

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of The Netherlands

Multi-Annual Country Strategy 2023-2026

Burundi

(Condensed version)

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# Introduction

This Multi-Annual Country Strategy (MACS) outlines the areas of international cooperation in which The Netherlands wishes to collaborate with Burundi for the period 2023-2026. This document is a condensed version containing the policy priority areas, strategic results and strategic interventions. Where applicable, multilateral and international civil society programmes are included. The resources supporting this strategy are assigned through the annual budget and annual planning cycles. The implementation of this strategy is monitored on a regular basis and adjustments are formalised through subsequent annual plans.

# Dutch policy goals and strategy with Burundi

## Overarching policy goal



The Netherlands wishes to collaborate with Burundi towards ‘A peaceful, prosperous, equitable and inclusive society in which all Burundians live free, healthy lives and can claim their rights’.

In working towards this vision, we contribute to the Dutch development policy, Burundi’s own National Development Plan as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 13 and 16.

Our objective is ‘To enhance the wellbeing, prosperity and empowerment of Burundians – especially women, young people and rural households – in Burundi by 2030’. This reflects the strategic focus of the Dutch government and the expertise we can offer, based on our analysis of the conditions and the problems and challenges Burundi is faced with.Considering our added value in the country, we will continue to focus thematically on **Food and Nutrition Security (FNS), Sexual and Reproductive Health and Right (SRHR), Security and Rule of Law (SRoL), Human Rights, and the nexus Youth, Skills and Employment.** Synergies between these will be sought and exploited at the individual and community level - where colocation of interventions make this possible, but also at the society and political level.

We put the perspectives and the needs of the people, as well as their empowerment and resilience, front and centre. We therefore take a **rights-based approach** to our work and address the needs and rights of **women, young people and other vulnerable groups such as handicapped persons** as cross-cutting themes in all our work. **Strengthening civil society** will be part and parcel of this approach. Where possible, we will **actively engage with the private sector** to strengthen its role in reaching our goals.

Past conflicts and ongoing tensions negatively affect mental wellbeing, social cohesion, interpersonal trust and trust in leaders and institutions in Burundi. There is a need for Burundian society to deal in an open, transparent and inclusive way with its past and with current tensions. In this context there is also a need for **mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)**. It enables people to gain agency over their lives and their role in society, which is key to the people centred approach.

As the stability of Burundi affects the stability in the region and vice versa, the Netherlands also engages with Burundi as **part of the Great Lakes (GL) region and the East African Community (EAC)** and keeps advocating with partners to do the same. Our approach in Burundi will, in part, be informed by regional dynamics. We will continue to encourage Burundi and its neighbouring countries to further regional cooperation and integration and build mutual trust in order to collectively and comprehensively address the root causes of conflict and instability. In the long run, improved economic and political resilience across Burundian society will remove drivers of conflict and will thereby be crucial to achieving peace, stability and security in Burundi and in the Great Lakes region at large.

This strategy is based on the political and economical situation in the second half of 2022. Changes in the political or economical situation may lead to adjustments in terms of approaches or expected results.

## Strategic results per policy goal

***International legal order, human rights and host nation policy & Peace, security, stability and migration***

**Long-term** strategic objective: to contribute to a renewed Burundian social contract anchored in human rights and characterised by greater legitimacy, accountability and inclusion as well as increased social cohesion and trust. This will contribute to diminishing vulnerabilities to disruption and help strengthen resilience for peace in Burundi.

Strategic objective for **this MACS period**:

* New and existing programming within the field of human rights and political government will focus on the coming elections in the hope of making a contributing to more fair, free and peaceful elections in 2025 and 2027 during which Burundians can make informed decisions.
* Depending on available capacity, we also aim to focus more on human security by reengaging in security sector reform (SSR).

We aim to contribute to the following **strategic results**:

* **Political** parties are better able to meaningfully engage in political and electoral processes. Existing and emerging dialogue frameworks allow for debate amongst political leaders. More space for women and young people to voice their needs and participate meaningfully in political processes.
* **Governance institutions** on the local and the national level will function in a way that is more informed, responsive, inclusive and accountable and in accordance with international standards.
* A more professional local **media** landscape that has increased operational space to inform all Burundian people, with a special focus on reaching vulnerable, underserved and underrepresented groups, like youth and women, fairly, independently and in a gender sensitive manner and that holds the government accountable.
* The monitoring of the **human rights** situation in Burundi.
* A strengthened **justice** system and greater access to justice with a focus on ‘those further behind’ (“Justice for all”).
* If additional funding and staffing become available, we will also **reengage in security sector reform** and strive to increase the accountability of Burundian security forces and their adherence to International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

***Social progress***

The strategic objective **for this MACS period** is to contribute to bodily autonomy, agency, and enjoyment of SRHR by those least able to claim and enjoy these rights, specifically women, girls and adolescents.

This leads to the following **envisaged strategic results**:

* Stronger capacity of civil society, specifically at least 3 progressive and feminist women led organisations (WLOs) and 3 youth led organisations (YLOs), in undertaking action advancing rights related to sexual and reproductive health (SRH).
* Community awareness, knowledge and perceptions on SRHR are rights based and promoted by empowered women, adolescent girls and youth leaders in all intervening provinces of Burundi.
* Allyships with progressive leaders are built to engage and influence value holders (religious, cultural and community leaders, teachers, parents etc.) that inhibit fulfilment of SRHR.
* Freedom of choice is promoted on comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), access to modern contraceptives and bodily autonomy through our civil society partnerships and strategic diplomacy.
* Vocal, visible and rights based media and social marketing activities are developed and broadcasted, to ensure access to modern contraceptives and bodily autonomy while ensuring freedom of choice for all.
* Provide young people through CSE, in- and out of public schools, the knowledge and skills to promote their health and well-being as they mature into sexually healthy adults to avoid teenage pregnancies, child marriage and HIV/STDs.
* Healthcare professionals, specifically community health workers, have strengthened community outreach and provide SRH commodities without discrimination and stigmatization while they follow an entrepreneurial approach.

***Sustainable development, food security, water and climate***

Strategic objective for **this MACS period:** enable farming households that are involved to realize their vision regarding what they wish to achieve in terms of prosperity, well-being and empowerment.

This leads to the following **envisaged strategic results:**

* To have a developed and tested case of farming system / food system transformation, in which farming households participating in our projects can produce, in a sustainable and resilient manner, enough to feed themselves and to earn income. This will all contribute to the nutrition, production and sustainability result areas and the results on enabling conditions that are defined in the ministry’s food security results framework.
* Increased relevance and effectiveness of government policies, strategies and practices for agricultural development and food security, inspired by the results achieved and the lessons learnt from tested case of farming system / food system transformation notably on farm management, input supply, access to markets and nutrition.

Both results are highly connected with adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate change, the use of (renewable) energy, private sector development and youth employment, with gender being a cross-cutting theme.

***Sustainable trade and investments***

Under this heading two themes are included: Private Sector Development and Youth. This leads to the following **envisaged strategic results**:

Private Sector Development

* Stronger enabling business environment in which the government fulfils its role to support the private sector and enables the latter to flourish. This in turn will generate employment and income for the population, unlock economic potential and encourage foreign investment and supports the private sector components of the other themes. A performing private sector will also leave less room for (political) clientelism and corruption and contribute to a vocal middle class that demands more democracy, transparency and accountability in governance.
* Greater capacity and stronger performance of the local private sector to support agricultural development, nutrition, renewable energy supply, recycling of waste, job generation for young people as well as regional trade.

youth: Youth empowerment for meaningful participation in decision making and economic development

* To contribute to systemic change for quality education and an enabling environment for meaningful participation of young Burundians in economic development and decision making

***Stronger European cooperation***

Our interactions with Burundi (bilaterally and in international/multilateral fora) are mainly conducted through, and imbedded, in the European Union (EU). Therefore our focus lies on increased, intensified European cooperation. This leads to the following **envisaged strategic results**:

* Better alignment and harmonization of activities in Burundi with the EU delegation and other EU countries, in order to increase impact.
* Improve joint political dialogue and advocacy with the government of Burundi, with a view to convince the government of Burundi to improve the human rights situation, the rule of law and governance in the country, introduce structural economic and financial reforms, and to take a less confrontational approach in international fora and align itself more with positions of the EU and like-minded countries.
* Take common positions on Burundi in international fora like the Human Rights Council, but also in fora like the Worldbank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

# II. Crosscutting priorities

***Gender***

Gender is elaborated in each relevant step of our approach to households and families, with attention to women’s interests and the workload of women, fostering participatory decision making, ensuring that women have access to information and extension. More specifically, attention is given to gender by setting up special windows for women and youth in project innovation funds, by formation of women groups and women Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) and by integration of farm planning and family planning.

Gender issues form the core of our programming on SRHR and programming will increasingly take place in close consultation with WLOs. Where possible and relevant, gender issues will be included in activities targeted at youth and in our SRoL programming. The fight against and the support of victims of gender based violence (GBV) is an integral part of our human rights programming

***Adaptation to Climate Change***

Adaptation to climate change is a cross-cutting theme in food security: farming cannot be sustainable or resilient if it does not adapt to climate change. There is some scope for climate change mitigation as well, particularly in value chain development. Entry points are to be found in (1) soil and water conservation; (2) selection of crop varieties that are resistant to droughts, pests and diseases; (3) reliable weather information and early warning systems; (4) crop diversity on farms and (5) diversity of income earning pursuits.

***Conflict*-*sensitiveness***

By working with inclusive groups of households in communities (e.g. G50), and through collaboration within communities SRHR, access to justice and conflict resolution (including related to land ownership), we address drivers of conflict at its basis. At the same time we work with parliamentarians and political leaders to address drivers of conflict at a more political level. However, in a fragile setting as Burundi, we may overlook opportunities. Therefore, during the coming years we will work with partners to deepen our understanding of conflict-sensitive programming, and we will identify points of entry for strengthening our approach in this sense.

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| Contact addresses: |  |
| Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the | Ambassade du Royaume des Pays-Bas |
| Kingdom of The Netherlands | Immeuble Old East |
| Sub-Saharan Africa Department (DAF) |  |
|  |  |
| Rijnstraat 8 | Place de l’Independence |
| 2515 XP Den Haag | B.P. 265 Bujumbura |
| The Netherlands | Burundi |
|  |  |