



Integrated Country Strategy

BURUNDI

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

There are winds of positive change in Burundi, which align with U.S. strategic interests and allow for a deepening of bilateral engagement and U.S. assistance that has not been possible in decades, possibly since Burundi's 1993-2003 civil war. The country, which is located in the heart of a region with long-standing conflict and instability, has a history of recurring violence and societal fissures that have inhibited its growth and kept it mired in widespread poverty. However, in 2020, Burundi started down a new path of engagement and reform. For the first time in 15 years, Burundi inaugurated a president who is orienting his government toward positive reforms, even in the face of opposition from key members of his own party, and seeking to reverse years of negative national policies, international antagonism, and economic stagnation.

The United States has been waiting for such an opening, and we must take advantage of this moment to support Burundi as it advances in this positive direction toward a more inclusive society with less poverty and corruption. It is currently laying the roots of reforms that could break the historical cycles of violence and contribute toward building peace in a crisis-prone region. However, should the United States fail to capitalize on this opportunity, or should hardliners and entrenched interests in Burundi stymie the positive changes underway, Burundi could backslide into the isolation and stagnation of the years prior to 2020, which led it to remain one of the four poorest countries in the world, the country with the second-highest child stunting rate, one of the hardest places for foreign investors and companies to do business, and a place where liberties were suppressed, not celebrated.

Mission Burundi's Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) capitalizes on Burundi's current positive path, leverages long-standing engagement that is producing results, and points the way to new investments that are in line with U.S. strategic interests. Our contributions to the health and humanitarian sectors have yielded considerable results and should be continued and deepened to ensure sustainable development. We believe new U.S. investments in nutrition, education, and civil society could reap significant human capital gains when coupled with a government that is trying to advance those priorities. Additionally, Burundi's contributions in hosting refugees from neighboring countries and in peacekeeping in some of the world's deadliest conflicts are admirable and worthy of continued and increased support.

We should also lift our eyes toward expanded engagement in areas of U.S. strategic interest and leverage new resources to accelerate Burundi's advancement toward a just and inclusive society while growing the economy and creating new opportunities for U.S. business and investments. Macroeconomic reforms, private sector-driven growth, and entrepreneurship, if well-fostered, will provide pathways toward sustained job creation, improved value chains, and alternatives to low-productivity subsistence farming, which remains vulnerable to climate change and results in food insecurity and continued poverty. Economic growth can also become the engine of a virtuous cycle of broader growth that promotes reconciliation, addresses youth unemployment, grows a middle class, and responds to the needs of the most

vulnerable, including women and girls and traditionally disadvantaged groups. No democratic society can succeed without harnessing the dynamism of its population. We must take advantage of current reforms to open even more space for civil society; promote human rights, political dialogue, and rule of law; fight trafficking in persons; and ensure adherence to international norms.

Within each element of the ICS are cross-cutting components. Inclusion of underserved communities, such as returning refugees, indigenous people, youth, and women (traditionally relegated to roles outside of the sphere of economic advancement) will strengthen cohesion in Burundi across all elements. Addressing social inequities inherent in Burundi's past cycles of violence and promoting inclusive education, economic access, and governance will advance social cohesion. Climate resilience and disaster preparedness in one of the most disaster-prone and climate-vulnerable countries must also be integrated into each facet of Burundi's growth to ensure that long-term consolidations are not sacrificed for short-term gains and that shocks, whether natural or manmade, do not impede growth.

U.S. support for positive domestic changes already underway will blunt progress made by our global competitors and demonstrate the advantages of engagement with the United States and its partners. A renewed and more successful Burundi will be a contributor to the broader national strategic goals of regional security and economic opportunity. However, two primary risks exist. First, a failure of the U.S. government to provide the necessary personnel and financial resources could inhibit our ability to successfully take advantage of this once-in-a-generation opportunity for change in Burundi. Second, if we fail to partner with and encourage Burundi on this new positive path, negative voices in Burundi could gain traction and force backsliding on Burundi's engagement on government reform, economic development, human rights protections, and human capital development. Both internal and external challenges remain, and progress will not always be linear. However, Mission Burundi's vision is to capitalize on positive momentum in Burundi today to enable the country to transform from one that is an outlier in the region to one that reliably contributes to the economic stability and security of the region and continent.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Invest in People: Burundian systems for health and education are strengthened.

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** The Burundian government's ability to plan and transparently manage resources dedicated to the improvement of health outcomes is improved.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Equitable educational opportunities in Burundi are increased.
- **Mission Objective 1.3:** Burundi's food security and nutrition outcomes are improved.

Mission Goal 2: Invest in the Economy: The foundation for a stronger Burundian economy is created.

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** The foundations of an enabling business environment, including a more attractive investment climate, are established.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Policies facilitating access to capital, training, and entrepreneurship, especially for underserved or vulnerable populations, are in place.
- **Mission Objective 2.3:** The transition from subsistence agriculture to a broad, market-based economy is initiated while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.

Mission Goal 3: Invest in Society and the Region: Burundi is a peaceful, open, and stable actor at home and in the region.

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** The successful 2020 transfer of power is exploited to promote more open and inclusive governance and respect for human rights and the rule of law.
- **Mission Objective 3.2:** Organs that support civil society and human rights are strengthened.
- **Mission Objective 3.3:** Burundi's defense and law enforcement agencies positively contribute to peace and stability both within Burundi and the region, working with the United States and like-minded countries as their partners of choice.

Management Objective 1: Invest in our Mission: U.S. Mission Burundi is appropriately equipped to achieve U.S. foreign policy objectives.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 | Invest in People: Burundian systems for health and education are strengthened.

Description | As Burundi is one of the four poorest countries in the world, Burundi's health system is primarily funded by international donors. The implementation of local health programs is mainly reliant on international organizations, NGOs, and faith-based organizations. Burundi's Ministry of Health (MOH) currently lacks the capacity to directly plan and manage the health sector, and the public financial systems of the health sector are not transparent. While most indicators of health outcomes continue to improve, albeit slowly, the Burundian government ultimately needs to take responsibility for the planning and management of the health sector. Post will continue to support the Burundian government's ability to plan, budget, and manage public health programs.

A significant challenge in Burundi is the lack of equity in educational opportunities among boys, girls, and vulnerable populations. Families often see the value of education for boys, but not for girls. A society that does not encourage the participation of half its population in educational opportunities is unable to progress towards sustainable prosperity and security. While Post currently lacks the resources to fund a broader basic education program, Mission Burundi will focus its efforts on promoting educational opportunities for all members of society, regardless of gender, ethnicity, class, or any other potential discriminatory factor.

Objective 1.1 | The Burundian government's ability to plan and transparently manage resources dedicated to the improvement of health outcomes is improved.

- **Justification |** A healthy population is foundational to other goals and objectives. Progress in the health sector provides Burundians with the opportunity to focus on improving their personal livelihoods and to contribute to the growth of a stable society. In turn, this allows Burundi to further contribute to regional trade, economic growth, and stability. The Mission will focus its efforts on training and programming to equip the government of Burundi to better meet the health challenges the country faces.
- **Linkages |** State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa Objective 4.1 Transform African Health Systems to Accelerate Reductions in Mortality; State Department's Africa Bureau Strategic Framework Objective 4.1 Strengthen African health systems and mobilize global actors to prevent, detect, and respond to current and future health security threats, and to accelerate reductions in preventable deaths.

- **Risks** | Basic health problems, such as high rates of malaria and a lack of access to proper nutrition, present some of the biggest challenges for development in Burundi. Economic development is dependent on improvement in health outcomes. Failure to improve health outcomes will thus have a detrimental impact on the economy. The Mission has established strong relationships with the Ministry of Health and NGOs and prioritized assistance that addresses the major health care challenges facing Burundi, making it more likely that the Embassy's programs will have an impact on some of the main health challenges facing Burundi.

Objective 1.2 | Equitable educational opportunities in Burundi are increased.

- **Justification** | Equitable educational opportunities play a significant role in a country's progress. Promoting equity in education is a U.S. priority. Programs that encourage higher rates of school attendance, including school feeding programs, will contribute to this goal by addressing some of the economic reasons causing parents to keep children at home instead of in school. Support of English-language programming through PAS initiatives will also help ensure that educational opportunities are more evenly distributed.
- **Linkages** | State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa Objective 4.2 Support Equitable Access to Education for All Learners and Training for Africa's Next Generation
- **Risks** | Burundi has a large youth population that lacks access to quality education. To ensure economic development and progress toward integration in the East African Community, English language programs and improved educational opportunities are key. Otherwise, Burundi will continue to lag behind its neighbors on key economic measures. Thus, support for American Corners and other programs that aim to expand educational opportunities are crucial for continued economic development.

Objective 1.3 | The humanitarian, food, and nutrition needs of vulnerable populations are met.

- **Justification** | Despite moderate improvements in recent years, Burundi remains one of the most food insecure countries in the world with a stunting rate of 52 percent and more than 1.7 million people at risk of moderate to severe malnutrition annually. Burundi continues to face successive natural disasters that constrain its ability to develop durable agriculture and other economic opportunities. Food and nutrition security are constrained by poverty, population growth, and land and environmental degradation. Chronic malnutrition and anemia rates among children under 5 remain high. Improving nutrition outcomes beginning during the 1,000 days between pregnancy and a child's second birthday can lay the foundation for a healthy population. Well-coordinated, multi-sector programs and nutrition-sensitive improvements to food systems will increase access to nutritious foods and knowledge of healthy diets. In the short term, humanitarian assistance interventions will meet the acute needs of affected households, including those of refugees, returnees, and IDPs,

while recovery, disaster risk reduction, and resilience initiatives will position communities to participate in durable food and nutrition security solutions. With food security, Burundi will be better positioned to progress economically.

- **Linkages** | State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa Objective 4.3 Sustainably Reduce Hunger, Malnutrition, and Poverty in sub-Saharan Africa; State Department's Africa Bureau Strategic Framework Objective 4.3 Reduce hunger, malnutrition, and poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa by strengthening equitable and accessible resilience capacities, climate adaptation and natural resource management, and the enabling environment for inclusive and sustainable agriculture-led economic growth.
- **Risks** | Over half of the children in Burundi lack access to quality nutrition, which has led it to have the second highest rate of stunting in the world. Timing is critical, as the cognitive and physical problems associated with malnutrition during the first two years of a child's life are irreversible. For Burundi to improve its educational outcomes and progress economically, its food and nutrition security needs must be addressed. The Mission will do this with a two-pronged approach: helping vulnerable populations gain access to nutritious meals and aiding food producers with getting nutrition-rich foods to the public.

Mission Goal 2 | Invest in the Economy: The foundation for a stronger Burundian economy is created.

Description | Despite the Burundian president's anti-corruption efforts since 2020, Burundi's business climate is characterized by heavy state interference, a lack of transparent and fair regulation, and other major obstacles to business. Instead of open and fair competition, success often depends on favoritism and corruption. The agricultural-based economy is plagued by low value chains, high unemployment, and lack of access to capital for key populations. This dynamic creates a winner-take-all climate where the political arena is seen as the economic driver rather than private enterprise, allowing continued corruption and rent-seeking behaviors among those in power. Alternatives to agriculture are undeveloped, constrained, not climate- or disaster-resilient, opaque, and characterized by lack of regulation and technical capacity. Additionally, 80-90 percent of Burundi's population derives a living from agriculture, mostly smallholder and subsistence farming, and are vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters. These issues can best be addressed by assistance from the United States and like-minded countries through encouraging macroeconomic and public financial management reform and promoting foreign direct investment (FDI), employment opportunities, profitable value chains, and sound agricultural and environmental practices.

Objective 2.1 | The foundations of an enabling business environment, including a more attractive investment climate, are established.

- **Justification** | The foundations for sustainable business development are not in place and lack the involvement of all stakeholders. The government lacks an understanding of basic macroeconomic principles and well-established international norms, and thus does not have the capacity to competently regulate the business environment, causing it to place restrictions on business rather than promote it. Potential international investors don't know the rules of the game and see a lack of contract enforcement, and low ease-of-doing-business rankings discourage foreign direct investment (FDI). This prevents the development of a private sector-driven economy, development of a legitimate tax base, and the ability to effectively fund and deliver basic services. It also results in a lack of consideration for environmental and climate change concerns. At the same time, a lack of transparency in government public financial management systems and the personal financial involvement of government officials in major businesses allow sustained corruption and the manipulation of private sector markets for individual benefit. The Mission will work directly with the government to provide technical assistance and increase dialogue on anti-corruption and economic development.
- **Linkages** | State Department's Africa Bureau Strategic Framework Objective 2.1 Encourage improvements to business enabling environments and enhanced trade and investment between the United States and Africa through whole-of-government engagement; National Security Study Memorandum-1 (June 2021); Joint Strategic Plan SO 3.3
- **Risks** | Corruption and the lack of business-friendly policies continue to hinder the economic development of Burundi. Supporting the government's anti-corruption efforts, macroeconomic reforms, and the country's integration into regional trade organizations will counter some of the problems that have prevented Burundi from profiting from its natural and human resources. Post's engagement with the government of Burundi in addition to the government's own calls for greater transparency and economic development will ensure that some progress is made on this front.

Objective 2.2 | Policies facilitating access to capital, training, and entrepreneurship, especially for underserved or vulnerable populations, are in place.

- **Justification** | Technical capacity for policymaking in civil society, private sector, and government is absent, leading to a lack of access to capital, investment, and creation of employment opportunities. Social norms limit the participation of women and youth in economic activities, freezing productivity in the country's largest employable population segments. Additional emphasis on technical and vocational education and training and improved ties to the private sector are necessary to ensure that youth completing their primary education have pathways toward viable livelihoods. Training

and support to adapt to the negative environmental impacts of climate change on the most vulnerable populations will be essential for sustainable development.

- **Linkages** | State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa Objective 4.4 Strengthen Country Capacity to Adapt to Environmental and Demographic Changes with Increased Resilience; State Department's Africa Bureau Strategic Framework Objective 4.4 Build the skills of Africa's current and next generation to adapt to longer-term economic, social, and environmental change.
- **Risks** | Due to a lack of training and exposure to entrepreneurship, many Burundians do not have the capacity to create successful businesses. Even if the government pursues policies that are more amenable to economic development, Burundians need access to capital and the tools to participate in a market-based economy. Thus, providing more training for the government in how to increase economic participation will help ensure that there is more economic opportunity for all sectors of society.

Objective 2.3 | The transition from subsistence agriculture to a broad, market-based economy is initiated while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.

- **Justification** | Burundi's economy is heavily dependent on cash crops like coffee and tea, and on low-production, subsistence agriculture with limited employment opportunities for a fast-growing population. If nothing is done to provide alternative employment sources, the ticking time bomb of a youth bulge combined with unemployment, which is already very high, will explode. Profitable, sustainable, and climate-resilient agricultural value chains should be developed, improved, and expanded, while the services, manufacturing, and extractives sectors should be developed to provide increased employment and consequent multiplier effects. These include higher standards of living, access to hard currency, increased public revenues, and a willingness for the population to invest in their own futures. The shift from subsistence agriculture will require more investment in technology and transportation as well as an emphasis on resource management planning.
- **Linkages** | State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa Objective 1.3 Expand African Capacity to Participate Effectively in Global Markets; State Department's Africa Bureau Strategic Framework Objective 2.2 Expand African capacity and technological innovation to foster effective participation in global markets; National Security Study Memorandum-1 (June 2021)
- **Risks** | Burundi lacks the transportation and technology infrastructure to move agricultural goods easily to the world market and to develop an industrial sector beyond subsistence agriculture. If investment is not made in these areas, it will be difficult for Burundi to grow economically and provide jobs for its burgeoning youth population. Thus, investment in transportation, planning and technology should help Burundi's agricultural products move more quickly to global markets and be managed more efficiently.

Mission Goal 3 | Invest in Society and the Region: Burundi is a peaceful, open, and stable actor at home and in the region.

Description | Following the presidential elections of 2020, Burundi appears to be on a path of change and reform. President Ndayishimiye’s administration has taken positive steps towards improving Burundi’s human rights record, addressing corruption in the government, and increasing freedom of expression and media openness. While this progress is promising, much more remains to be done, and the risk of backsliding remains a realistic possibility. Therefore, maintaining engagement and supporting these efforts remain essential to sustaining and furthering this momentum.

Further, in a region with a history of cyclical violence, professionalization of Burundi’s security forces will not only reinforce human rights norms, but it could also help stem cross-border violence. Such professionalization in the context of Burundi’s military has the additional benefit of properly equipping the military for its regional peacekeeping role, adding stability both at home (through a more professional and responsive domestic military force) and abroad (through increased professionalism in its regional peacekeeping forces).

Objective 3.1 | The successful 2020 transfer of power is exploited to promote more open and inclusive governance and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

- **Justification |** Unless Burundi continues the momentum of positive political progress, which began in 2020 and continued in 2021, Burundi risks backsliding towards a more repressive political environment. A more open political space, in which the government of Burundi recognizes and supports basic societal norms and freedoms, will create an environment in which Burundians see themselves as more invested in the future of their country. The Embassy will thus engage with the government to encourage progress and civil society groups to promote greater inclusion and participation in the public space.
- **Linkages |** State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa Objective 3.3 Support Democratic Processes and Promote Strong Democratic Norms; State Department’s Africa Bureau Strategic Framework Objective 3.1 Promote accountable, transparent, and democratic governance by empowering key reformers and actors at all levels to promote access to justice, strengthen checks on executive power, reduce corruption, deliver public services, and incorporate citizen-responsive governance practices to reduce corruption and its corrosive effects on democratic institutions and the people they serve; National Security Study Memorandum-1 (June 2021)
- **Risks |** Absent a government committed to democratic processes and norms, Burundi will continue to lack a strong civil society, which will retard economic opportunity and basic freedoms. U.S. government engagement with the government of Burundi and with civil society actors can continue to nudge the country towards more freedom and opportunity for its citizens.

Objective 3.2 | Organs that support civil society and human rights are strengthened.

- **Justification** | The 2020 disruption in the cycle of political violence has provided an opportunity for a more inclusive society that benefits Burundians across the spectrum of economic, political, and cultural classes. The Embassy will focus on deepening its relationships with civil society actors to continue promoting greater freedom of expression and respect for human rights.
- **Linkages** | State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa Objective 3.2 Promote and Protect Fundamental Rights and Liberties; State Department's Africa Bureau Strategic Framework Objective 3.2 Promote and protect fundamental human rights for all peoples, improving equality and inclusion by advancing human rights, bolstering civil society capacity, and supporting independent and professional media to protect fundamental human rights, particularly of marginalized populations.
- **Risks** | While Burundi has seen some improvements in freedom of expression and the press, more remains to be done, and the country is still in a fragile state. Without greater U.S. engagement to help ensure that these freedoms are made permanent in Burundian civil society, these spaces may narrow before the next elections. Thus, now is the opportune time for the Embassy to assist civil society organizations strengthen their voice and influence in Burundian society.

Objective 3.3 | Burundi's defense and law enforcement agencies positively contribute to peace and stability both within Burundi and the region, working with the United States and like-minded countries as their partners of choice.

- **Justification** | Burundi is already a regional contributor to stability through its peacekeeping troops. Burundi's willingness to provide peacekeepers to regional conflicts demonstrates the value that Burundi's law enforcement and defense organizations bring to the region. However, there is a wide gap between the professionalism of the military forces involved in peacekeeping operations and the police forces operating in Burundi, which can themselves be sources of conflict, corruption, and human rights abuses. Furthermore, by contributing personnel to promote regional stability, Burundi's defense organizations benefit from training and experience, which further their ability to appropriately promote and reinforce Burundi's internal stability. Expanded focus on law enforcement and the justice sector is necessary to ensure Burundi's military is not the sole positive actor among the various security forces. The Embassy will focus on more training opportunities for law enforcement and defense organizations.
- **Linkages** | State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa Objective 2.3 Reduce Instability and Internal Violence that Threaten U.S. Interests in Africa; State Department's Africa Bureau Strategic Framework Objective 1.2 Improve the capacity and will of security forces, both defense and civilian security sectors, to identify and respond to ongoing transnational threats posed by violent extremism, organized

crime, maritime insecurity, and border insecurity; National Security Study Memorandum-1 (June 2021)

- **Risks** | With Burundi's progress on TIP in 2021 and the removal of restrictions under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act from 2021-2022, the U.S. defense and security organizations can directly engage their Burundian counterparts by offering training and other support, which can improve stability within the country and support Burundi's significant role in contributing troops to peacekeeping missions in the region. Failure to reengage would lead to a missed opportunity for closer collaboration with the United States. The disparity in professionalism between the military and police forces, and the potential for police forces to contribute to instability, remain risks to be addressed. Thus, Embassy re-engagement at this time will increase U.S. influence and help ensure that the security forces become agents of stability for Burundi.

4. Management Objective

Management Objective 1 | Invest in our Mission: U.S. Mission Burundi is appropriately equipped to achieve U.S. foreign policy objectives.

- **Justification** | After the turmoil of Burundi's political crises prior to 2020 and subsequent hardships brought on by the COVID pandemic, the Embassy looks to reestablish a forward-looking, positive equilibrium for our workforce, including locally employed staff, third country nationals, and Americans. This requires us to review and bolster our recruiting methods, improve our internal processes to onboard personnel, develop them as employees, and manage succession in the workforce, as well as ensure appropriate compensation and other employee benefits. We will embrace greater transparency, equity, inclusion, and proactive communication as cornerstones in our workplace culture. To make US Embassy Bujumbura a more desirable assignment for USDHs, we will enhance the quality of living conditions at post, overcome government restrictions on same-sex couples, increase employment opportunities for eligible family members, and expand community engagement and recreational activities. We will also implement actions to minimize the negative impact to operations resulting from host nation delays in the importation of equipment, supplies, and personal effects.
- **Linkages** | State Department's Africa Bureau Strategic Framework Management Objective Revitalize the diplomatic and development workforce and infrastructure in a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and accessible manner.
- **Risks** | Historical shortages of Americans bidding on our positions, deficiencies in the local labor market in certain technical skillsets/trades, host nation reluctance to recognize same-sex couples, and challenging local living conditions with limited educational opportunities for assigned diplomats and their families will continue to make it difficult to achieve the full staffing level required to accomplish all the Mission's

goals and objectives. The new government's unfamiliarity with universally accepted diplomatic privileges, other host nation impediments to our management operations, and a very limited local supply chain for essential goods and services are also major hurdles to supporting our foreign policy objectives.