

## **Position Paper**

### **The Role of International NGOs in the Reintegration Process**

Recent progress has been noted in the peace process in Burundi. All efforts to advance the process of peace and the process of 'demobilization-disarmament-reinsertion-reintegration' (DDRR) should be encouraged and endorsed. These successes have, however, highlighted the need for the various actors - in particular the Government of Burundi, the World Bank, and the African Union - to work together, contributing their respective strengths and resources. The international NGOs (INGOs) also have an important role to play and wish to clarify the nature of support they are able to bring to the reintegration process, for ex-combatants as well as returning refugees.

The majority of INGOs in Burundi are signatories to the Humanitarian Charter and the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief (1994). These documents clearly define the commitment and of INGOs to assure the right to life with dignity for civilian populations through the provision of humanitarian assistance. The INGO community strives to work effectively and transparently, upholding their responsibility to beneficiaries and donors. INGOs are non-political, not for profit organizations that must maintain the principles of neutrality and non-discrimination in their work.

The humanitarian charter also affirms the fundamental importance of the distinction between combatants and non-combatants (Principles of Humanitarian Charter 1.2.) Although INGOS have a responsibility and an important role to play during the reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian society, they are unable to provide assistance to combatants that are not yet demobilized. Once combatants have voluntarily joined a demobilization process, handed over their weapons and agreed to reinsertion into society as non-combatants, INGOS may provide them with assistance.

Through their work in both relief and development programming, INGOs have a valuable contribution to make during the conception, planning and implementation phases of reintegration for both ex-combatants and returning refugees. INGOs work in close collaboration with communities, local associations and authorities, to improve the livelihoods of the population. Many INGOs have specific mandates to build the capacity of civil society and to use a rights-based approach.

It is essential that the reintegration process is integrated into ongoing relief and development activities, that local communities and associations are prepared and able to participate in the process, and that the process is transparent.

This participation is not possible without strong planning and coordination. INGOs wish to be informed about the entire DDRR process and consulted in the elaboration and application of the national reintegration plan.



Norwegian Refugee Council



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International Rescue Committee



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Jesuit Refugee Service



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