

**PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH ON
COMMUNITY MECHANISMS LINKING
CHILD PROTECTION WITH SOCIAL COHESION**



BASELINE REPORT BURUNDI/CHAD

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PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH ON COMMUNITY MECHANISMS, CHILD PROTECTION AND SOCIAL COHESION IN BURUNDI AND CHAD

BASELINE FINDINGS

1. INTRODUCTION

Community based child protection mechanisms have become a common approach to protecting children in conflict and post-conflict settings. Widely utilized by NGOs, international agencies, the UN and communities themselves as a means to prevent and respond to child violence, abuse and exploitation, their effectiveness and sustainability are often assumed but rarely empirically assessed (Wessells 2009). Similarly, little is known about alternative community mechanisms that can be implemented to promote social cohesion¹ and enhance the protection of children and adolescents in adversity. Externally-driven child protection mechanisms tend to suffer from lack of “fit” and local ownership by the community as well as weak linkages with the national child protection system, often resulting in wasted resources and poor performance (Ibid.). These shortcomings are particularly serious for children and their communities in conflict and post-conflict settings where adequately considering local circumstances is a critical requirement, as a deterioration of already critical conditions may compromise peacebuilding² efforts and even trigger a return to violence.

¹**Socially cohesive societies** are characterized by the principles of inclusion, participation and social justice. **Inclusion** refers to embracing – not coercing or forcing – diversity, and ensuring equal opportunities – that everyone, regardless of their background, can achieve their full potential in life. **Participation** requires involving all stakeholders in the decision-making that affects their lives. **Justice**, broadly understood, encompasses the social, procedural and legal dimensions of justice. Socially cohesive societies are not necessarily demographically homogenous. Rather, by respecting diversity, they harness the potential residing in their societal diversity in terms of ideas, opinions, skills, etc. Therefore, they are less prone to slip into destructive patterns of tension and conflict when different interests collide (DESA-ECOSOC 2015).

² According to the UN Secretary-General’s Policy Committee: “**Peacebuilding** involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and therefore relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives.” (Decision of the Secretary-General’s Policy Committee, May 2007).

The baseline data shared and discussed in this report constitute the preliminary findings of a project that seeks to expand our limited body of evidence on the role of community based child protection mechanisms in improving the protection of vulnerable children and social cohesion of families in Burundi. More specifically, the field data presented here were gathered during the first field visit conducted by the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD) team to Burundi. This field trip is part of a UNICEF-commissioned Action Research Project on Community Groups, Child Protection and Social Cohesion, which focuses on the African countries of Burundi and Chad. Designed as a community action-learning endeavor, the overall project seeks to enhance our understanding of the role of both “formal” (government, statutory) and “non-formal” (peer, kinship, community based) child protection mechanism in facilitating conflict prevention and mitigation, and the establishment of lasting social cohesion, particularly in multi-ethnic, conflict-affected contexts, as they impact children and their communities. Additionally, programmatic activities are designed to build the capacities of individuals and groups in the communities to facilitate positive social relationships and resolve conflict in a transformative non-violent manner.

This reports begins by outlining the research design, and the conceptual and methodological frameworks that guided the initial investigation. A brief overview of the historical and current conditions in Burundi and Chad is then presented, focusing on the link between conflict, displacement, social cohesion and child protection. It is followed by a discussion of the main findings of this study, focusing on the experiences of children and youth as they navigate their complex, tumultuous social and geopolitical environment. The final section offers some concluding thoughts, re-emphasizing the need to attend to the critical, if conflicted, agentive roles that Burundian and Chadian children are playing in their country’s increasingly sensitive political environment. While grounded in the specific realities of life in Burundi and Chad, the lessons offered by this study speak to conditions in other troubled African nations and, by qualified extension, conflict-affected societies worldwide.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

The analytical framework that guides this research draws on previous studies examining young people’s meaningful role in peacebuilding processes in contexts affected by protracted political and structural violence (Nelems & Currie 2012, Ensor 2013). Acknowledging the importance of considering local constructions and culturally situated definitions, this study of children affected

by different forms of violence (historical, political, structural, inter-personal) and displacement (internal, cross-border) in Burundi and Chad is inspired by the New Paradigm of Childhood Studies and the Social Ecology Model of Development (Bronfenbrenner 1986, Cook and duToit 2005). Additionally, our examination of the link between child protection and social cohesion is situated within a Human Security approach (MacFarlane and Khong 2006) to the understanding of conflict.

Adopting insights from sociology and cultural anthropology, the New Paradigm of Childhood Studies argues for the social construction of childhood, a respect for children and childhood in the present rather than as “adults in the making”, and recognition of children as social actors and rights holders (James et al. 1998). As recognized by this approach, children are able to play an active role in their own circumstances and can thus contribute to their longer term outcomes (James and Prout 1997; Boyden and de Berry 2004). In conditions of protracted violence and entrenched poverty, individual agency can, however, be severely constrained, pointing to the need to also consider the broader structures and social-political conditions in which children live. Understanding children’s experiences of violence and conflict thus requires an examination of the spaces at the “intersection between agency and social forces” (Christiansen et al. 2006: 16).

The relevance of considering children’s circumstances, not just as individuals but also as members of their family and community as well as the broader society, is further underscored by the Social Ecology Model of Child Development, which, as elaborated by Bronfenbrenner (1986), emphasizes the foundational role of social relationships in children’s development processes. In this model, positive, supportive relations within families and with other key adults, among peers and with local institutions and authorities are central elements that protect young people from the developmental risks associated with conditions of adversity and conflict (Ager et al. 2005; Cook and duToit 2005; Lynch and Cicchetti 1998; Strang and Wessells 2006). The combination of these frameworks, we argue, provides useful conceptual guidance to this project on Burundian and Chadian children and the ways they are being impacted by the range of social cohesion and child protection factors, both endogenous³ and exogenous⁴, found in their country, and how these can be enhanced.

³ **Endogenous factors** may include ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity, gender and inter-generational dynamics, livelihood strategies, local social networks, community based organizations and protection systems, etc.

⁴ **Exogenous factors** may include broader geo-political conditions, national-level policies (e.g. land tenure and natural resource management), government structures (e.g. health, education, justice, etc.), the presence and functioning of international and national aid and development organizations, the influx of returning refugees and IDPs, etc.

Our conceptual framework is further predicated on the premise that the doctrine of “human security” – as opposed to the traditional “national security” paradigm – constitutes a more adequate response to novel forms of conflict. Proponents of human security argue that the proper referent for security should be the individual rather than the state. A people-centered view of security with considers the situation of children as well as that of adults is thus viewed as necessary for national, regional and global stability.

Attention to the experiences and views of children as rights holders constitutes an integral component of the project, both conceptually and methodologically. While the involvement of children in research – or any other activities – is admittedly not without challenges, child participation is a *sine-qua-non* condition of child-inclusive action research-oriented projects, a potential path towards empowerment, and a fundamental right recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Rights and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Cook and Du Toit 2005; Ensor and Reinke 2014).

2.1 Research Design

The overall two-year (2013-2015) study draws on both existing literature and in-country fieldwork experience. The first field visit of the IICRD team to Burundi took place between February 21 and March 6, 2015 and the first field visit to Chad took place between May 16 and 29, 2015. Considering the need to build on prior work undertaken by the North-South Institute (NSI), the team’s activities explicitly aimed at consolidating baseline information on social cohesion, identifying relevant child protection stakeholders, drivers of conflict and eliciting local perceptions on structures and process contributing to (or hindering) social cohesion and peacebuilding at the community level. It also sought to identify the structural factors that provide the broader context in which social cohesion and child protection efforts take place.

The guiding overall research question is:

- **How do groups at the community level protect children, youth and women/girls while promoting social cohesion, peacebuilding and general human security?**

Secondary questions include:

- What are the conflict drivers in each of the settings, and how do these conflict drivers contribute to (child) protection risks and harms?

- Do informal and formal groups influence communities differently?
- What group characteristics, activities, functions, processes, and mechanisms actively support or erode social cohesion and child protection in conflict and post-conflict settings?
- What is the agentive role of youth in promoting or hindering community cohesion?

Additionally, this field trip represents a preliminary effort to document the changing role of traditional community leadership in the promotion of child protection, social cohesion and conflict resolution. Research activities sought to document any tensions, overlaps, and linkages between these actors including building on prior research undertaken on these questions by UNICEF and other agencies (see Olivier, 2014). Research activities sought to document any tensions, overlaps, and linkages between these actors to inform the development of training materials.

It is recognized that by ensuring such community engagement with all aspects of the research, the specific and localized understandings of social cohesion and its links to peacebuilding and child protection can more effectively be revealed.

2.2 Research Methods

The fieldwork conducted during the first visit of the IICRD to Burundi and Chad summarized in this document was largely descriptive in order to identify emerging issues that can provide a baseline and inform future training materials. The data collection methods were selected according to a line of inquiry established by the social cohesion/child protection framework described above, and by the Terms of Reference for the overall project developed by UNICEF.

A combination of participatory action research (PAR) and rapid ethnographic research methods designed to leverage local knowledge on the development of, and the actors involved in the creation of social cohesion at the community level was implemented. More specifically, the main methods for data collection were focus group discussions (FGDs), individual interviews, and child centered participatory reflective exercises (i.e. “unity circle” and “community social mapping”) developed by IICRD and led by the core research team and assisted by three research assistants/interpreters (RA), members of the “*Association des Scouts du Burundi*” in Burundi and by 5 interpreters/rapporteurs (two in Koumra and three in the communities visited in Moyen Chari) in Chad. All provided invaluable aid with note-taking and translation to the local languages spoken by research participants (i.e. Arabic, Sara, Sango), proving invaluable for the overall success of this first field trip.





Discussing participatory methodologies with school children in Koumra, Mandoul, Chad

Efforts were made to bolster the validity of research finding through triangulation – that is, the reiterative, layered use of multiple sources of data (secondary and primary sources) and multiple methods of data collection.

In Burundi, a total of 21 FGDs were convened (17 with adult participants, 3 with female children/youth, and 1 with male children/youth). The FGDs each involving between 5 and 15 participants, were guided by a list of semi-structured questions (See Field Report). The resulting group-elaborated conceptions of social cohesion and child protection were explored in greater depth during the individual interviews with 7 adolescent girls and 6 boys. Additionally, “unity circle” and “community social mapping” exercises were conducted with school children in Rumonge (Bururi Province) and Nyabutare (Makamba Province).



Community Social Mapping with school children in Kayogoro II, Makamba Province, Burundi

While in Chad a total of 17 FGDs were convened (9 with adult participants; 4 with female children/youth, and 4 with male children/youth). The FGDs, each involving between 7 and +30 participants, were guided by a list of semi-structured questions (See Appendix I). The resulting group-elaborated conceptions of social cohesion and child protection were explored in greater depth during individual interviews with 12 adults (local authorities and representatives of aid organizations) 5 young girls, 7 adolescent girls and 6 young boys. Additionally, “unity circle” and “community social mapping” exercises were conducted with school children in Koumra (Mandoul Region) where a number of them were survivors of human trafficking, and refugee children at Belom Camp (Moyen Chari Region).

Community stakeholders identified in Mandoul and Moyen Chari included: child protection groups, youth groups, women’s groups, peace building associations, local and international NGOs, traditional leaders and elders, religious leaders/groups, income generating/solidarity groups, and other groups working at community level to protect vulnerable children such as Enfant ARED (a Koumra-based local NGO focusing on trafficked, abandoned, orphaned and other especially vulnerable children in the south of the country).

These participatory exercises, designed to provide children with an opportunity to experience, identify, reflect on, and discuss the main child protection mechanisms and risks in their

communities, proved highly successful and well-received by the children themselves as well as their school teachers and other adults involved.

2.3 Research Sites

Burundi. In Burundi, the research focused on two provinces in Burundi, Bururi and Makamba, previously chosen through a consultative process, which was led by UNICEF, and involved local and international partners, government actors and NGOs. More specifically, the communities visited were Rumonge (Bururi Province) and Kayogoro, Buga, Makamba, Mabanda, Nyanza-Lac and Nyabutare (Makamba Province).



Burundi – Political Map

Research findings identified significant differences – as well as some general similarities – between the two provinces, which were ultimately chosen by UNICEF-Burundi as representative of the main issues framing the experiences of a large percentage of children and their families in the country, namely, ethnic and socio-economic diversity, internal and cross-border displacement, and the presence of community-based child protection mechanisms.

Bururi Province in the southwest of Burundi is the largest of the seventeen provinces of the country. The population of Bururi was severely affected by the 1993 crisis, discussed below. AIDS orphans, street children, child heads-of-household, widows, large numbers of returnees and other vulnerable groups are among the main social issues affecting

this Province (UNDP 2006: 51). Makamba Province in southern Burundi is of particular research interest for similar reasons as Bururi. Furthermore, Makamba was the primary site for the return of as many as 35,000 Burundians from Tanzania in late 2012 (IRIN 2012). The Province has subsequently attracted many migrants from other Burundian provinces. It remains a main

location of return for refugees and thus an epicenter for conflict over land. It is known to be a region of rich soil and comparatively lower population density, and has thus long attracted migrants from other provinces. The significance of these provinces for the overall context in which social cohesion and child protection take place in Burundi reflects historical and contemporary dynamics of conflict and displacement in the country.

Chad. In Chad, the research focused on two of Chad's 23 regions (Secrétariat Général du Gouvernement du Tchad: n.d.), Mandoul and Moyen-Chari. Located in the south of the country, the population of Mandoul was 637,086 inhabitants as of 2009 (the date of the latest available official census). The main ethnico-linguistic groups are the Sara, the Mbaï, the Nar and the Daï, and the main products are subsistence agriculture and cotton. The regional capital of Mandoul is Koumra, the sixth largest town in Chad, where most of the Mandoul-based portion of this field based took place. Mandoul is also reputed to be one of the Chadian regions with the highest incidents of violations of children rights, as well as one of the poorest⁵.

Moyen Chari, another region of Chad (Secrétariat Général du Gouvernement du Tchad : n.d.) has an economy that is based on subsistence agriculture, pastoralism, and the commercial production of cotton and sugarcane. The region's population was 598,284 inhabitants in 2009, and the main ethnico-linguistic groups are the Sara and the Tupuri. The regional capital of Moyen Chari is Sarh. While interviews were held in Sarh with staff from UNICEF and CARE, the bulk of the Moyen Chari-based portion of the research took place in the southern town of Maro, closer to the border with the Central African Republic (CAR), as well as in Maingama Returnee Camp and Belom Refugee Camp. As was the case with Mandoul, Moyen Chari is also reputed to be one of the Chadian regions with the highest incidents of violations of children rights. The challenges presented by the flows of returnees and refugees to the region are additional factors affecting both social cohesion and child protection outcomes⁶.

The significance of these two regions for the overall context in which social cohesion and child protection take place in Chad reflects historical and contemporary dynamics of poverty, conflict and displacement in the country. Prior work by NSI had also been undertaken in this region.

2.4 Background and Historical Antecedents

Burundi. Burundi is a small land-locked African country that borders Rwanda in the north, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Lake Tanganyika in the west, and Tanzania in the south and the east. It was led by a monarchical dynasty for centuries, before being colonized initially by

⁵ Interview with UNICEF's Child Protection staff. N'Djamena, May 18, 2015.

⁶ Interview with UNICEF's Child Protection staff. N'Djamena, May 18, 2015.

Germany (1896–1918), then by Belgium (1918–1962) until it gained its independence in 1962. The extent to which exploitation and manipulation of ethnic rivalries during colonial times led to cycles of ethnic-related violence in recent history remains a matter of debate. It is, however, undeniable that post-independence Burundi has remained plagued by massacres, assassinations and other crimes against humanity that often have a markedly ethnic character.

One of the most significant and violent episodes in Burundi's history, widely recognized as genocide, took place in 1972 with the massacre of tens of thousands of the Hutu ethnic group by the Tutsi-dominated regime. Beginning in April of that year, an ethnic Hutu revolt insurrection which resulted in the death of 2,000–3,000 Tutsis; as many as 200,000 Hutus were killed in reprisal (Dexter and Ntahombaye 2005) including most “educated” Hutu – those with at least a year of secondary education. “The entire membership of what was perceived as the Hutu elite” was virtually eliminated (Sommers 2001: 37). The events left approximately 200,000 Burundians dead and another 300,000 as refugees, mainly in Tanzania. The tragedy of 1972 also created a legacy of fear and mistrust that has been linked to subsequent episodes and still lasts to this day.

A case in point is the crisis of 1994. This is also acknowledged as genocide and was triggered by a failed coup d'état during which the first democratically elected president, Melchior Ndadaye (a Hutu) was assassinated. This event sparked the massacre of an estimated 50,000 Tutsi by Hutu, followed by a brutal repression of Hutu by the army. In the aftermath, more than 600,000 Hutus sought refuge in neighboring countries while many others became internally displaced. The ensuing civil war between Hutu rebels and the Tutsi-dominated army resulted in the further deterioration of social relations, security and political stability (Dexter and Ntahombaye 2005).

In August 2000, after years of negotiation and intensive diplomatic efforts, the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement (APRA) was signed by 17 political parties and the Burundi government. This agreement constitutes a political platform for the restoration of peace based on the values of justice, the rule of law, and the respect of fundamental human rights and freedoms⁷. The agreement provided for a 36 month transitional period devoted to the restoration of state institutions and the rule of law. In November 2003, an accord was reached with the largest group, the CNDD-FDD (*Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie – Forces de Défense de la Démocratie*; National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy). The CNDD-FDD is the largest of the Hutu armed rebel groups which had not participated in the peace process and had not initially lay down their arms. The November 2003 agreement led to a comprehensive ceasefire and power-sharing provisions. This

⁷ The Arusha Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, Prot. I, chap. II, art. 5.

transitional period was extended by six months from November 2004 to April 2005 and then from April 2005 to August 2005 because the provisions of the APRA – in particular those relating to the elections and the demobilization of the combatants – were not yet fully implemented. The APRA also provided the background for many of the provisions of the Post-Transition Constitution, which was ratified by referendum in February 2005 and promulgated in March 2005 (Dexter and Ntahombaye 2005). The FNL (*Forces Nationales pour la Liberation*; National Liberation Forces) remains the only rebel group outside the peace process (Dexter and Ntahombaye 2005).

As Peter Uvin has argued “the most prevalent motive for violence is fear” (1999: 263), and the transformation of ethnic violence into acts of self-defense. “People in both ethnic groups are deeply afraid of being attacked and attack first, in ‘defensive attack,’ to avoid the fate they think is awaiting them” (1999: 263). This fear of extermination by ethnic adversaries has even been found even to run through second generation Hutu refugees from the 1972 massacres: “Burundi refugees were raised to believe that the Tutsi, or their accomplices, could be anywhere at any time, planning to eliminate Hutu people” (Sommer 2001: 183). Acts of vigilantism carried out by armed groups, while not yet systematized, are reportedly becoming more common.



Chad– Political Map

The current situation in Burundi, particularly as linked to the upcoming May 2015 elections, has led to heightened tensions and likelihood of renewed violence. These are clearly highly relevant



factors that will, one way or another, impact conditions of social cohesion and child protection in the country.

Chad. The Republic of Chad, is a landlocked Sahelian country in north-central Africa. With an area of 1,284,000 km², it stretches 1,500 km from north to south and 1,000 km from east to west (UNICEF 2010: 20). It borders Libya to the north, Sudan to the east, the Central African Republic to the south, Cameroon and Nigeria to the southwest, and Niger to the west. Lake Chad, from which the country gets its name, lies on the western border with Niger and Nigeria. The north of the country is a desert that runs into the Sahara (Republic du Tchad 2010: 8).

Chad is a member of the African Union (African Union 2013) and the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC 1994). As established in the first article of the Chadian Constitution, "Chad is a sovereign, independent, secular and social nation, one and indivisible, based on the principles of democracy, justice and the rule of law" (Republic du Tchad 1996).

Chad became an autonomous republic within the French Community in 1958, and gained its full independence on August 11, 1960. Throughout most of its recent history, the country has been confronted with endless armed conflict generated by deep ethnic, religious and political divisions (World Bank 2013).

In the early 1990s, the State adopted sweeping political reforms, holding multiparty elections and what appeared as the beginning of a process of democratization with the arrival of President Idriss Deby to power. Subsequently, this stability was increasingly questioned, particularly after the 2005 constitutional amendment that allowed President Deby to stand for a third term in May 2006. That constitutional revision plunged the country into a political crisis and triggered a wave of rebel attacks in the east of the country as well as in N'Djamena, the capital (World Bank 2013) The signing of the "Political agreement for the reinforcement of the democratic process in Chad," concluded in August 13, 2007 with the support of the international community (France, EU and OIF), reestablished a measure of political stability in the country (UNDP 2013).

While Chad was already impacted by its own political instability, it was greatly affected by the conflict in Darfur. The Janjaweed militias, supported by the Sudanese government forces and some rebel groups in eastern Chad, have contributed to the increasing instability in the region. Attacks by rebel groups gained momentum at the end of 2005, following the deterioration of diplomatic relations between the Sudanese and the Chadian governments (Amnesty International 2011: 10). In early 2008, more than 2,000 fighters from three different Chadian armed opposition groups launched an attack against the civilian population, leaving many dead or wounded, while more than 50,000 fled to the border with Cameroon. The Chadian authorities

were able to regain control of the capital in February of the same year. As many as 84 minors were demobilized from the ranks of the Chadian rebel group Union of Resistance Forces (*Union des Forces de la Résistance*, UFR), and entrusted to UNICEF (ibid.).

The United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) was established in September 25, 2007 through Resolution 1778 of the UN Security Council in order to protect civilians and restore the rule of law and peace in the region. In addition, through the adoption of resolutions 1834 (2008) and 1861 (2009) and in consultation with the authorities of Chad and the Central African Republic, a group of MINURCAT soldiers took over the functions previously played by the European Union Forces (EUFOR), whose mandate was complete (MINURCAT 2010). MINURCAT eventually withdrew in May 2010. However, the United Nations Security Council set up a working group composed of representatives of MINURCAT, the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Chadian security forces to ensure the security of the country. The Chadian authorities subsequently declared that they would take care of the protection of their country's citizens, as well as that of refugees and other displaced persons (Amnesty International 2011: 10).

The Government of Chad has assumed full responsibility for the protection of civilians and the safety and security of humanitarian actors since the 2010 withdrawal of the *Mission des Nations Unies en République Centrafricaine et au Tchad* (United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad / MINURCAT). Arrangements have been implemented to reinforce security conditions in eastern and southern Chad, including additional deployments of the national police and the *gendarmérie*, the National and Nomadic Guard of Chad (*Garde Nationale et Nomade du Tchad* GNNT), the Integrated Security Unit (*Détachement Intégré de Sécurité*, DIS), and the continued deployment of joint Chad-Sudan mixed forces along the border (United Nations 2012: 2).



This village, on the way from Koumra, Mandoul, to Sarh, Moyen Chari, is representative of most rural communities in the region

3. FINDINGS INFORMING SOCIAL COHESION AND CHILD PROTECTION: RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

As the previous sections have made clear both Burundi and Chad's populations are exceptionally young, overwhelmingly rural and rapidly urbanizing. Both countries continue to be plagued by punishing poverty with development prospects lagging given structural and contextual difficulties. The extraordinary challenges associated with poverty and structural violence faced by many children and their families on an everyday basis represent risks that result in considerable challenges to social cohesion. Preoccupied with their day-to-day survival makes effectively planning for a positive future challenging.

In Burundi, research findings suggest that social cohesion in the targeted communities is assumed to be everyone's responsibility. Village chief and elders, or other traditional community groups tasked with promoting non-violent conflict resolution (see Systems Mapping briefing for a discussion of the *bashingantahe*) were perceived as more directly accountable for peacebuilding.

A number of significant risks as well as protective factors affecting social cohesion and child protection in Burundi were identified by study participants.

In both Burundi and Chad, child protection responsibilities are distributed among a number of public institutions, with services provided by local authorities, non-state actors and local associations (See Systems Mapping report for a more detail discussion of these institutional and community stakeholders).

In response, current programs supported by UNICEF Chad involve a work in strengthening the formal system including training of staff in public institutions, such as the police, and legal authorities (BIDE, 2014).

The type of relationship between child protection and social cohesion remains unclear at this stage of the research. Whether social cohesion results in enhanced child protection – or vice versa – or both issues are correlated, rather than causally related, and associated with broader social circumstances such as general societal stability, still needs to be determined. A number of significant risks as well as protective factors affecting social cohesion and child protection have, nevertheless, been ascertained by study participants, including the repatriation of refugees; land issues, food insecurity and constrained livelihood options; poverty; family relations and social support; education and schooling; unmarried mothers and unwanted pregnancies; orphans; the various manifestations of violence in the country; and, the role of groups and associations **in Burundi**, and poverty, child trafficking, the worst forms of child labor, violence, early marriage,

female genital mutilation (FGM; excision-clitoridectomy), and limited birth registration **in Chad**.

3.1 Key Findings in Burundi

3.1.1 Internal Displacement and Refugee Repatriation

In Burundi, research participants reported migration for work as a common coping strategy adopted by children, in both Bururi and Makamba Provinces. While labor migration can in general terms be perceived as a positive manifestation of agency, the young age of some of the children involved and the exploitative work conditions to which they are often subjected to clearly constitute serious risks to their protection and well being.

The link between unsustainable geographic mobility and potential threats to child wellbeing is recognized by most study participants who identify displacement, both within the country's borders and as cross-border displacement for those children moving to Burundi from other countries such as the DRC and Tanzania as a primary protection risk.

The repatriation of the Burundian refugees who fled to Tanzania in 1994 officially began in 2002 when it was first considered safe for them to return. Since that time over half a million refugees have made the short journey home across the border - the majority assisted by the United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR. Many of those refugees had been living in a refugee camp for over 15 years. In 2009, the government of Tanzania announced that the 38,000 Burundians that still remained in Mtabila camp in western Tanzania must leave the country by June of that year. After several postponed deadlines, Mtabila camp finally closed at end-2012, with repatriations scheduled between April and November, according to an agreement reached by both countries and UNHCR (IRIN 2011).

The following interview with a returnee youth from Tanzania highlights some of the challenges facing these young people.

Venerant¹ is 18 yrs old, and came to Bugu, Burundi 3 years ago from Tanzania.

“I grew up in *Mtabila* camp, Tanzania, with my mother and father and 3 siblings. It wasn’t a good life, we could survive, but there was no work and little to do, and no proper schooling. There was no future there. Seven years ago my father told my mother to leave and took another wife this was hard on the whole family. My mother came back to Burundi to return to her family but the land that had belonged to us was gone, taken by another. Her family refused to help, and she is still landless. I wanted to help my mother and make a life for myself, and left Tanzania three years ago for Burundi, traveling on my own with few resources. It was tiring and frightening and I often feared for my safety and even my life. At first, I tried to help my mother in our home community but it was too dangerous to stay as I was seen as a threat by the new landowners, they threatened me so I came to Bugu, a community of returnees near the border. Here it is safe and there is peace and social cohesion, people help each other, but few opportunities and little employment. Many young men like myself stay for a while, become frustrated, and then return illegally to Tanzania where they feel better work and more opportunities are more likely to be found. I now live with my friend Enoch (17). We want to finish school at all costs. My older brother completed school and urges me to do the same. Even though he doesn’t have a good job, he still sends me a little money to help with my school books and uniform. To make ends meet, Enoch and I help local families tend their land, it is hard work and we often toil for 6 hours in the hot sun and only make 1,200 BurFr (approx. \$0.80 USD). Other than Enoch, I have few friends here. I would like to join the Bugu youth group but I don’t have enough time, as I need to work after school and on weekends to make ends meet. My mother has taken a legal case forward to try and reclaim the land that is rightfully ours. I am patient to await the judgment but I don’t trust the system” (Key Informant Interview, Bugu, Makamba, March 3, 2015).

The challenges posed by the reintegration of the thousands of refugees who have returned to Burundi in the last few years was frequently mentioned by children and adults alike as a potential threat to social cohesion in both provinces included in this field trip. In Makamba, home to large numbers of such returnees, many respondents mentioned discriminatory treatment of returnees as a violation of children’s rights and a child protection risk.

Additionally, access to land and land tenure issues emerged as defining factors affecting local social cohesion and the relationship between returnees and local residents. The National Commission of Land and other Resources (*Commission Nationale Terre et autres Biens*, CNTB), which was mentioned as performing crucial functions related to issues of land tenure and returning refugees, was not among the institutions targeted during the project’s initial visit to Burundi. Neither was UNHCR. The specific role of both organizations will be investigated during subsequent stages of the research.



3.1.2 Land Issues, Food Insecurity and Constrained Livelihood Options

Conflict related to land was identified as one of the significant drivers of conflict and a key factor hindering social cohesion and peacebuilding in Burundi. Nearly every single participant mentioned land as a scarce resource that influenced and exacerbated conflict at the community-level. As an adolescent male remarked during a FGD in Makamba, *“without land, you don’t belong. There is not enough land for everyone. Those of us who came back [from Tanzania] have a harder time because our lands may have been taken”*.



Returnee children in Kayogoro, Makamba Province (March 2015)

It is worth noting that, while perceptions that problems of access to land may have been exacerbated by the arrival of refugees, land scarcity had been a feature of Burundian society for many years and is more directly related to demographic pressures than to displacement. Living in one of sub-Saharan Africa’s most densely, rural populated countries, with more than 350 people per square kilometer (World Bank 2012), Burundians are facing the problems associated with competition for land and declining soil fertility co-joined with unemployment and rising consumer prices. With 90% of the population surviving through subsistence agriculture, fragmentation of land and its over-exploitation (CTB 2014) are contributing to a situation in which land conflicts are increasingly frequent, usually arising within families or between neighbors (International Crisis Group 2014).

Many Burundians express the view that small plots and poor soil will force most children to leave farming. At the same time, severe and advancing population pressure on land and declining soil fertility compound the increasing difficulties in securing viable off-farm employment to

further constrain available livelihood opportunities. The belief that education will prepare children for non-agricultural employment if they manage to finish secondary school is widely held. “*A good education can help them find a better-paying job in the city, away from these problems of poverty and lack of land*”, affirmed a young mother in Rumonge voicing her hope for a better future for the small child she carried on her back. Unfortunately, this option is out of reach for a large number of children, since many do not complete primary school and most secondary school students never graduate. Additionally, many of those persons interviewed stated that having social connections and making “advance payments” are more important than job qualifications. Persistently high consumer price inflation (EIU 2012: 12) further contributes to conditions that leave many children and adolescents undernourished, unable to remain in school and facing narrow future options.

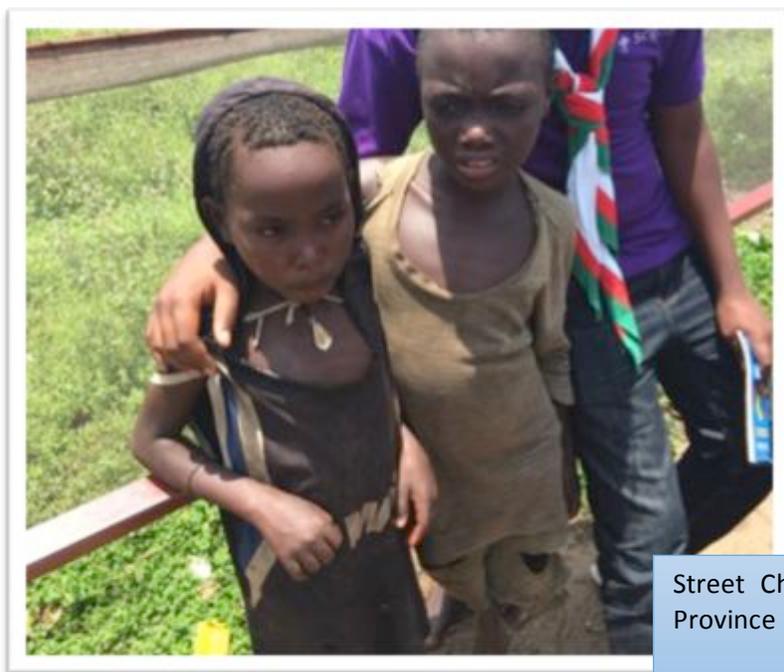
3.1.3 Poverty

“*Poverty is at the root of most problems in Burundi*” and “*children suffer because of poverty*” were sentiments frequently expressed by youngsters and adults alike during research exercises and casual conversations in both Bururi and Makamba Provinces. Minimizing poverty was noted as the most urgently needed action or criteria from which to reduce drivers of conflict, build social cohesion and harmony, as well as a primary reason for the poor treatment of children.

The precarious economic situation in the country relates crucially to prospects for peace and security in Burundi. The general economic situation in the country has a profound impact on children’s wellbeing with survival being one of the main preoccupations for many older children and youth (Uvin 2009; Sommers 2013). Conditions of entrenched poverty and structural violence mean that economic and social adversities, including lack of access to quality education and health, unemployment and rising consumer prices, competition for land and declining soil fertility, displacement and insecurity are defining and constraining children’s everyday experiences.

Poverty’s primary role in contemporary children’s lives is confirmed by macroeconomic data, such as that presented in the 2013 Human Development Report, which ranks Burundi as 178 of 187 countries in terms of income, educational attainment and life expectancy. According to this analysis, the Gross National Income per capita is US\$544 per year, there is a mean of 2.7 years of schooling among the adult population, and life expectancy at birth is 51 years (UNDP 2013). Over a twenty-one year period (1990-2010), the average annual growth rate of the per capita GDP was negative 1.6 percent (UNICEF 2012: 112). World Bank data also show that 84.5% of the population is considered to live in multidimensional poverty. Counter to regional trends, economic prospects for Burundi’s future indicate deeper entrenchment of poverty: Burundi’s

GNI per capita decreased by 10% between 1980 and 2012, while the World Bank forecasts continuing decline in growth in the next few years (World Bank 2014).



Street Children in Rumonge, Bururi Province (February 2015)

Most study participants asserted the primacy of having basic needs met as a key factor in both social cohesion and child protection. Food scarcity, resulting from the combination of rising prices, dwindling harvests, small farm plots, limited off-farm work and large families, is leading many children to endemic hunger and ultimately dropping out of school. Migrating to a city to search for work is common. Furthermore, many respondents cited cases of hungry adolescent girls engaging in transactional sex in exchange for food, or money to buy food. The escalation of petty theft in to more serious criminal activities is, however, reportedly more likely in the case of boys.

While the dire straits that Burundi faces these days dominate assessments of its current circumstances, there are many promising dimensions of contemporary Burundian society. For example, Burundians are living longer and children are spending more time in school. Additionally, the government's second Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP II) paper touts significant post-war progress, including reductions in the country's armed forces and dramatic increases in mining production, enrollment into primary and secondary schools and access to health care services (Government of Burundi 2012: 21-4). Poverty reduction and livelihood promotion must continue to be prioritized. Minimizing poverty was the most frequently

mentioned requirement for enhancing social cohesion and harmony, as well as a primary reason for the poor treatment of children.

3.1.4 Family Relations and Social Support

Children's family circumstances and general social environment can either strengthen or weaken their individual capacities for adapting to risk and adversity. Healthy family functioning has been shown to help children cope effectively with conditions of adversity (Garbarino, Kostelny and Dubrow 1991). The constraints and challenges associated with survival in contexts of conflict and political and structural violence, on the other hand, can distort "the powerful socializing influence of the family toward abusive and malign effects" (Ager 2006: 50). Furthermore, research shows that the stress associated with violent conflict and associated social instability may lead to an increased incidence of physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children (Triplehorn and Chen 2006: 228). Often the conditions associated with or resulting from violent conflict – for example, political uncertainty, forced displacement, food insecurity, illness and death – increase the strain on available local resources (Ager et al. 2005) and leave caregivers unable to meet basic physical needs of their families (Ager 2006). In such situations, it is possible that "systems that are normally sources of support and protection, such as the family, become sources of risk and developmental damage" (Boothby et al. 2006: 5).

In Burundi, years of conflict and economic hardship have contributed to a situation in which reliance on social support cannot be assumed and is often not forthcoming. The breakdown in family structures – also a consequence of conflict and poverty – is clearly having a direct effect on children. Parental capacities have been severely weakened by the constraints of poverty and the preoccupations adults have with ensuring the daily survival of their families. Unable to rely on their parents for support, many young people are left to find their own ways of meeting their basic needs. The breakdown in social cohesion extends beyond the family, and was explained both as a result of poverty, as well as the breakdown in relationships of trust associated with the years of violent conflict.

Another common problems cited by young respondents as negatively affecting their relationships with parents is alcoholism. Numerous youngsters explained how their parents' dependence on alcohol leads to abuse, school drop-out and eviction from rented homes. "*Fathers sometimes spend all their money on drink and there is nothing left for food or school supplies. When fathers get drunk, they often beat their children*", lamented a school-aged girl during a participatory exercise (Community Social Mapping) in Nyabutare, Makamba Province. The resulting material and emotional loss cause children to no longer trust or be able to rely on their parents for support

or protection. The breakdown in this trust is likely to have long-term repercussions at a societal level.

On a more positive note, the role of groups associated with Churches and other religious institutions appears to remain highly relevant despite the general breakdown in social support networks in Burundi. These groups constitute a mechanism of child protection that should be investigated more thoroughly in future phases of this project.

Finally, peer group influence was often cited in the research with young participants and is a natural manifestation of the “youth bulge” in the Burundian population. This can be either a driver of conflict among unemployed disenfranchised young men, or a force for powerful social change if the creative, social capacity of adolescents and youth can be harnessed for the social good. Groups like the Scouts are ideally positioned to play a key role in this process.

3.1.5 Education and Schooling

Education and schooling appear to play complex roles that can represent both a source of risk and a protective factor, depending on the circumstances. As indicated by most study participants, education remains a key priority for the majority of Burundians, considered as an essential precondition for eventually gaining employment. Starting primary school is mandatory and some authorities put strong pressure on parents to send their children to school. Despite the abolition of primary school fees, students and their families struggle to cover other costs associated with school attendance, e.g. uniforms, exercise books, and fees for school gardens, new classrooms and furniture. Although parents may even sell precious farmland to keep children in school, many still drop out.



Children at Primary School Kayogoro II, Makamba Province (March 2015)

School education is weakened by the current inability of many teachers to teach all three required foreign languages (French, English and Kiswahili) effectively. The language issue arose most prominently during fieldwork with Burundian refugees who had recently returned after many years in Tanzania. The Tanzanian government closed primary and secondary schools in the refugee camps in 2009. Primary schools that refugee returnees attend shed a particularly harsh light on the severe language difficulties that persist, reportedly, in primary and secondary schools across Burundi. *“This is because in refugee camp schools in Tanzania, students learned Kiswahili but not French or Kirundi”*, one refugee returnee boy explained. *“So here, we just sit in class, but mostly do not understand what the teacher says; it is a real problem for us!”* Coming from camps where formal education was not available for three years, and into schools where they do not know the two main languages of instruction, it is hardly surprising that many refugee returnee students either don’t perform well in school or simply drop out forever. The situation is sad and troubling, and the responses to this situation are thus far inadequate. The dire straits that adolescent returnees face are compounded by the fact that they are so unfamiliar with Burundi.

At the same time, children often face significant problems when they are in school. One surfaced as particularly noteworthy during the field research. Adults, school officials and government officials all alleged that some schoolgirls are impregnated by teachers. The view that many school girls become pregnant by their teachers was often voiced. Some girls who cannot afford to pay school expenses may be able to remain enrolled if they have sex with teachers or school directors, some respondents alleged. Transactional sex involving young girls in and out of school appears to be unexceptional.

Girls’ diminished schooling opportunities are largely associated with their heavy workload at home. Unwanted pregnancy among school-aged girls leading to early marriage was a related and similarly common problem.

3.1.6 Unmarried Mothers and Unwanted Pregnancies

While no official figures exist, the number of unmarried mothers is reportedly significant. The majority of them are adolescent girls, and many became pregnant due to poverty, coercion, or both. *“Some, older men give you food and promise to buy you things”*, offered a teenage girl in

Rumonge, Bururi Province, as one of the explanations for the increasing rates of unwanted pregnancies in the Province, and the country at large. Similarly driven by extreme poverty, theft of food and property also appear to be commonplace among both girls and boys. Moreover, on-site exercises in both Bururi and Makamba Provinces revealed references to unmarried mothers bringing shame to their families. Abortion, which is illegal in Burundi, and even infanticide, were mentioned as potential responses to unwanted pregnancies by some unmarried girls and female youth who admitted “*knowing someone who had done it*”.



Most members of this “Vocational Skills Group for Girls” are young unmarried mothers.
Rumonge, Bururi Province (February 2015)

The link between abortions and infanticide and schooling for girls, which was mentioned during FGD and individual interviews with adolescent girls, represents a serious risk to child protection in Burundi. As reported by study participants, both are more common among secondary school girls. Pregnancy, allegedly often resulting from sex with male instructors, would immediately halt the girl’s prospects for further education and livelihood options. At this stage in girls’ schooling, this event would seem as a particularly ruinous outcome for poor families after years of sacrifice and investment in their daughters’ future.

Relatedly, unmarried mothers may be too embarrassed to register their children if the fathers refuse to come forward, which is common. A child who is not registered may be unable to sit for national exams or receive free health services, and may face difficulties establishing land inheritance rights. In this respect, unregistered children’s situation is similar to that of orphans.

3.1.7 Orphans

The existence of large numbers of orphans – no estimates of the size of the orphan population in Burundi could be found – was pervasively mentioned as a threat to both social cohesion and child protection in Bururi, Makamba and the country at large.



Many of the street children in Bururi Province, like those in this photograph are either orphan or have been abandoned (February 2015)

Local definitions of the term “orphan” should be further investigated, but seem to include those with no father as well as those with neither parent. Significantly, the absence of the mother appeared to be of no, or at least lesser, significance, and unlikely to result in a child being labeled orphan. Indeed, the phrase “*an orphan is a child without a father*” was often voiced in response to the question “*who is considered an orphan in Burundi*?”. Two main causes for the large proportion of orphans were proposed: high numbers of civil war deaths (over 300,000), and children whose parents (or father) died early after contracting HIV/AIDS. A third factor is the local definition of orphan: it included those with no father as well as those with no parents. Orphan children reportedly typically go to live with relatives, most commonly uncles and aunts. Lack of schooling, abuse and exploitation, including sexual exploitation are common, as is relatives’ tendency to stealing the inheritance of orphan children (i.e. primarily land, as well as other kinds of property).

Other children also found to be in similarly precarious circumstances were described as “unaccompanied” rather than orphan. The large numbers of children arriving to a community from another region or country (e.g. Tanzania) without one or both of their parents was seen as particularly vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, violence and neglect.

3.1.8 Violence

Violence – either threatened or explicit – constitutes a ubiquitous feature of Burundian children lives. Interestingly, study participants consistently asserted that ethnic animosity is no longer an issue in Burundi. References to ethnic differences and even ethnic affiliations were indeed carefully avoided by all those involved. This matter needs to be further investigated, as social and political behavior in the country do not appear to support claims of ethnic neutrality.

Politically-inspired violence, on the other hand, has been a featured component of much of the violence in Burundi over the years, as discussed in the background section. Domestic Violence, sometimes involving severe hitting or beating children and women, also remain longstanding practices in Burundi. Some of it is perceived as unproblematic and even done “for children’s own good”. For instance, teachers routinely beat their students often response to some form of “misbehavior” such as failing to learn a lesson or complete the homework, refusing to carry out a chore, or disobeying orders. Conversely, the sexual exploitation of female students is, as already discussed, allegedly not uncommon but regarded as shameful and unacceptable behavior, as is violence associated with excessive drinking. “*Parents who beat up their children*” and “*sexual violence against girls and boys*” were indeed routinely mentioned by school children in Community Social Mapping exercises and discussions carried out in both provinces.

Throughout the research, the linkages between violence and poverty were shown to be interconnected and constantly feeding back on each other. Sexual violence in Burundi also appears to be widespread. While adolescent girls and female youth are the most common targets, participants in several FGDs shared stories of sexual predators repeatedly victimizing children as young as 1 or 2 year old. While these incidents clearly represent a serious threat to child protection, the subsequent local mobilization to take action against the perpetrators could be seen as an illustration of social cohesion in the affected communities.

3.1.9 Groups and Associations

War- and poverty-related hardships have had an extremely negative impact on social cohesion in Burundi. However – and perhaps because of this – associations, clubs and groups remain relevant when considering the social support available to children and youth in Burundi. Study participants explained that the value of belonging to such groups was foremost because membership would serve as a sort of social safety net in the event of a personal emergency; for example, the group would help by making a contribution to medical fees. This form of “insurance” depends on the contributions made by each member on a weekly or monthly basis.



Women's Group (*Forum de Femmes*) in Rumonge, Bururi Province (February 2015)

While in contemporary Burundi membership in a group or association has become a strategy employed in the hopes of gaining access to material aid, the actual assistance channeled through such groups appears to be rather limited. The small amounts that are generated by member contributions may sometimes help individual members in an emergency situation, but in reality the assistance offered by the association is too limited to contribute to an overall improved material situation of its recipients in any meaningful way. Members nevertheless continue to make their contributions in the hope that when faced with an extremely precarious situation, they will be helped. “I joined the Youth Association because my parents were not able to send me to school when I had the age for it. It was difficult for me to make friends with other school-aged children . . . and then I got pregnant. I am learning things [skills] by being in the Association that can help me and my baby . . . I like coming to the meetings. I can also get together with other girls and maybe even help other children too” explained a soft-voiced but determined young mother in Nyabutare, Makamba Province.

This expressed hope indicates that belonging to such groups and associations performs an important emotional role; indeed, group membership appears to serve as a vital source of moral support and provide a sense of belonging among participants, even when material support is negligible or lacking. These social benefits transcend material limitations and are seen as important protection mechanisms, especially for children and youth living on the precarious edge of survival.

3.2 Key Findings in Chad

3.2.1 Poverty

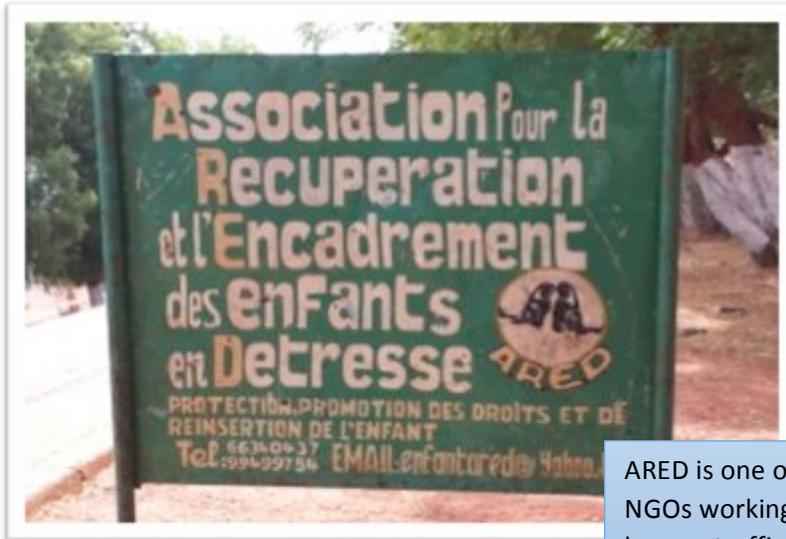
As discussed in more detail in the sub-section on Chad's socio-economic context, two thirds of the population live below the poverty line and the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is 876 USD (UNDP 2013b). Poverty in Chad affects approximately 55% of the population, especially in rural areas, which directly impacts children living in these regions. Poverty has serious consequences on the fulfillment of children's fundamental rights, including their access to healthy food, to adequate financial resources, health services, etc. (Humanium n.d.). Moreover, poverty was listed by most study participant as a threat to child protection, and was also identified as the primary root cause for all of the additional threats highlighted in this study. A representative of the women's association explains : *"On est obligé de faire travailler les enfants pour chercher du fargo"*.

Aisha 14, refugee camp of Belom for the past 2 years.

I am orphan and live with my maternal uncle. I lost both parents in the war. I would really like to go to school but I have no one who can support me to continue my studies. I do not have any soap to wash my clothes before going to school. I am overwhelmed by hunger; I don't eat enough. In the morning I have to do many house chores, like fetch the water and the wood.

3.2.2 Child Trafficking

Chad is a country of origin, transit and destination for children trafficked for forced labor or sex trafficking. The families of these children usually expect to receive some kind of monetary compensation and, in some cases, are deceived into believing that their children receive a better education. Some poor Muslim children leave their villages to attend classes in Koranic schools, only to find themselves being forced to beg on the street to bring money to their by their traffickers. Chadian girls from poor families also seek work in the larger cities where they often end up being forced to engage in prostitution and/or domestic slavery. Additionally, children had been identified in some military training centers of government and rebel. Some of these children may have lied about their age in order to be able to enlist, while other minors were reportedly recruited by government forces with full knowledge of their status (USDS 2013). Recent efforts by the Chadian government to take more measures to operationalize an Action Plan signed with UN in 2011 seems to be having an impact.



ARED is one of the primary Chadian NGOs working with child survivors of human trafficking.

As noted by the Association for the Promotion of Fundamental Freedoms in Chad (APLFT), the government of Chad has yet to enact legislation specifically prohibiting human trafficking; formal mechanism for the support and rehabilitation services to victims of trafficking and forced labor are similarly not available. Hoped-for Penal Code revisions prohibiting the trafficking of children and providing for a system of protection for victims are yet to be proclaimed. These gaps in the legal protection system contribute to the impunity of the traffickers, and perpetuates the abuse of trafficked children who continue to be forced to endure extremely exploitative conditions (PRAJUST-APLFT-ASF 2012: 7). In our research, we found that trafficking of children was a concern in Koumra.

3.2.3 The Worst Forms of Child Labor

A phenomenon related to child trafficking is the participation of children in the so-called worst forms of child labor. In Chad, the minimum age for employment is 14 years according to Article 52 of the 1996 Labor Code. Child labor, however, remains a very widespread reality for many children in the country. Due to economic hardship, families have their children work. These generally unschooled children typically face extremely challenging circumstances including poor living conditions, violence, long working hours, below minimum wage, etc. Working children, often found in markets, bars and other public places in the capital or other major cities such as Moundou, Koumra, Sarh and Abéché, are sometimes forced to beg, steal or even engage in transactional sex, and other forms of exploitation and abuse (Humanium n.d.). In focus groups with children, they described elaborately their obligation to work (i.e. “*je ne fais que le balayage*”).

de la cour chaque matin, d'aller au marché, faire la cuisine tous les jours, chaque soir je dois les donner de l'eau pour se laver, le refus de ces travaux, et on me tape.”) When asked what children considered too much work, children were very practical: “Alors souvent ma grand-mère me donne un bidon contenant 20 litres pour aller puiser de l'eau. Chaque fois ma grand-mère me force de préparer absolument tout, de laver les vêtements, d'aller chercher le fargo à longue distance.”

The case of the “*enfants Bouviers*” – child herders commonly found throughout southern and eastern Chad – was raised in every single FGD and interview conducted for this study. *Enfants Bouviers* are children, typically from an agriculturalist background, engaged to guard and drive herds of cattle, often working over 12 hours a day with little food or water. There usually is a contract between the parents and the employer establishing the remuneration to be paid in exchange for the child’s labor (Arditi 2005: 713-729). The regions with the highest numbers of *enfants bouviers* are Mandoul, Moyen Chari and Logone Oriental.



Young boys in Koumra, Mandoul, discuss the case of “*enfants bouviers*” and other forms of child labor in the community

In 2013, Chad made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by criminalizing the recruitment of children for armed service and implemented the 2013 Child Soldier Action Plan. Government inspectors and UN officials conducted joint inspections to screen for underage recruits in the military. The Government also established Child Protection Units in military zones and provided child protection training. In addition, the Government ratified the National Birth Registry Code, which requires all children be issued a birth certificate, in theory reducing the likelihood of under-age recruitment on grounds that the actual age of the children involved was not known (USDL n.d.: 1).

Many gaps remain in the Chadian legal framework, which leave children vulnerable to exploitation. *Enfants Bouviers*, and children working in agriculture, domestic service and in other informal workplaces are not covered by the Labor Law. Furthermore, there are no laws to protect trafficked children or children engaged in illicit activities, and no compulsory education age has been formally established (USDL n.d.: 1).

Children’s views on what is exploitative child labor (Belom refugee camp)

In a focus group, with 8 to 17 year old in Belom, children spoke evocatively about how they wanted to receive an education, but they were often unable to go to school because of their responsibilities. They spoke specifically about “household chores”, “lack of support from parents”, “work in the field”, “the distance to go to school” and “parent illness.”

An 11 year old boy explains: “ *Often I am forced to work, to go to the fields early in the morning until the evening. Before returning home, I have to fetch water. This is work that goes beyond my capacity.*”

In groups, they discussed what was considered acceptable chores for them, at their level. “ *Go to the market, sell and buy; washing clothes, fetching water and helping parents.*” The work that went beyond their abilities was : “*carrying heavy weight, getting heavy firewood, working in the fields from 5 in the morning to 6 in the evening, going by foot to places that are far and that all household works be placed on the shoulders of one child.*”



3.2.4 Violence

Violence – either threatened or explicit – constitutes a ubiquitous feature of Chadian children lives. Domestic violence, sometimes involving severe hitting or beating children and women, also remain longstanding practices in Chad. Some of it is perceived as unproblematic and even done “for children’s own good”. For instance, teachers routinely beat their students often response to some form of “misbehavior” such as failing to learn a lesson or complete the homework, refusing to carry out a chore, or disobeying orders. Conversely, the sexual

exploitation of female students is allegedly not uncommon but regarded as shameful and unacceptable behavior, as is violence associated with excessive drinking.

Throughout the research, the linkages between violence and poverty were shown to be interconnected and constantly feeding back on each other. An 11 year old girl in the refugee camp in Maro explains: “Je ne fais que balayer la cour chaque matin, d’aller au marché, faire la cuisine tous les jours. Chaque soir je dois donner de l’eau pour se laver. Le refus de ces travaux et on me tape.” Community leaders in Belom spoke about domestic violence in the women-headed violence whereby “*La pauvreté pousse les mamans à être très fâché, le papa est mort, ils ont des difficultés et les responsabilités tombent sur les épaules des enfants.*”

Sexual violence in Chad also appears to be widespread. In a pattern that mirrors the situation in Burundi, while adolescent girls and female youth in Chad are the most common targets, participants in several FGDs shared stories of sexual predators victimizing children of both sexes as young as 1 or 2 year old.

Unaccompanied minor in Maigama, Sahr, Chad

Mustafa is 17 yrs and came to Maigama refugee camp over a year ago.

I came from the Central African Republic because of the war. I experienced really difficult things to come to Chad, but that is part of life. When the conflict broke out, I became an assistant to a driver. When I arrived at the border, I connected with the UNHCR team asking to become a refugee. I lost my leg because of random bullet, and now have to walk on crutches. My parents stayed in CAF. When there is peace I will return. To earn some money, I now do the sewing for people in the camp. There is very little work here, we have no recognition. We are many unaccompanied minors at the camp, after having being cared for by UNICEF we now have hosts families from the camp.

3.2.5 Early Marriages

Early marriage for girls remains common practice in Chad. Some early marriages are practiced even before puberty, as early as eight years of age. These are often arranged marriages without the consent of the children in questions. Early marriage of children has a negative impact on their health, their development, and the full exercise of their rights. Young married girls drop out of school and are generally limited in their social interactions. They also risk early pregnancy which can be dangerous to their health and that of their subsequent children (Humanium n.d.).

Women's group, like this one in Koumra (Mandoul) identify domestic violence and early marriage as key threats to both child protection and social cohesion



Civil majority is reached in Chad at 21 years, with the legal age for marriage being 18 for boys and 17 for girls. However, in customary law, the age of marriage is implicitly set at 13 years (Humanium n.d.), which is contrary to the provisions of the CRC as remarked upon by the Committee on the Right of the Child in its 2009 concluding observations (CRC 2009: 35). According to UNICEF, Chad is, after Niger, one of the where early marriage is most widespread in the world (2010: 101). Similarly, a recent report from the UN Population Fund (UNFPA 2013) estimates that one out of 10 girls in Chad has a child before age 15 years, and that 48% of women aged 20 to 24 report having given birth before the age of 18. Poverty and socio-cultural considerations remain the main causes of child marriages.

3.2.6 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM; excision-clitoridectomy)

Act No. 006 / PR / 2002 of 15 April 2002 on the promotion of reproductive health establishes, in article 9, paragraph 2, that all forms of violence such as female genital mutilation (FGM) are against the law. Penalties are provided for in Article 18 of the same law, as well as in Article 253 of the Penal Code. Additionally, national campaigns have been organized by a number of institutions, including the MASSNF, to raise awareness both of the harmful effects of these practices, and of the associated penalties (Conseil des Droits de l'Homme 2013:4). FGM has, however, remained a common practice to-date. Taking mostly the form of clitoridectomy, FGM is usually performed before puberty – typically between 5 to 12 years – but may, in some cases, be carried out on girls younger than a year.

While religious beliefs, ethnicity, and education level seem to have an impact on the incidence of this practice (UNICEF 2013), the large majority of study participants mentioned poverty as the primary reason for its persistence: it is one of the few income-generating activities available to the women who perform it; girls typically receive gifts or money at the ceremony than often accompanies the practice and, most importantly, it is believed that the parents of excised girls are likely to negotiate higher “bride prices” (locally known as “*dot*”) than non-excised ones.

3.2.7 Limited Birth Registration

Low rates of birth registration is a risk to child protection often mentioned by Chadian authorities and local study participants alike. An unregistered child at birth risks "being excluded from society, of being denied the right to an official identity, a name, and a nationality" (UNICEF 2001: 1). Furthermore, the challenges of establishing the age of a child not registered at birth, make it difficult to determine the protections to which she is entitled, and provisions applicable to her if she finds herself in contact with the law.



Child registration at Maingama Returnee Camp, Moyen Chari

The Republic of Chad has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, both of which stipulate the obligation of States

parties to register children at birth. At the domestic legislation level, Act No. 008 / PR / 2013 concerning the organization of civil status in the Republic of Chad provides that "personal status can only be established and proven by acts of the State". Section 10 of said Law provides for mandatory birth and death registration, and Article 12 ensures that both registrations be free of charge. Under Law 008, every birth in the national territory must be declared to the competent authorities within one month from the date of birth, either through the declaration of both parents, one of the parents or any person who was present at the child's birth. Birth registration without following proper legal procedure is, however, widespread in Chad. In effect, of all West African States and Central Africa, Chad is still the one with one of the lowest birth registration rates. In 2009 for example, only 9% of births were registered in Chad, compared to 32% in Niger, 33% in Nigeria, 49% in Central African Republic, and 70% in Cameroon (UNICEF 2009: 9).

4. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Additional issues identified by the research include: limited collaboration and sharing of information across groups working on protection (e.g. child protection committees, women and youth organizations); a significant disconnection between national level objectives and community level problems; and a local perception that informal groups were often seen as more legitimate and effective (i.e. accessible, familiar) than formal systems.

The most common pathway for addressing child protection issues involved approaching family members as a first step, followed by traditional conflict resolution mechanisms including the village chief and/or the *bashingantahe*, sometimes the local child protection committee in the case of Burundi, and finally, the court and justice. Repatriated refugees, often exposed to non-local understandings of justice while living in internationally-managed camps, expressed less confidence in customary law and traditional approaches to justice and conflict resolution. "*They can give advice, but they cannot settle disputes!!*" vehemently repeated a young man who, having been orphaned as a young boy, had lost his father's land and other inheritable property to his unscrupulous relatives. Currently an active member of Abana Makamba – a Burundian NGO that works with orphans and other vulnerable children – he firmly believed that most of the protection issues affecting children in Burundi (i.e. land issues, various forms of violence, abandonment, sexual and physical abuse) could not be adequately resolved "*à l'amiable*" (amicably) and required the intervention of the formal justice system. As indicated above, the changing role of traditional groups such as the *bashingantahe* is an important factor impacting conflict resolution strategies. Additional research on these changing roles is critical to a better understanding of the efficacy of related peace building and social cohesion mechanisms and, equally important, community perceptions of what works and what is most legitimate.

In both Burundi and Chad religion was frequently mentioned as both a protective mechanism (promoting social cohesion and cooperation among co-religionists) and a potential source of conflict (among people from different religious affiliations). Traditional religious actors (priests, pastors, Imams) were identified by many residents (although not by returnees in Burundi) as having influence in protecting people at risk of harm or after they have harmed or been harmed by others. The continual reference to religious leaders by community members and by the religious leaders themselves suggests that they are a recognized critical group for protecting children, youth and women at the community level, even if their role appears to be more symbolic than practical.



Religious leaders of various denominations (priests, pastors, Imams) remain influential community actors

Additional issues identified by the research include a limited collaboration and sharing of information across groups working on protection, a significant disconnection between national level objectives and community level problems, and a perception that informal groups were often seen as more legitimate and effective (i.e. accessible, familiar, recognized local social capital) than formal systems. It is thus, essential that subsequent stages of this project involve the diverse organized community groups operating at the community level including children/youth, women, elders, religious, and other community leaders. This work should build on current efforts at the government level to strengthen the informal system. *“On veut rendre les acteurs locaux de proximité, de les outiller, les amener à comprendre, de connaître les instruments juridiques et des compétences pratiques pour traiter des situations”* explained a representative from the Ministère de l’Action social in Chad. Although some of the previous structures put in place by government have failed. A community member observed: *“Comment renforcer des structures qui ne fonctionnent pas, les 20 comités de protection ne sont pas actifs?”*



Women's groups, such as the "Organisation des Groupements Feminins pour le Développement au Tchad" are among the most active stakeholders in a range of positive social change endeavors.

Given the tendency of some of these groups to consider children's issues in isolation, it is also important to highlight that child protection is more effectively addressed from a systems perspective that adequately incorporates both short-term and long-term. In a focus group with community leaders, our broader focus was criticised as: "*Pourquoi vous posez toutes ces questions quand vous disiez que vous parlez des enfants?*"

The inter-related root causes of the various child protection risks identified during this first visit must be investigated further. Unwanted pregnancies and early marriage among girls, for instance, can be seen as indicative of larger societal patterns of gender discrimination and violence against women. Efforts to reinforce social cohesion are, on their own, unlikely to resolve these complex and sensitive matters.

The inter-related root causes of the various child protection risks identified during the site visit must be kept to the forefront. Unwanted pregnancies and early marriage among girls, in Burundi for instance, can be seen as indicative of larger societal patterns of gender discrimination and violence against women. While FGM and early marriage among girls in Chad, was recognized by most study participant to relate to poverty while also being culturally prescribed norms. Efforts to reinforce social cohesion must be considered in context, as complex and sensitive matters, which may involve changing socio-cultural patterns of gender discrimination and

violence against women. At the de-brief meeting participants made a note of caution: “*comment prendre le bon dans les communautés et rejeter ce qui n’est pas bon.*”

Subsequent stages of this study will involve building on the main findings of this field visit as well as documentation undertaken by UNICEF and other actors to design a training curriculum that can refine and expand community mechanisms for strengthening protection mechanisms and risk factors impacting child protection and social cohesion in both Burundi and Chad, noting that they are overlapping, rather than separate concerns.

5. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The findings discussed in this report constitute a first effort to better understand how children in Burundi and Chad are instrumentally utilizing the new opportunities presented by post-conflict circumstances (Arnfred and Utas 2007) to reconfigure social orders (Richards 1996), and navigate, negotiate, and modify their socially prescribed life trajectories to their advantage (Vigh 2006).



Understanding of child protection in Burundi and Chad reflect a mixture of local views along with insights from international child protection standards, including the *African Charter on the*

Rights and Welfare of the Child (the African Charter)⁸ and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC)⁹ as well as *Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies Minimum Standards*.¹⁰

As discussed in the Systems Mapping briefing, Burundi has ratified most international legal instruments on the rights of children, its national legislation remains insufficiently aligned with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The fact that Burundi does not yet have a comprehensive legal instrument incorporating the various provisions relating to the rights of the child, nor a national policy on children encompassing all the rights of children, limits the effectiveness of these provisions as child protection mechanisms (UNICEF n.d.: 5)¹¹.

While a number of significant commonalities can be identified, it is also important to acknowledge that Burundian and Chadadian society is far from homogeneous and that not all children and communities will be equally impacted by the issues and factors investigated by this study. As illustrated by the previous discussion, different individuals and groups in society are differently affected by local conditions depending on their position in society, their decision-making power and their individual and socially-ascribed vulnerabilities and resilience. Women, children and youth possess both particular vulnerabilities and the potential to operate as active agents of their own protection. Furthermore, in both Burundi and Chad, as in many countries of the Global South, they constitute the largest demographic sector. Their role in processes of social cohesion (or “bonne habitation” as referred to in the community) and peacebuilding calls to be strengthened through a capability approach while considering the complexities of Burundi and Chad’s social, cultural and economic reality.

⁸ *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*. Available from: <http://acerwc.org/the-african-charter-on-the-rights-and-welfare-of-the-child-acerwc/> [accessed on April 15, 2014].

⁹ *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Available from: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> [accessed on May 15, 2014].

¹⁰ *Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery - A Commitment to Access, Quality and Accountability*. Available from: <http://www.ineesite.org/en/minimum-standards> [accessed on April 4, 2014]

¹¹ UNICEF (n.d.) « Politique Nationale pour la Protection de L’Enfant au Burundi 2012-2016 ».

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The next stage in the project will involve building on these preliminary findings to develop local capacity to strengthen the linkages between child protection and social cohesion. A number of recommendations help bridge these two phases of the project.

1. Strengthen the capacity of local child protection committees (or similar recognized local protection mechanisms) to more effectively mobilize local assets to enhance social cohesion.
2. Engage youth as trusted peers for vulnerable young people, and as potential agents of social change for peacebuilding
3. Include respected community leaders such as faith leaders and elders involved in traditional dispute resolution on issues linking child protection and social cohesion (e.g the *Bashinganate* in Burundi)
4. Enhance the role of local women's groups as core care and protection providers for children across the lifespan and mobilizers for local social and economic capital (such as women's saving groups) that can further peacebuilding
5. Utilize participatory action research tools that draw on local social capital to understand and address the complexity of local context in reducing risk factors and strengthening protective mechanisms for vulnerable children
6. Design and pilot locally developed indicators that enhance local child engagement in linking capabilities and opportunities for child protection and social cohesion
7. Explore potential child protection and peacebuilding research-practice platforms to create on line and face-to-face practice learning opportunities to connect the community experience in Burundi and Chad, and potentially with other similar conflict affected contexts.

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