growing up at the margins of Western European or US society, or in families with parents who were mentally ill or dependent on drugs or alcohol. The general aim was to improve understandings of what characterizes individual coping mechanisms and responses among children living in high-risk social environments, and how treatment and prevention interventions could be more responsive to their needs (Luthar and Brown, 2007). Resilience studies were particularly helpful in moving the field from a focus on the traumatic and psychologically damaging impacts of adversity towards one that acknowledges the capacities of individuals to cope effectively in the face of extreme constraints. Resilience theory suggests that vulnerability can be reduced and relatively good outcomes experienced despite conditions of environmental risk (Rutter, 2012, p. 336).

Resilience researchers have more recently broadened their focus to examine the experiences of young people in a wider range of socio-cultural contexts and, in particular, the social, political, cultural, and economic systems in which young people are embedded (Hazen, 2008, p. 250).¹⁸ Building on Bronfenbrenner's conception of the ecological model of human development, a socioecological approach to resilience considers:

both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual's family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways (Ungar, 2008, p. 225).

This conception of resilience as socially embedded has been especially relevant to the growing field of resilience studies in conflict settings and in places with limited access to the basic resources needed to sustain well-being. The socioecological approach to resilience allows for an understanding of well-being not only as an individual process, but also as social, economic, and political processes, open to multiple levels of analysis and intervention.

By considering the strengths and agency of young people, and by aiming to build protective factors, practitioners and policy-makers can develop interventions that enhance young people's ability to support themselves. Young Burundians report that they are most concerned about ensuring their survival and that of their families. Providing them



Supported by a micro-credit project, a 23-year-old woman runs a business selling fruit in Musaga market, Burundi, December 2010.
© Martina Bacigalupo/Keystone/Agence VU

with opportunities to earn an income and generate livelihoods is likely to improve their prospects significantly and reduce their chances of adopting high-risk coping tactics. According to Sommers and Uvin (2011, p. 11), generating employment opportunities and providing means to access credit would provide young people with the conditions they need to advance themselves.

Resilience theory suggests that encouraging youth participation in matters and processes that affect young people offers them an opportunity to express their individual agency in ways that can reduce their risks of engaging in violence. Approaches that place young people at the centre of interventions in Burundi include Search for Common Ground's *Intamenuwa* ('Indivisibles') project to mobilize young people for peaceful elections in 2015 through conflict resolution skills development (SFCG, 2014); another such project is Action on Armed Violence's peer-based effort to reduce engagement in violence, accompanied by micro-credit loans (Madueno, 2014). These initiatives serve as positive examples of the kind of interventions that are needed to reinforce young people's capacities for resilience in the long term.

The socioecological model also suggests that young people's individual agency is not enough to ensure their well-being; as noted in Box 9.3, it is essential that interventions involve the wider systems in which young people are embedded. This means involving parents, teachers, religious actors, and other community members in the wide range of projects that currently target young people. One example of innovative programming is UNICEF Burundi's Peace-building, Education, and Advocacy Programme, which supports research and interventions to strengthen household caring practices, while at the same time engaging with communities and education service providers in improving life skills education for adolescents. UNICEF programmes currently under way include research on how violence may be transferred from one generation to the next, population-based household surveys on early childhood parenting practices, and resilience and social cohesion, as well as programmes to engage young people and cultivate their leadership skills.¹⁹

At the widest level of society, more effective policies are needed to respond to the needs of young people. Positive developments include the passage of a national child protection policy in 2013, the elaboration of Burundi's child protection code in May 2014,²⁰ and a national youth policy that prioritizes youths in employment, training, and access to micro-credit schemes (Mpfayokurera, 2014; Mukene et al., 2014; Peeters, Rees Smith, and Correia, 2012). Government policies of mandating free maternal and child health care²¹ and free primary education send important political messages, but they remain far from being realized in practice. The considerable political will and financial resources needed to bring them to fruition remain elusive. Until this political impetus becomes a reality, it is difficult to imagine meaningful improvements in the lives of young Burundians.

CONCLUSION

The challenges facing young people in Burundi are profound. Having lived much of their lives in a situation of violent conflict, they have experienced extreme loss and hardships: the death of parents and other close family members, frequent displacement, loss of land and looting of property, illness, and disrupted access to school and other basic services. In the post-conflict period, young Burundians continue to suffer from a persistent lack of access to education and health care, food insecurity, and seemingly insurmountable challenges to obtaining gainful employment. In short, young people in Burundi remain highly vulnerable.

Despite the odds, young Burundians are doing their best to cope, with varying degrees of effectiveness. Understanding how they do so is important for developing positive support strategies. As this chapter has shown, young people use a variety of coping tactics to improve their access to resources and to ensure their immediate short-term survival. In the longer term, however, these strategies may increase the exposure to risks, as is the case when young people join youth wings of political parties for material gain, given Burundi's historical mobilization of young people for violent ends. While armed violence data is not yet refined enough to establish a link between such violence and political groups, it seems likely that some of the current violence is indeed linked to political party manipulation of young people. In this context, it is important to note that guns are used in more than one-third of all weapons-related violence, attesting to their ongoing availability despite post-conflict disarmament efforts.

The impacts of a situation in which so many young people are, as one young person said, 'busy just surviving' (Seymour, 2014, p. 3) are felt at all levels of society and have serious implications for Burundi's future. To avert, or at least mitigate, the potential damage, government leaders, policy-makers, and practitioners need to place a higher priority on improving the opportunities available to young people. Despite the profound challenges, advances can be—and, in some cases, are being—made. Yet to truly make a difference in the lives of young Burundians, concerted attention, political will, and an efficient use of existing funds are required. Burundi is not unique in its developmental challenges, but the country's particular history makes addressing the dire conditions of its youth particularly urgent. ■

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BIF	Burundi franc
CNDD	Conseil National Pour la Défense de la Démocratie
CNDD–FDD	Conseil National Pour la Défense de la Démocratie–Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
FNL	Forces Nationales de Libération
FRODEBU	Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi
MDRP	Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme
Palipehutu–FNL	Parti pour la Libération du Peuple Hutu–Forces Nationales de Libération
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPRONA	Union pour le Progrès National

ENDNOTES

- 1 For the purposes of this chapter a 'young person' is defined as anyone who falls between the ages of 10 and 25 years.
- 2 This interim president, Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, had been appointed in 1994, following the death of the first interim president, Cyprien Ntaryamira, who died in the April 1994 plane crash that also killed President Juvenal Habyarimana of Rwanda (Pézard and Florquin, 2007, p. 199).
- 3 See the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement (APRA, 2000).
- 4 Building on the work of an observatory that had previously operated with the support of the UN Development Programme, the Burundi Armed Violence Observatory was established to monitor and record events relating to armed violence at a national level. The project, led by the Burundian National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons in collaboration with the international NGO Action on Armed Violence, began a systematic collection and analysis of reports of armed violence in Burundi in early 2014. Partners in the collection of data include the Burundian National Police, local administrations, human rights actors and other members of civil society, medical centres, and radio stations. The data collected by

the observatory is setting a long-needed baseline for analysing trends in armed violence throughout the country. The observatory documents information on each incident reported, including the sex of the victims and perpetrators, the type and number of arms used, the location of the incident, and the apparent motivation for the incident. For more information on the observatory, see CNAP (n.d.).

- 5 Pézard and Florquin (2007) document that of the almost 1,300 injuries treated at a Médecins sans Frontières–Belgium clinic in one Bujumbura neighbourhood, 58 per cent of the wounds were due to bullets, 21 per cent to grenades, 13 per cent to blunt objects, 5 per cent to bladed weapons, 2 per cent to landmines, and 1 per cent to mortar bombs. A number of factors may explain why these findings regarding the use of various weapons in violent incidents differ from those presented in this chapter, including the proximity to the conflict phase, the limited geographical scope of the reports documented in Pézard and Florquin (2007), and the international DDR and security sector reform interventions described above.
- 6 In 2003, the African Union established the African Mission in Burundi, which was replaced by the UN Operation in Burundi peacekeeping mission in 2004 (RULAC, 2010). The UN Integrated Office in Burundi was established in 2006; five years later, it was replaced by the UN Office in Burundi, which completed its mandate in December 2014, with UN responsibilities transferred to the UN Country Team (BNUB, n.d.).
- 7 Operating between 2002 and 2009, the MDRP supported the DDR processes in seven countries and reached an estimated 350,000 ex-combatants with a budget of about USD 500 million (World Bank, 2010, p. 1).
- 8 Having conducted a mental health diagnosis of more than 1,200 demobilized children in the provinces of Cancuzo, Kayanza, Ngozi, and Ruyigi, the NGO Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services (THARS) recommended urgent psychotherapeutic interventions, which never took place (author correspondence with the THARS director, 20 October 2014).
- 9 Burundi has also received support from the German government to strengthen capacities of police structures and from the US Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement for weapons marking, the destruction of weapons and ammunition, and storage and management support (GIZ, n.d.; USDOS, 2009). International NGOs such as the Mines Advisory Group and Action on Armed Violence have also provided significant support for stockpile management, weapons destruction, and capacity building and training of national authorities to monitor and respond to acts of armed violence (AOAV, n.d.; GICHD, 2012).
- 10 Burundi's gross national income per capita decreased by 19 per cent between 1980 and 2013 (UNDP, 2014, p. 2). Counter to regional trends in sub-Saharan Africa, economic forecasts indicate worsening poverty in the future (World Bank, 2014).
- 11 In 2013, life expectancy at birth was 54.1 years, the mean years of schooling for the adult population over 25 was 2.7 years, and an estimated 82 per cent of the population was considered to live in 'multidimensional poverty', reflecting both economic hardship and 'overlapping deprivations suffered by people at the same time' (UNDP, 2014, p. 5; n.d.a).
- 12 With more than 350 people per square kilometre, Burundi is one of sub-Saharan Africa's most densely populated countries, yet also one of its most rural, with the majority of its population depending on subsistence farming (World Bank, 2012).
- 13 For more details on the methodologies used in this research, see Seymour (2012) and Seymour et al. (2014).
- 14 In many contexts of armed conflict, young people describe their mobilization by the fighting forces as a choice within severely limiting constraints; see, for example, Brett and Specht (2004) and Seymour (2013).
- 15 In a 2011 study funded by the International Labour Organization, 69 per cent of the 452 former child combatants interviewed indicated that their main reason for joining armed groups had been to gain material benefits, although they also cited fear, peer pressure, political ideology, and a desire for revenge. The study finds that the mean age of recruitment was 14.6 years and that the average length of involvement was 4.2 years. It also reports that 69 per cent of the young people had joined voluntarily, 16 per cent had been forcibly recruited, and another 8 per cent had been abducted. Once recruited, the youths were required to participate in active combat, help with transport, prepare food, and serve as guards and informers, among other tasks (HealthNet TPO, 2011, p. 21).
- 16 See Hazen (2008, pp. 250–51).
- 17 Similarly, qualitative research with former child combatants in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has shown how young people's voluntary enrolment in armed groups may have offered physical protection and a means of survival in the short term, even if such coping strategies left some of these young people with a strong sense of disillusionment and frustration years later (Seymour, 2013).
- 18 This approach has been taken by the Resilience Research Centre in Halifax, Canada. Since 2007, the Centre has led the International Pathways to Resilience project across five countries to examine the culturally specific strengths and capacities that young people use to cope with problems. See IPTR (n.d.).
- 19 Author correspondence with UNICEF Burundi, 12 January 2015.
- 20 Child protection is defined as 'the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children' (CPWG, 2012, p. 13). Current international best practice aims to strengthen the 'child protection system', defined as 'the people, processes, laws, institutions and behaviours that normally protect children' (p. 30), which effectively represents the outer level of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model.
- 21 Government policies stipulate that health care be provided free of charge for children five and under.

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