



# **A Red Cross unit in every community:** developing a countrywide community volunteer network in Burundi Red Cross Society

## Case Study



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Strategy 2020 voices the collective determination of the IFRC to move forward in tackling the major challenges that confront humanity in the next decade. Informed by the needs and vulnerabilities of the diverse communities with whom we work, as well as the basic rights and freedoms to which all are entitled, this strategy seeks to benefit all who look to Red Cross Red Crescent to help to build a more humane, dignified, and peaceful world.

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1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disasters and crises
  2. Enable healthy and safe living
  3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace
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***A Red Cross unit in every community:***

***developing a countrywide community volunteer network in  
Burundi Red Cross Society***

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# 1 Introduction

In order to progress the implementation of the “Framework and principles to build strong National Societies 2011”, as approved by the 18<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly in 2011, the Learning and Organizational Development department is developing a series of case studies to collect and share learning on:

- How National Societies function in various political, economical and cultural contexts
- How National Societies become strong according to the Framework’s definition of a strong National Society
- How external support can help National Societies to become strong.

Such analysis and knowledge of real-life situations complements the development of generic tools and training for National Societies. The studies are expected to contribute to Federation wide knowledge development and sharing, and form the basis of the curriculum for future training and learning opportunities.

## 1.1 What is this case study about?

*“When we work with vulnerable albino people, other people in the community treat them better.”*

This case study analyses the change process within the Burundi Red Cross Society (BRCS) between 2005 and 2010. At the centre of this change process is the development of the National Society from an organisation without any sustainable presence and activity at community level into an organisation delivering sustainable local services in 98% of the country’s communities. In the process it grew from a handful of volunteers to over 300 000 in the course of four years.

The impacts of these figures are enormous in terms of the quantity and quality of local services delivered to vulnerable people in Burundi. As well as local services, the mobilisation of approximately 1 person in 30 of the population was described by volunteers as contributing to a culture of peace and non-violence in communities, many of which had remained fragmented following conflict between Hutus and Tutsis during the 1990s. There are also powerful examples for how this mobilisation is having a positive impact on the resilience of very vulnerable communities. In short, the ability of the Burundi Red Cross Society to meet the needs of vulnerable people in Burundi has transformed.

The development of this community base to the National Society was a planned organisational development (OD) process using the Design, Test, Duplicate methodology drafted by the secretariat OD department in 2002 (revised 2012). This then catalysed a series of other changes in organisation and management at other levels of the National Society.

The case study summarises the general context of vulnerability in Burundi and of the National Society prior to the change process, focuses on the development of the community base to the organisation, and gives a brief snapshot of the organisational structure in June 2011.



Volunteers harvest potatoes on land donated to Muramvya provincial branch. The harvest will be split between branch and local group, supporting vulnerable people either as food or as a source of income, June 2011. Balthazar Bacinoni/Burundi Red Cross Society

## 1.2 Why is this case study important?

**A strong National Society is one that is able to deliver country-wide, through a network of volunteer-based units, a relevant service to vulnerable people sustained for as long as needed.<sup>1</sup>**

This case study documents the transformation of one National Society from a situation of extreme weakness to one of strength as defined by the Federation General Assembly within only a few years. It shows how a National Society may overcome the constraints of working in a chronically poor environment to deliver simple but sustainable services, based on community resources rather than international programme funding.

The initial situation of the BRCS, while extreme, applies in greater or lesser extent to many National Societies, and can be characterised as follows:

- Lack of sustainable community-level services, country coverage or reach
- Consequent lack of sustainable community structures and resource mobilisation
- A national level organisation which is out of proportion to the service delivery capacity of the rest of the National Society, and is itself largely operational rather than carrying out support and coordination functions
- Dependence on international funding streams to carry out activities and maintain the structure that exists
- Image in local communities as an external NGO, rather than a locally-owned and accountable organisation.

The case study is also important because the change process used represents a departure from traditional approaches to OD within IFRC. The methodology used focused on developing sustainable grassroots services as the crucial basis for a sustainable National Society, before realigning intermediary branch and

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<sup>1</sup> Building strong National Societies: Our common endeavour. A comprehensive framework. Approved by 2011 General Assembly

national level activities to focus on supporting local action. This approach is different to that taken in many National Society development interventions, in which priority is given to national and intermediary branch level capacity building, rather than holistic organisational change focused on service delivery.

The case study illustrates some aspects of National Society development that may be inspirational or relevant to other National Societies:

- The crucial role of leadership and governance processes in enabling transformational change within a National Society
- The holistic nature of much National Society development; in this case the strong and mutually reinforcing linkage between local service delivery, further resource mobilisation and organisational sustainability
- Demonstration of a community-based volunteer system as a core business model for a viable National Society
- The potential of a managed approach to developing a sustainable community base, and associated costs
- The roles of intermediary branches and national office in coordinating and supporting sustainable community service delivery
- What volunteer management can look like in a resource-poor environment

### 1.3 How does the case study relate to the 2011 Framework and Principles for building strong National Societies?

The case study illustrates a number of points made in the 2011 Framework<sup>2</sup> approved by the General Assembly.

First of all, it illustrates the assertion that all National Societies can become strong according to the definition of National Society strength given in the Framework and cited above.

The case study furthermore gives a textbook example of the “first step” in National Society development: “developing a sustainable country-wide local-branch-and-volunteer service”.

It also provides practical illustrations of organisational development to reach various critical turning points in the self-development process, most noticeably the governance renewal prior to the launch of the project.

The case study illustrates the distinction between organisational development (i.e. work done within a National Society by its leaders to change what exists), and capacity enhancement (more usually known as capacity building). Both of these processes interact throughout the case study; however the case study clearly shows that it was the organisational development within the National Society which provided the basis for the effective growth and strengthening through capacity building. In retrospect, the capacity building carried out prior to this organisational development process was ineffective, and actually incapable of bringing about change of this scale and scope.

Finally, the case study suggests the power of the principle that “each National Society is responsible for its own sustainable development”, and is a good example of the “good supportership” advocated for in the Framework of appropriately tailored support closely supervised and controlled by the National Society’s own leadership.

*“White man means money” – common belief in Burundi*

<sup>2</sup> Building strong National Societies: Our common endeavour. A comprehensive framework. Approved at the 2011 General Assembly.

## 1.4 How was the case study developed?

The case study results from the evaluation of the pilot project: “mobilising sustainable local capacities in the branches of the Burundi Red Cross Society”. This evaluation was carried out in June 2011 by a team of four people from BRCS, IFRC and the Finnish Red Cross. The evaluation report can be accessed at: <http://www.ifrc.org/docs/Evaluations/Evaluations2011/Africa/978-92-9139-180-6%20Burundi-evaluation-report.pdf>

The case study was approved for publication by the Burundi Red Cross Society.

## 1.5 Further information

This case study has been produced for the Learning and Organisational Development department of the IFRC secretariat. For more information, please contact:

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A YouTube video on the pilot project is available at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q\\_uaqS8QBEE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q_uaqS8QBEE)

# 2 Background to the case study

## 2.1 Vulnerability in Burundi

Burundi is a chronically poor country of very low Human Development Index (HDI) – currently 166 out of 169 countries with comparable data. Life expectancy is currently 51.4 years<sup>3</sup> with 81 per cent of the population living on US\$ 1.25 per day and a GDP per capita of US\$ 403.<sup>4</sup> Progress in development as measured by the HDI has been consistently slower than other sub-Saharan countries over the last thirty years.

The population of 8.5 million is largely engaged in agriculture (90 per cent), with the majority of people subsistence farmers, and one of the highest population densities in Africa (315/km<sup>2</sup>). The population is currently growing rapidly in spite of the health and environmental factors detailed below, adding to pressure on land.

Although there is a common language and culture, post-independence Burundi has experienced outbreaks of ethnic violence between Hutu and Tutsi groups within society. The most recent war starting in 1993 caused over 300,000 deaths and displaced some 1.2 million people (16 per cent of the population).<sup>5</sup> Of these, many fled to neighbouring countries Rwanda and Tanzania.

Healthcare in Burundi is poor, characterised by high morbidity and mortality rates, in particular among pregnant women and children under five, with a death rate of 176 per 1,000 live births. Malaria is the main cause of morbidity and mortality, with diarrhoeal diseases, acute respiratory infections, malnutrition and AIDS also prevalent.

Environmental factors add to the vulnerability caused by population growth in a largely subsistence economy. Deforestation for firewood leads to soil erosion and landslides. Unstable seasonal patterns of rains are leading to some regions facing regular drought, and chronic food insecurity. A great number of Burundians are reliant on external food assistance.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.2 National administrative structure, and relationship to the current (2011) Burundi Red Cross structure

Burundi comprises approximately 2850 **collines** (communities) of 2 – 3000 inhabitants each. 98% of collines have Burundi Red Cross Society volunteer groups comprising 50 - 500 volunteers. Prior to 2007, the National Society was not represented at this level.

3 [http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR\\_2010\\_EN\\_Table1\\_reprint.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2010_EN_Table1_reprint.pdf)

4 <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BDI.html>

5 <http://web.worldbank.org/>

6 CRB strategic plan 2010 - 2013

11 – 25 collines make up a **commune**. Each of the 129 country's communes has a Burundi Red Cross Society committee. Prior to 2007, there were communal Red Cross committees in existence, carrying out sporadic activities in the immediate vicinity.

An average of eight communes makes up a **province**. The Burundi Red Cross Society has 17 provincial **branches**. Provincial committees existed prior to 2007.

The country is divided into five **regions**, at which level the Burundi Red Cross Society has a regional national committee member.

### 2.3 The Burundi Red Cross, 1994–2007

From 1994 - 1996, the National Society provided humanitarian assistance to refugees from the genocide in Rwanda in the north of the country, with support from the International Federation.<sup>7</sup>

There then followed a period of International Federation and Participating National Society (PNS) support to organisational development of the Burundi Red Cross Society, as well as humanitarian assistance to displaced people. Capacity building measures included efforts to strengthen partnerships at national level, construction of some provincial offices and translation of materials into Kirundi, the local language.

In 2002, the end of relief operations, plus ongoing tension between external partners and the National Society led to Federation and PNS support for the National Society phasing out. One concern was the ongoing failure to hold a National Society General Assembly. Another was a lack of partner confidence in National Society financial transparency. The result was the loss of most staff positions, and the collapse of almost all project activities. This triggered a shift in vision and strategic thinking within the leadership of the National Society, and led to the appointment of a new secretary general.

2004 and early 2005 saw National Society governance elections take place in 122 of Burundi's 129 communes – in retrospect a “turning point” in the development of the National Society. Two factors which combined to enable this shift were the arrival of the new secretary general, but also the external Movement pressure.

These in turn led to governance renewal in 16 of the 17 provinces. In 2005, the National Society held its first democratically constituted General Assembly. This process was not easy: there was a widespread belief that the National Society had ceased to exist with the termination of external support. Even at senior governance level, the argument had to be made that the National Society had to exist and be active with or without partner funding.

At the time of the General Assembly, there were four paid staff at the national office, including the new secretary general, and no staff at provincial branch level. Following the General Assembly, these began a process of sensibilising communal and governance volunteers, as well as national external partners to the history and role of the National Society, and its ambition to function irrespective of the availability of donor funding.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ifrc.org/docs/appeals/annual03/010103.pdf> International Federation annual appeal for Burundi 2003-2004 (Appeal no. 01.01/2003)

As Movement confidence in the National Society grew<sup>8</sup>, a strategic plan for 2007-2009 was developed based on consultation with provincial governance. This foresaw the extension of the National Society, which had not previously existed at community level, into each of the nearly three thousand *collines* that make up the lowest level of national administration in Burundi. The secretary general's vision was for each community to have trained first aider.

## 2.4 Service delivery capacity of the Burundi Red Cross Society in 2005

In 2005 the Burundi Red Cross Society did not exist at community level. It was sporadically represented by commune committees: a commune typically covering 11 – 25 communities, and a population of 30 – 60000 people. Commune committees would typically mobilise some fund locally, and carry out some activities in their immediate geographical area, but without the human or financial resources to carry out wider activities.

Burundi Red Cross Society was almost totally dependent on international donor finance in order to carry out activities and to support its paid staff. Figure 1 gives an illustration of this situation.



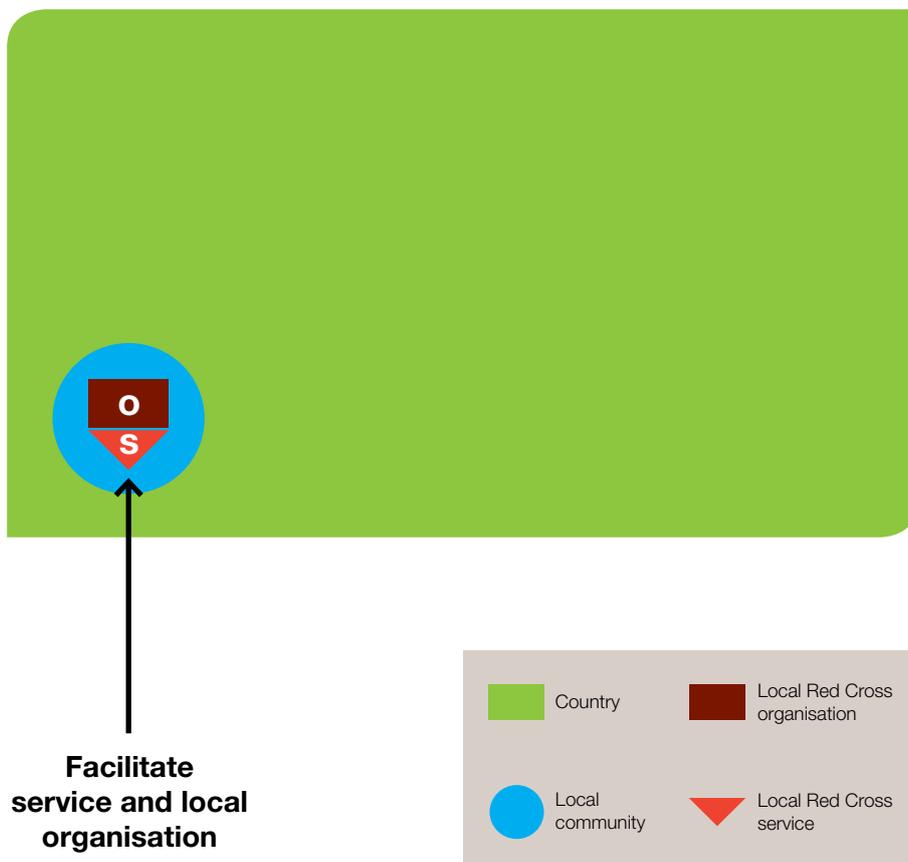
<sup>8</sup> Six partner National Societies participated in the partnership meeting in October 2007.

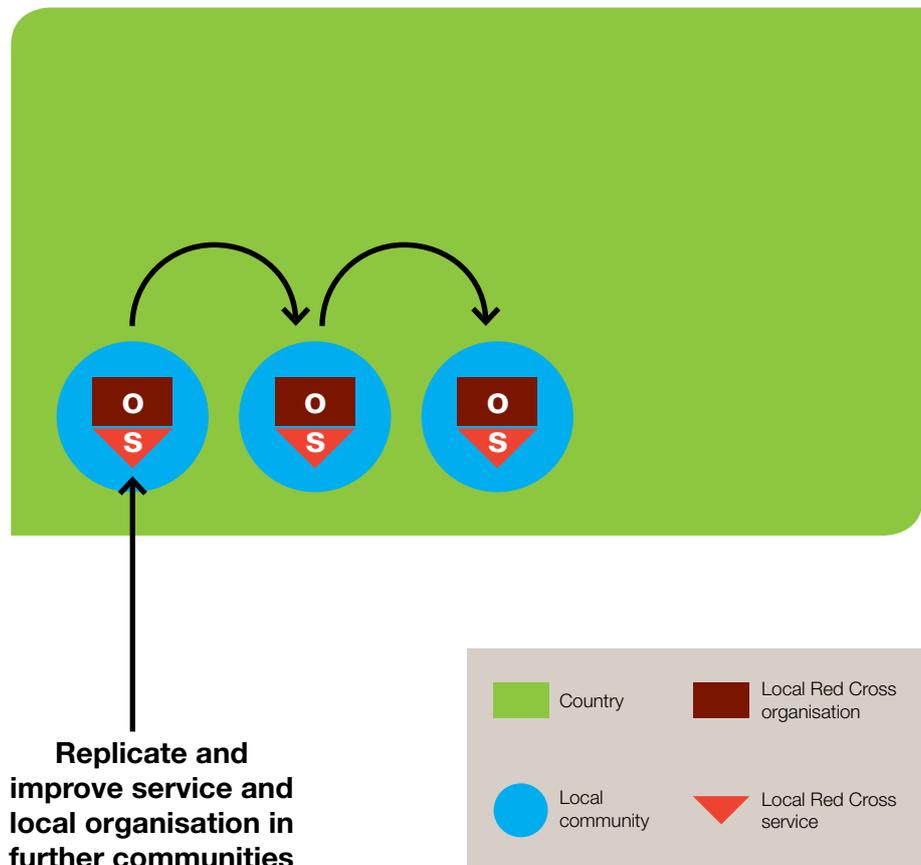
# Basis for the change strategy in the National Society

At the heart of the BRCS change process is the “design, test, duplicate“ methodology developed by the IFRC secretariat Learning and Organisational Development department. This focuses on developing the community level of a National Society as the key foundation for further development and realignment of other National Society structures.

The principle is that a National Society should focus on designing and testing a sustainable unit in one community (fig. 2), before improving and replicating this model in other communities (fig. 3). In order to enable this, investment finance should be made available to pay for the organisational costs of setting up local units. This should not be used to finance community-level activities themselves or ongoing organisational structure: these should be supported by communities.

Figure 2.



**Figure 3.**

The components of the unit are a simple service that can be carried out with resources available within the community, and a simple organisational structure that allows for volunteers to “own” the organisation, to reach decisions, to raise local resources, and to interact with the rest of the National Society.

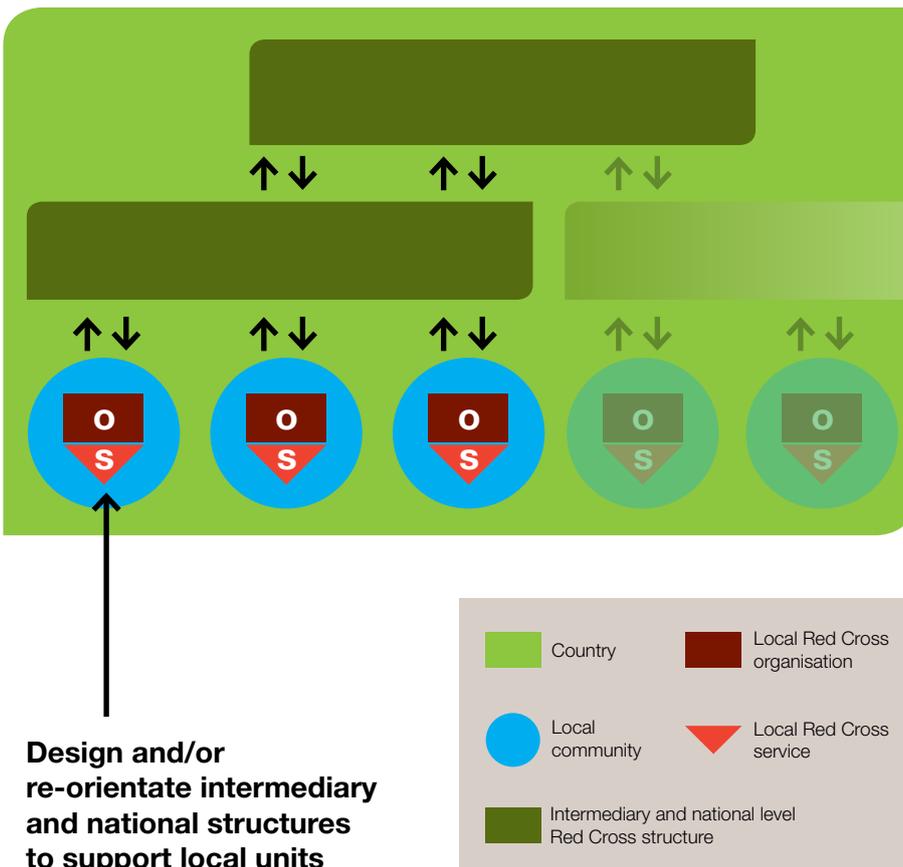
The choice of initial communities is key; these should be communities where there is the highest possible chance of successfully creating a sustainable unit. This relies both on good conditions at community level, but also buy-in and commitment from branch leaders. Success in these communities influences other communities to follow suit, until at last even those communities in which the initial chances of success are weak also develop local units.

Sustainability means that the unit’s service should be important but simple enough for the community to resource both it and the organisational structure through leadership, volunteer time and donations. It is important that units are not dependent on the National Society for support: if so it is unlikely to have the resources to support thousands of individual units.

In terms of the development process, it is important that the cost to the National Society of setting up each unit should be kept as low as possible so that the National Society is able to afford to set up several thousand new units over time. While formation of the early units is resource-intensive, the learning from these experiences allows the project to go to scale at the lowest possible cost and with the maximum chance of success.

Once there is a critical mass of units in one area, a support structure can be developed, or adapted from existing structures to meet the minimal coordination and support needs of local units (fig.4). Again this is a process of testing a model in one location, and systematically adapting it to conditions in further places.

Figure 4.



Throughout the process, the importance of systematic documentation and learning is key. In particular, failure in one place should not prevent the methodology being tried in another geographical location. What is important is that the reasons for failure are analysed and the learning applied at the next attempt. As the project only invests small amounts of time (and associated travel and accommodation costs) in individual locations, failure in an individual location is not expensive.

Once the project is firmly established in one branch, the methodology and learning can be replicated across other branches based on National Society capacity and financial resources.

# 4 Implementing the change strategy

## 4.1 Committed leadership: the foundation for change

The 2007 national strategic plan had stated the intention to create community units across the country based on the vision of a first aider in every community. This ambition had legitimacy within the National Society based on the process of governance renewal that culminated in the 2005 General Assembly.

## 4.2 Secretariat technical support and financial investment

Secretariat support to the change process took the forms of funding from the Capacity Building Fund, and training for the individuals within the National Society who would lead the change process – in particular secretary general, national OD coordinator, and the two provincial branch coordinators.

Training for the individuals focused on the logic of sustainable community mobilisation, and how this was different to project-based approaches to delivering services. It discussed traditional forms of mutual aid and community self-help, and how these might relate to Red Cross activities. It also addressed the theory of designing and duplicating units described above.

The secretariat funding provided (CHF 100 000 per year over three years) was only enough to catalyse the change process: very significant additional funding was contributed to the process by ICRC and Norwegian Red Cross and to a lesser extent other PNSs. While not all of this funding was earmarked for organisational development, there was enough flexibility in programme funding for it to be used to develop and sustainable National Society structures as well as supporting programme goals.

## 4.3 Creation of initial units

To start the pilot project, two provincial branches were selected. One factor in choosing them was the quality of local leadership. Another was that these were provinces in which the National Society had not been active in delivering relief services. The fear was that in areas where the National Society was associated with making payments to volunteers, it would be very difficult to persuade communities to self-organise without paying them.

In one community each in Karuzi and Ruyigi provinces, a small team including the national project coordinator and branch secretary held community meetings as well as informal chats with people that they met. The discussions focused on the needs of vulnerable people in the communities, and how, prior to the ethnic conflict of the 1990s, local people had worked together to support one another in line with the traditional concept of *ikibiri*. *Ikibiri* means “a duty carried out together for a needy person”. In doing so, the voices of older people who could remember this time were important.

Initial discussions were tough: although the Red Cross was not well-known in these areas, there was an assumption that it was another NGO come to give things away, or employ people to do things in the community. In challenging this perception, the project team spoke of the Fundamental Principles and their compatibility with *ikibiri*. These discussions continued for two weeks in one community, before enough people agreed to work together to form a Red Cross unit. There followed elections to a committee, which formed the leadership core of the unit.

Initial services were decided using the Fundamental Principle of humanity to determine who the most vulnerable people in communities were – a potential challenge in communities where most people are vulnerable in one way or another. The activities carried out were agricultural in nature – digging a field, building a house or mending a roof for an elderly or disabled person – and based on existing skills and tools. The logic was that lots of people doing simple things once a week would lead to very visible impacts, which in turn would attract further resources from within the community.

While the DTD methodology had suggested that it would have been acceptable for one or even both of the initial projects to have failed, so long as useful learning contributed to future attempts, in practical terms it was felt that it would have been very difficult to start again in new locations if the initial attempts had not been successful.

*“we don’t have anything but our strength to give to help vulnerable people... so we’ll dig fields and build houses...”*

**Local solidarity and initiative:**

In 2008, units in Makamba province started going from door to door collecting food in response to famine in a neighbouring province. They collected 300 tonnes in three days: a significant contribution given the general level of poverty even in the non-affected areas. Other provinces then followed suit, meaning that rural Burundians made a significant contribution to alleviating the famine through the National Society, in addition to external support.

### 4.4 Duplication of local units

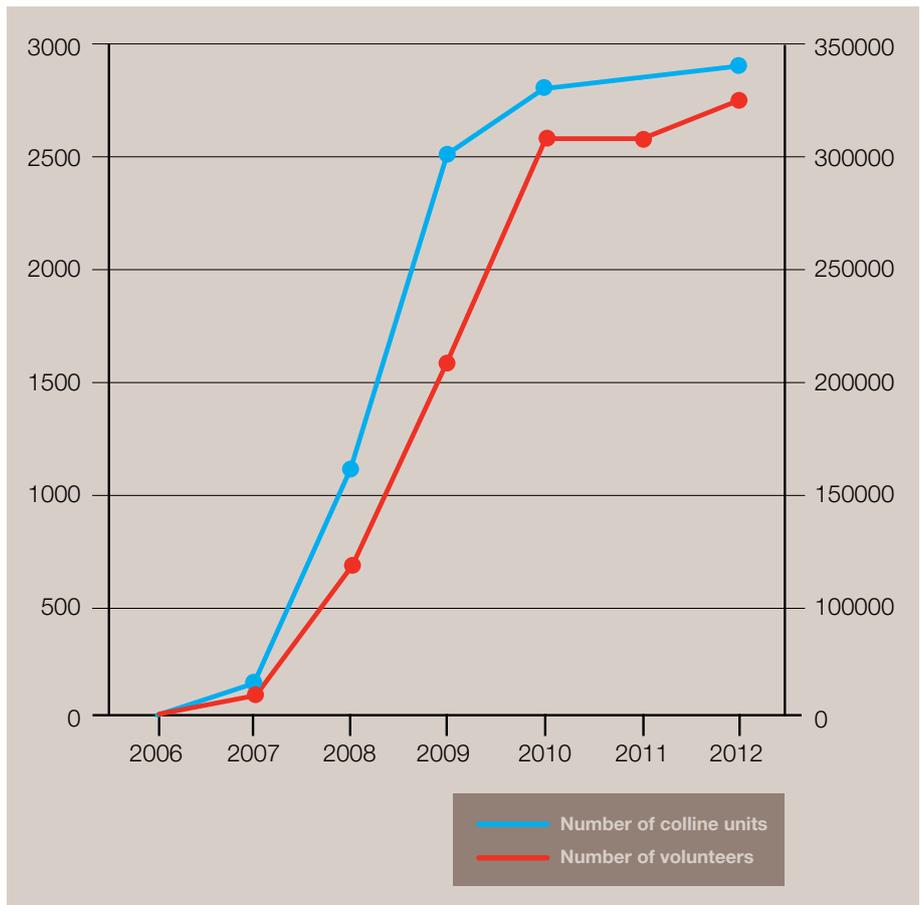
Duplication took two forms. The National Society managed a planned process of extending the idea and model developed to other communities by the project team. At the same time, duplication took place informally as people moved between communities, saw what was happening, and persuaded their own communities to approach the National Society for support in setting up their own units.

Later in 2007, the decision was taken to extend the pilot project across the country, and a documentary of events in the initial provinces was filmed and shown to provincial branch secretaries in December 2007. Through this process, 2008 and 2009 became years of duplicating the initial success across the country. The table below gives some sense of the speed at which the Burundi Red Cross Society expanded during this period:

Year	Number of colline units	Number of volunteers
2006	0	
2007	142	9,689
2008	1,100	77,545
2009	2,507	185,798

Year	Number of colline units	Number of volunteers
2010	2,800	300,000
2011	2,850	300,000
2012(mid-year)	2,900	320,000 of which 70,000 are youth

## Growth of the Burundi Red Cross Society, 2006-2012



### 4.5 Developing support structures

At the same time as more new units were being created, existing units needed ongoing training and motivation. Given the scarce resources available to the National Society, it was important that local units should provide one another with as much support as possible, therefore regular meetings between committee members of local units were arranged at the commune level. Meetings at this level facilitated reporting of problems, encouraged sharing of solutions between units, and encouraged healthy competition to help spread innovation and new ideas. One limiting factor was the cost of transportation for committee members to come together: these costs needed to be found locally.

## 4.6 Obstacles and challenges encountered

In general, once the early units had been developed, the project took off very rapidly and at times almost beyond the National Society's capacity to keep pace. An issue with the expansion was the need to ensure quality of process once the task of setting up new units passed from a small handful of people to many teams working across the country, so that all units would develop in a similar direction. One way of doing this was to ensure that the message of simple but important services to communities was consistently applied: another was to

### Learning from mistakes

During the early project phases, one external partner wanted to support a local group building houses for returned refugees from Tanzania. In doing so, the decision was taken that these houses should have metal roofs. This decision however meant that volunteers no longer regarded the returned refugees as vulnerable, a metal roof being a status symbol within society. As this and other examples were analysed, good practice began to evolve as to how external funding could best support and reinforce the efforts of local groups rather than competing with them.

bring together unit leaders every month to meet with provincial branch secretaries so that these could ensure that individual units were on track.

A major issue was to provide local units with adequate training to function effectively within the framework of Red Cross Red Crescent values. Systematic management training for unit leaders only began in 2011, based on the needs expressed by volunteers. Until then, support was delivered through group leader meetings, and through individual coaching and support in response to particular situations. A particular concern, for example, was that lack of experience in dealing with group financial accountability might lead to conflict and reputational damage to the National Society as local units began to generate their own financial resources. One approach used by the National Society in such cases was to draw on the Fundamental Principle of Unity as a tool to encourage units to work together transparently.

Two concrete issues that the National Society faced related to externally-funded projects implemented within the National Society, and their impact on community units.

In one case, a project managed by the national office paid people to build houses. This led to the local volunteer unit, which had been building houses as part of their weekly service, stopping functioning. Volunteers questioned why they should work for free if payment was being given to other people to carry out the same work.

Another example occurred when external concepts of vulnerability were imposed on a local unit. Here, an external partner wanted to support a local group building houses for returned refugees from Tanzania. In doing so, the decision was taken that these houses should have metal roofs – a status symbol within the local community and one certainly not available to most volunteers. This decision meant that volunteers no longer saw the returned refugees as vulnerable, whereas in fact the returned refugees were potentially in need of further services.



*Muramvya Provincial Branch office. The land was donated by local government, and the building constructed by local volunteers.*

Experiences such as these led to improved practice within the National Society, both in working to eliminate damaging internal competition within the organisation, and in developing guidance for how externally-funded projects should be implemented so as to reinforce community units.

A further issue related to differences in community structures within Burundi. Burundi's linguistically and cultural unity mean that the model developed for a rural community unit was successful almost everywhere, even in towns, which often have a similar dynamic and stability to rural areas. The exception was the inner city of Bujumbura (the capital), where initial attempts to organise volunteers were not effective. Possible explanations for this initial failure in central Bujumbura could include the higher proportion of more educated people living in the city, for whom the types of volunteering on offer were not of interest (but who might volunteer in higher-skilled roles), in addition to the less stable and strongly defined community of the inner city.

During early 2012, a new model of volunteer unit was developed for the inner city areas, and has now spread to seven of the thirteen communes. The new model targets young people working in ad-hoc groups rather than on a weekly basis.

#### **The danger of competition with local units**

One danger to the project was that international projects would compete with colline units, for example through paying local people to carry out activities. In one case this led to colline units stopping functioning. Volunteers felt that if such work was going to be externally resourced, then they should be paid, and as a consequence, felt neglected and demotivated. This led to the National Society developing internal procedures and guidance for partners so that internationally funded activities should work through and reinforce local units, rather than undermining them.

## What did this cost?

# 5

The initial secretariat investment of CHF 100 000 / year over three years, was sufficient to catalyse the change process and develop and replicate the basic local unit while providing initial infrastructural support in two provincial branches and at national level. It was not sufficient to cover the costs of expansion to cover the further fifteen provincial branches.

The budget breakdown for the year 2009 gives a sense of how secretariat money was used. At this stage (year 2) of the process, volunteers are being trained in how to set up and run new units, but work to consolidate this system is being carried out at every level from community base to national leadership and staff. The generic expenditure headings could be summarised as project staff salaries, travel and accommodation costs, and training and quality assurance at all levels.

Project/Programme Interest	Budget(CHF)
Organise 3 trainings of trainers on coordination and support to local Red Cross Units	2,695
Organise 2 training sessions for groups of community volunteers on how to set up local Red Cross Units and Youth sections	6,226
Organise 30 training sessions for groups of community volunteers on coordination and support system of local Red Cross Units	6,752
Organise a review on the setting up of local Red Cross Units in the Central Region	898
Organise a workshop on youth sections set up in Eastern Region	1,968
Train 3808 leaders of 272 local Red Cross Units (7 members per local units) on leadership and fundraising	2,516
Elaborate a methodology guide on monitoring and evaluation of local Red Cross Units and disseminate in initially in three branches	2,246
Organise 2 inter-regional exchange visits for volunteers	1,330
Organise 4 inter-branch exchange visits for volunteers	1,797
Organise inter-local unit exchange visits for volunteers	8,356
<b>Specific objective 2</b>	
<b>Volunteers are well supported for better coordination of service delivery to the most vulnerable</b>	
Organise a professional staff retreat	4,043
Organise a retreat for branch governance representations	4,942
Make visibility material (1000 Red Cross flags and umbrellas)	2,965
<b>Administration costs for the Department and Branches</b>	
Fuel for regional coordination vehicles	4,492
Fuel for branch motorbikes	2,695
Computer material (cartridges, memory sticks,...)	1,797
Stationery	719
Communication fees	898

Project/Programme Interest	Budget(CHF)
SUB TOTAL	57,336
Administration fees 10%	5,734
Staff salaries (2 national, 2 provincial, 4 provincial project staff)	36,961
<b>TOTAL GENERAL</b>	<b>100,030</b>

This snapshot is however far from being the full story.

The initial funding was investment money, with the goal of producing positive results as quickly as possible at the local level, and the support system to maintain these. Once this phase was over, however, a much larger but more predictable flow of resources was required to maintain the support structure that had been developed for the local units. This sum is the ongoing running cost of the National Society support structure.

For Burundi Red Cross, the ongoing support structure required employment of people at provincial branch level with associated office and travel costs, plus expansion of the national office to manage countrywide systems of reporting and internal communication, for example. National resource mobilisation and external communications strategies needed to be developed and implemented, all requiring further staff positions.

*“Burundians can be donors too!”*

These increased costs were covered from a variety of sources:

- Through donor-funded programmes which contribute to wider organisational costs. The established door to door community coverage that Burundi Red Cross is a very powerful attraction for some new donors such as World Food Programme.
- Through donor financing of OD work
- Through using gifts in kind (such as land) as sources of income generation and development of further income generation strategies
- Through use of volunteer skills and energy to reduce costs – for example in building several provincial branch offices
- Through development of a membership system that incentivises each level of the organisation to recruit members by splitting the membership fee in a transparent way

While progress is being made at developing a managed mix of resources to support the National Society, developing a sustainable resource base is a long-term process, and is still having to catch up with the very rapid expansion of the National Society.

# Snapshot of Burundi Red Cross local units and support structure in June 2011

## 6.1 Colline level

The colline is the interface between the National Society and the community. This is where local human, financial and in-kind resources are mobilised to meet the needs of vulnerable people.

The National Society has 98 per cent coverage of the country at this level, totalling some 2,850 units. Each unit is led by a committee responsible for identifying vulnerable people and raising and managing volunteer and other resources to meet their needs.

A typical unit is made up of at least 50 volunteers (some of whom will pay a formal membership fee of US\$ 0,40). These volunteers will typically include young and old people of both Hutu and Tutsi groups, as well as returned refugees and people who have themselves been identified as “most vulnerable”.

Typical services include building and / or re-roofing houses, tilling fields, transporting sick people to local health facilities, paying for medical care for individuals, and providing food and other items to vulnerable people. All of these are carried out using local resources sourced by the unit. Typically, a group will meet once a week for up to three hours to carry out its chosen activity. In collines with large numbers of volunteers, several groups will form and work in different places.

In most units income-generating activities provide funds to help vulnerable people, but also support members of the Red Cross group. For example, members might club together to buy goats. The goats might be used to manure the field of an old person whilst also being passed between group members for the same purpose. On being sold, some of the money raised is put aside to help vulnerable people, some might be reinvested, and the remainder might provide a return on members’ original investment. There is therefore a strong element of self-help in group membership, and this accounts for the strong growth of the more dynamic groups: it is in people’s personal as well as shared interest for them to volunteer.

A feature of local resource mobilisation is that local authorities will often give land to local units to help support them: the land will then be used by the unit to generate funds. In return, units may often provide the lead in communal labour days organised by local authorities, as non-Red Cross people are more likely to join in if the local unit is visibly active.

In addition to delivering services, volunteers often meet following their work. They may receive information on the Fundamental Principles, but also simple health messages, for example. In this way large numbers of people can be reached through local units.

*“Your neighbour is the best person to help you. He knows when you are ill, and what you need.”*

Each colline produces a monthly report on simple indicators: number of volunteers, number of vulnerable people helped, number of houses built etc. These are submitted to the communal level, with an average rate of return of about 80 per cent. Such reports provide an indicator of the health of the unit, as well as collecting the National Society's impact, and are collated at each level of the organisation.

### Attracting new partners

The network of local units with local knowledge and acceptance, trained to identify the most vulnerable people in the community was seen as a big asset by World Food Programme. In particular, they found this network to be more effective at distributing food than NGOs which were not present and accepted within communities.

## 6.2 Commune level

A commune (which might cover between 11 and 25 colline units) has a committee of seven volunteers who take responsibility for training and coordinating local colline units. Communal committees are elected by a representative of each colline committee, plus the members of the outgoing committee.

Every six months, the committee organises a meeting for all of the collines to evaluate completed activities and make future plans. This structure promotes exchange between collines, allowing new ideas to disseminate, and also a level of competition. As at the colline level, commune units often attract gifts of land, or use of meeting space from local authorities who want to support the National Society, but do not have the financial resources to do so.

## 6.3 Provincial "branch" level

The branch is responsible for coordinating, monitoring and recording all activities taking place within the province, which consists of an average of seven communes and 160 collines. There is a paid branch secretary and accountant in each branch, although some branches may have more staff supporting externally funded projects. Core staff positions are often paid through externally funded projects, and may not necessarily work in the same location, if the project funding the position is based somewhere else.

Each branch now has a dedicated building, some constructed through PNS support, and others built through gifts of land and volunteer effort, testament to good local relationships. Not all branches however have internet accessibility, or indeed electricity.

Some members of the branch committee have a technical responsibility (for example disaster management), and are responsible for communicating with focal points at communal and / or local levels. In this way the burden of ongoing communication and reporting is spread from the branch secretary position; on the other hand there are very serious limitations to how much time volunteers can dedicate to these activities themselves.

## 6.4 National level

About 60 people (of around 200 in total) work in the national central office, providing technical and support services to the branches. The role of the OD department is interesting in this model, acting as a gatekeeper to the colline units, ensuring that all central office activities are structured in such a way as to be deliverable at the local level, and overseeing the development of the support structure.

# 7 Conclusion

The Burundi experience is a rich learning opportunity around the dynamics of major organisational change in a resource-poor environment. It shows how a focus on self-led and self-resourced, community level service delivery can be a driver for organisational change that touches every aspect of a National Society's structure and management.

Over the 4-5 years of the change process, the National Society's business model has changed from one set up to receive and spend donor funding in project-based activities, to one whose focus is on mobilising communities to deliver sustainable community services. This service delivery capacity attracts financial support from other partners.

The impact of this change has been enormous scaling up of the capacity of Burundi Red Cross Society to meet the needs of vulnerable people. These services are sustainable at the community level because it is in local people's interests for them to continue, and they do not require external resources in order to make them continue.

Underpinning the change have been factors both inside and outside Burundi Red Cross Society which have allowed it to be successful. In particular:

- Within the National Society, there has been high quality leadership and management to define a realistic vision for the National Society, and to manage limited resources to implement it.
- Burundi presents enormous and chronic needs. With domestic services and international aid only able to meet a fraction of these, the potential for communities to self mobilise is enormous, and the National Society's strategic vision recognised and built upon this potential. In doing so, it developed unique capacities within the country that will be very difficult for any competitor to replicate.
- Finally, the homogeneous geographic and cultural character of Burundi make it very suitable for the methodology applied, meaning that once established, the new units could self-replicate across the country very rapidly, with only one area, the central area of Bujumbura, having a significantly different dynamic.

While this case study focuses on development of the "cutting edge" of a sustainable community structure that enables the National Society to deliver services to vulnerable people sustainably and country-wide, this has brought about a whole series of further organisational changes that are only briefly alluded to in this document, and would be worthy of further study in the future. Every level of the National Society is undergoing major change, and is likely to do so until the National Society stops growing rapidly and there is time for management systems to stabilise.

As other National Societies visit Burundi to better understand the challenges and opportunities of such transformation, it is important that other change processes of this nature are supported, documented and shared in order to increase the chances of success of subsequent change processes in other National Societies.

### **Developing additional programme areas**

Although colline units determine their own activities, the network of units means that simple training and information can be disseminated to people throughout the country very effectively. Training also helps local units do more. For example, with DFID funding a number of local units were trained in simple community risk mapping, which in turn led to activities which reduced the vulnerability of the whole community. For example, growing and planting trees to reforest hillsides, and building terraces to prevent erosion and mudslides. One unit has constructed 80 kilometres of terraces through its own labour! Again such activities can often be turned to income generation: reforested land is often given to the group by the local administration as a future source of revenue through firewood.



# The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

**Humanity** The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

**Impartiality** It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

**Neutrality** In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

**Independence** The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

**Voluntary service** It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

**Unity** There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

**Universality** The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

This case study has been produced by the Learning and Organizational Development department, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

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