

**Knowledge network
Dutch Consortium for Rehabilitation
Research brief #15**

**The strengths and
weaknesses of DCR
interventions with
regard to
sustainability in
Burundi**

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This brief is part of a series of research briefs of the DCR consortium. The purpose is to communicate lessons and corresponding recommendations for programme quality improvement. For information on the research methodology please refer to the full report, available upon request.

This research has been conducted for the DCR Knowledge Network during the period of September 2014 and March 2015. The research has been prepared in the Netherlands and was conducted in Burundi between 2 November and 22 December. During a meeting in Burundi in July 2015, a concept note was set up which centralised the concept of 'social cohesion' for this research. The central question was how DCR interventions have influenced the social cohesion in the beneficiary villages in Burundi. This is a relevant topic, as research implemented in the target communities before the start of the project showed that social cohesion was low, because of weak or absent community structures. Therefore researching the level of social cohesion as a consequence of the project would show the effect of the DCR project. Based on this concept, a research proposal has been written and adapted to a more specific focus:

What are the strengths and weaknesses of DCR interventions aimed at reinforcing the capacity of communities in conflict management, regarding sustainability?

The aim of this research is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Pamoja/DCR interventions and the challenges with regard to sustainability of these interventions after the Pamoja project ends in December 2015. The research uses four different methodologies: 1) a literature research on DCR strategies and evaluations, 2) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), 3) interviews and 4) a questionnaire on social capital to identify the social capital of the communities that were visited for the research.

For this research, 12 communities in the provinces Muyinga, Gitega and Makamba were visited. Around 18 beneficiaries per village interviewed, who were members of different committees reinforced or put in place by Pamoja. Local authorities were included in the research to identify their capacities to sustain DCR interventions in the future. Finally, 33 Pamoja staff members in Bujumbura and the three provinces were interviewed in order to reflect the perspectives of both beneficiaries and staff on the interventions of Pamoja in Burundi.

Lesson 1: Collaboration between communities leads to community solidarity and less reported conflicts to communal tribunals.

Along with others, the VSLA's, Socio-therapy and peace committees state that they work together intensively and coordinate their activities in the hill network, the network that coordinates all committees set up by Pamoja. Previously the Pamoja people would often only meet in the tribunals during a conflict. As a consequence of working together in conflict resolution and other social issues, people in the hills are familiar with and help each other. This results in improved community solidarity in the Pamoja communities.

Lesson 2: The Pamoja aim of strengthening community structures has improved the position of women in the beneficiary communities.

According to the beneficiaries, women were the first to become active in the Pamoja project. Their participation in Pamoja committees elevated them from their former positions and enabled them be heard by the men in, for example, the hill networks. Their participation in the Village Saving Loan Association (VSLA) groups gave them the possibility to save money and buy schoolbooks for their children, which showed the men, who were more difficult to involve in the activities, the advantage of the Pamoja project. Men were more difficult to involve because they did not see the long-term benefit of participation, thinking it was a waste of time.

Lesson 3: Participation in the Pamoja committees leads to self-confidence and pride, which results in beneficiaries taking initiatives independently from Pamoja.

Some beneficiaries have taken initiatives to sensitize the members of other communities. These actions should be promoted by Pamoja. For example, committees organise plays to sensitize their fellow community members on violence in households. Their activities and results make them proud of what they are doing. In the questionnaire, most of the committees state that they are confident to continue independently after Pamoja, but their answers in the interviews show several of their concerns regarding the period beyond 2015. Examples of these concerns are the loss of knowledge, the lack of funds and means and the short age of existence of several of the committees. (Some were put in place as late as 2013).

Recommendations:

Recommendation for lesson 1:

- It has become clear that the men are difficult to mobilize for the Pamoja project. For next interventions the women could be included in the project first, with their success the men could be mobilized to participate.
- Forming separate groups of men and woman could make it easier for men to participate to projects.

Recommendation for lesson 3:

Organizing a Pamoja closing event could be a good way to announce the official ending of Pamoja. Furthermore, it could be an opportunity to introduce the NGO's that will continue to work with the Pamoja interventions and who might take over the monitoring and evaluation role from Pamoja after 2015. Finally, the event could be used to brainstorm on the concerns of beneficiaries regarding the continuation of Pamoja interventions after 2015.

Lesson 4: The beneficiaries are interested in sensitising neighboring communities regarding Pamoja interventions.

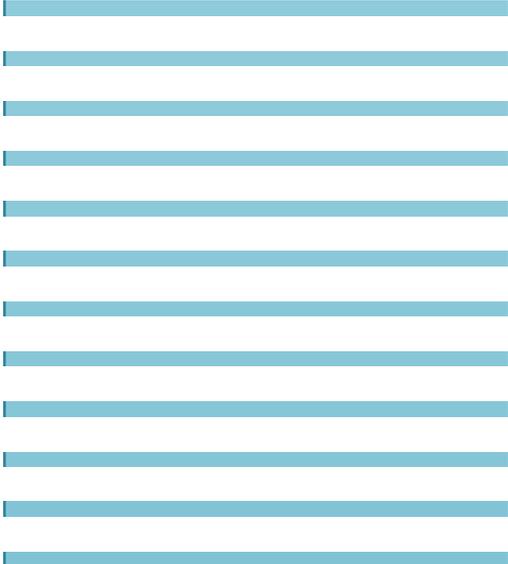
When asked, beneficiaries state that they think it is important to sensitise the surrounding communities on Pamoja interventions. Beneficiaries think that the differences between communities should not be too great and also that they can learn by teaching the interventions to others. An example: beneficiaries could go to other hills to solve conflicts for free or to sensitize their neighbors on conflict management. It would be interesting to consider training beneficiaries to become trainers who could then teach the surrounding communities about Pamoja interventions. Many beneficiaries would like to repeat the lessons learned in order not to forget them. By sensitizing other communities, they think they can repeat the lessons and remember them better. Furthermore, they would like to receive some materials like books and pens to teach others and to help them to remember the interventions of Pamoja. Although most of the beneficiaries are pro-active, in several villages the attitude was wait and see. Beneficiaries are too much used to receive goats and ask for help. It is important to identify these villages and to develop an approach in order to change their attitude. For more information please see the full report.

Lesson 5: Different NGO's and programmes are working in the same communities simultaneously; their similarities provide the opportunity to work together in synergy.

During the research, the following stakeholders were found to be active in the Pamoja: the DCR and SCAD consortia; the NGO's FVS, FIDA, AMAD and IFDC and the UMVA program. Several of these stakeholders have overlapping interests and approaches, but work independently from one-another. SCAD and Pamoja have a lot in common, and in Makamba, FVS is working on creating VSLA's, as are HNTPO and ZOA. The lesson learnt is that instead of working separately, cooperation is key to achieve the sustainability of Pamoja interventions. The UMVA program for instance, works on connecting beneficiaries to micro-finance. Pamoja could cooperate with UMVA to help the beneficiaries develop their VSLA's into bigger associations.

Lesson 6: Beneficiaries would like to learn more modern farming methods, not only in Makamba, but also in Muyinga and Gitega.

Beneficiaries in Muyinga and Gitega asked to learn about the production of manure and how to protect their crops against erosion. It would be interesting if the interventions of ZOA in Makamba could also be taught to the beneficiaries in Muyinga and Gitega. By providing exchanges of experience and books,



Recommendations lesson 6:

- Provide the beneficiaries with books and material that will help them to remember and practice the lessons learned by the Pamoja Project.
- Develop 'modern farming techniques' as a collective activity ('activité commune') to be implemented in the three provinces.
- Organize exchanges of experience to learn from the good farming practices in Makamba.

these lessons could be taught in a faster and more economical way.

Lesson 7: There is a considerable difference between hills participating from the start of Pamoja in 2011 and hills that joined later in 2013. Furthermore, there is a great difference in knowledge between Pamoja hills and the hills that were not targeted by Pamoja.

Beneficiary communities that participated from the start of Pamoja in 2011, are more structured and confident than the communities that joined from 2013. This difference should be taken into account when preparing the communities for the end of Pamoja, by intensifying training and support for the communities that are less experienced with Pamoja interventions. Furthermore, the large difference in knowledge could influence the relationship between hills with and without Pamoja intervention. For example problems like theft, spread of diseases and water shortage can already spread from one village to the other.

Lesson 8: Many beneficiaries lack access to basic needs, which could reduce their capacities to sustain Pamoja interventions after the end of the project.

In the questionnaire, beneficiaries in 6 of the 12 villages stated that the water points are very far away of the hill. 7 of the hills stated that the water points are not well maintained. 7 of the 12 hills lack a meeting place to shelter against the rain or the sun. 6 of the 12 hills have to walk approximately two hours to sell their products on the market. None of the hills have the means to travel long distances. These and other problems may be a threat to the beneficiaries' capacity to sustain DCR interventions after the end of the project. For example, how can the water point committees function effectively if there are not enough water sources? And how can hill networks meet on a regular basis in the communal committees if they have no means of transport?

Lesson 9: Local authorities are not capable of taking on the monitoring and evaluation role of Pamoja after the end of the project. The communal committee is still weak and lacks funds to function effectively.

Local communal and provincial authorities are not financially capable of providing services like transport or meeting places for the beneficiaries. The communal committees are still weak and have not held any meetings since their reformation of September 2014. The beneficiaries need to be monitored and advised after the end of Pamoja, but the local authorities lack the means to do this in the same way as Pamoja.

Recommendations lesson 7:

- Develop a context specific approach for the villages implemented in 2011 and in 2013.
- Organize exchange of experience between the hills of 2011 and 2013.

Recommendations lesson 8:

- Advocate at the local and central authorities that access to basic needs is severely limited. Try to get the authorities to develop a specific approach in order to address this problem.
- Teach water point committees how rehabilitate water points.

Recommendation lesson 9:

- Advocate with provincial authorities to take the monitoring after Pamoja. The province could take the monitoring role over the communal committees.
- Change the communal committee in a simpler committee: the committee of monitoring and evaluation. Its task is only to supervise and advise the hill-networks. Not to organize meetings or provide the hills with materials.

Implications of the research results in the implementation of the DCR programme

This section summarises the positions of the DCR members concerning the lessons learned and recommendations listed above.

The research brought up some practical recommendations for the improvement of the DCR interventions at the level of communities, as well as about the role of the local administration in extending the results of the five-year period. Most importantly, the research confirmed that community structures have been strengthened i.e. VSLAs, peace clubs/committees and socio-therapy groups with the greater involvement of women than men. In fact, women in Burundi are more vulnerable because of the patrilineal system. Therefore, it can be concluded that the DCR contributed to the empowerment of the most vulnerable group of people.

Basing on the findings, community level meetings were convened to discuss with community leaders the concerns related to the closing of the programme at end of December 2015. In this regard, it was agreed that the local administration will prioritize the main topics of the DCR in their daily work for instance social cohesion, the collaboration with RCE in the maintenance of water sources and working with community based organizations to advocate for better service delivery in agriculture.

As logistical facilities are needed to support community meetings, community leaders and administration officials agreed that, they will organise activities in surrounding neighborhoods to avoid long distance walks. In addition, adult learning methodologies like group discussions will be used to share lessons and undertake sensitizations because; the population is not literate enough to concentrate on writings.

As the research revealed, there should be further steps taken to complement what has been achieved with the DCR especially in strengthening the CBOs towards becoming a bigger and stronger movement to initiate changes through advocacy. In this issue, CARE and partner organizations agreed to consider these community structures in the upcoming projects, not at the same level of the DCR but at a higher stage of community organization.