



# THE ROAD AHEAD

Citizen Attitudes about Burundi  
in the Post-2010 Election Period

Findings from Focus Groups with Men and Women in Burundi  
Conducted September 20-30, 2010

By Andrea L. Levy  
with foreword by Christopher Fomunyoh, Ph.D.

February 2011

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs



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# NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that responds to the aspirations of people around the world to live in democratic societies that recognize and promote basic human rights. Since its founding in 1983, NDI and its local partners have worked to support and strengthen political and civic organizations, safeguard elections, and promote citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. With staff members and volunteer political practitioners from more than 100 nations, NDI brings together individuals and groups to share ideas, knowledge, experiences and expertise. Partners receive broad exposure to best practices in international democratic development that can be adapted to the needs of their own countries. NDI's multinational approach reinforces the message that while there is no single democratic model, certain core principles are shared by all democracies. The Institute's work upholds the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It also promotes the development of institutionalized channels of communications among citizens, political institutions and elected officials, and strengthens their ability to improve the quality of life for all citizens. For more information about NDI, please visit [www.ndi.org](http://www.ndi.org).

# FOREWORD

Since gaining independence in 1962, Burundi has had a checkered history of political turmoil, coups d'état, ethnic violence and civil war. Despite the conduct of credible elections in 1993, the country lapsed into a decade-long period of instability until the signing of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in 2000. That agreement laid the foundation for a democratic transition that Burundians hoped would lead to peace, reconciliation and democracy. Successful elections in 2005 appeared to have set Burundi on a promising course of democratic development.

Though the transition process outlined in the Arusha Agreement concluded with the 2005 elections, Burundi planned to take another democratic step forward in 2010 by holding the country's first direct presidential election since 1993. Most Burundians hoped that the country's institutions and leaders would pass the test of these elections, and hence consolidate peaceful democratic development.

Voter turnout was high for the May 24 communal elections, the first in a series that would culminate with *collinaires* ("hill" or neighborhood elections) in September. Twenty-three Burundian political parties fielded candidates for the local elections. After results showed that the ruling party, the National Congress for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), won a large majority of the vote, the process began to break down. Opposition candidates announced they would boycott the presidential and legislative elections, claiming that the CNDD-FDD rigged the vote. During the four other elections conducted after the local poll, politically motivated violence and intimidation increased throughout the country. The government responded by banning opposition efforts to organize campaigns in support of the boycott. Voter turnout dropped sharply in the presidential and legislative elections. Faced with little competition, incumbent President Pierre Nkurunziza and the CNDD-FDD retained the presidency and a large majority in parliament. Instead of the participatory, multi-party political process that Burundians envisioned, post-election Burundi now resembles a *de facto* single-party state. Political discourse has become more strident and many opposition leaders have fled the country.

In the post-election period, NDI conducted a series of focus groups to collect citizen views on the electoral process and other governance-related matters. What did the citizens think about the boycott? Did they feel they were able to vote as they wished? What issues did they want the government to address in the post-election period? After the boycott, did they still believe in elections? A total of 40 focus groups were conducted in 22 communities, offering Burundian participants in urban and rural settings neutral, nonpartisan venues to make their voices heard.

In this report their voices are heard—and there are several positive points to highlight. Despite the problematic 2010 election cycle, Burundians still embrace the democratic process and elections as the best means for choosing the country's leaders. Most notably, in a region that has been historically fraught with ethnic conflict, Burundian participants stated that it is regional, political and economic differences—and no longer the Hutu-Tutsi ethnic cleavage—that distinguish Burundians from each other. Burundians also say that their country is moving in the right direction as a result of improved social services and development policies.

Burundians also anticipate many challenges for the new government. Notably, they want the government and opposition parties to engage in dialogue and to work collaboratively to move the country forward. Corruption, a rising cost of living, insecurity and impunity are also major concerns. Six months after the elections, the political environment in Burundi remains tense. Many Burundians worry that political space continues to narrow, and that serious crimes and human rights abuses remain uninvestigated or go unpunished.

Over the years, NDI has conducted public opinion studies in more than 45 countries around the world. Focus group results have been used to establish voter education programs, assist political parties in developing more effective platforms and campaign strategies, and to raise awareness of citizen concerns. NDI hopes that the findings of its focus group research in Burundi will stimulate dialogue among Burundian democrats—in government, opposition and civil society—on how the country can respond to citizens' concerns, including how to reinvigorate the country's post-Arusha path toward democratic development.

Christopher Fomunyoh, Ph.D.  
NDI Senior Associate for Africa

# PREFACE

Many expected the 2010 elections, the country's first to be held since 1993 under direct universal suffrage, to mark Burundi's democratic coming of age. The events that followed were consequently a disappointment for nearly all who were involved in the elections—from Burundian voters to political leaders and members of the international community who had offered technical and financial assistance to support the electoral process.

To understand how average citizens perceived the electoral process and the future of their country, NDI launched a qualitative study of public opinion in September 2010, comprising 40 focus group discussions throughout Burundi. Specifically, the study examined:

- perceptions about how the electoral process unfolded;
- the extent to which gender, ethnicity and religion affected voting behavior;
- perceptions of the degree of security and civil liberties enjoyed by Burundi citizens;
- attitudes toward the performance of the government; and
- expectations for the future direction of the country.

**Focus Groups Results and Usage.** Focus groups are semi-structured group discussions directed by a moderator and following a pre-set guideline. Unless otherwise noted, the conclusions presented here represent views commonly and repeatedly cited. The interaction between participants in a focus group provides insight into how citizens think and feel and is often a more powerful means of understanding why those attitudes exist than interviewing people individually. Information gathered in this way reflects citizen values and needs and is critical in helping decision-makers test their assumptions and incorporate the will of the people into policy-making.

**A Snapshot of Public Opinion.** Any public opinion research, including focus groups, is only a snapshot of opinion at the moment the research is undertaken. Public opinion is dynamic and evolves as people experience and react to major events. Therefore, the conclusions of this report represent opinions only from when the research was undertaken.

**A Qualitative Research Tool.** Focus groups are a qualitative, not a quantitative, research instrument. Although focus groups are a superior research method for understanding the meanings behind commonly held attitudes, the total number of participants in focus group research is always relatively small and thus is not statistically representative of the larger population. This report reflects the opinions of the citizens of Burundi who participated in this study. General terms, such as 'people' and 'citizens' may be used on occasion in this report as a convenience to represent the attitudes of those participants; however, the Focus Group Participant Demographics chart as well as the Methodology Notes appearing at the end of the report should be consulted by all readers to understand the sub-set of individuals interviewed for this study.

**Participant Perceptions vs. Political Realities.** The *perceptions* of participants in these focus groups do not necessarily reflect *reality*. Ordinary citizens often judge progress based on the change in their own lives. Improvements in areas outside their immediate interests (although important in

the greater context) are not always viewed as progress by the average person. Participants in this study sometimes get their facts wrong and often form their opinions based on inaccurate or semi-accurate readings of the world around them. Nevertheless, even if their perceptions do not represent reality, there is power in these perceptions. Citizens make decisions based on what they believe. Without knowledge of these perceptions, policy-makers and other stakeholders will not be able to address them. Thus, the goal of this research is to report the perceptions and opinions of participants, regardless of their accuracy, to Burundian political and civil society leaders so they may better understand and respond to the concerns of the general populace.

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## THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

The quotations below reflect the recommendations of Burundian participants for ensuring a peaceful and prosperous future for the country.

*“The ruling party and those who fled the country must come to an agreement, otherwise the situation will get worse.”*

*“I believe that once zero tolerance for corruption is implemented, then Burundi will go forward.”*

*“Burundi would move in the right direction if there were negotiations with the opposition. With an independent justice system, security for all, and everything organized properly, it will be better.”*

*“In my opinion, once corruption is halted, children are educated, and the killings have stopped, Burundi will be better.”*

*“In 2011 Burundi will be better if the President and his colleagues work together.”*

*“If those who have joined the rebellion come back, Burundi will go forward.”*

*“If the President implements what he promised in his inaugural address, we’ll have a new Burundi.”*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores public opinion in Burundi. Based on 40 focus group discussions with nearly 500 Burundian participants, the report examines attitudes and concerns of Burundian citizens about the 2010 electoral period. As with all NDI public opinion studies, participants were asked about their views on government performance, security, human rights, and related issues. Principal findings are summarized below. The full results, along with selected quotations from participants, can be found in the Principal Findings section of this report.

### I. The Electoral Process and Consequences

- **Participants exhibited a high degree of knowledge about which elections were held and a fairly high level of familiarity with candidate names.** Each group, at the very least as a collective effort, was able to name the four direct elections<sup>1</sup> that took place: communal; presidential; legislative (national assembly) and village-level councilor. With respect to the candidates, Pierre Nkurunziza and Agathon Rwaswa had the highest levels of recognition across all the groups.
- **Voter turnout for the communal elections was high.** A downturn in voting commenced in certain areas during the presidential elections as a protest against fraud and in solidarity with the boycott.
- **Participants are divided on the issue of satisfaction with the electoral period – only about half of the groups note they are fully pleased with what transpired during the elections.** Positive sentiment toward the electoral process is usually linked, not surprisingly, to satisfaction with the outcome: the win by CNDD-FDD and a feeling that peace and security now reign in the country. This satisfaction usually trumps any concerns with the process itself. Participants with positive attitudes toward the elections say the allegations that the communal elections were stolen were never proven. Some take a cynical view of the allegations and the boycott. They maintain the opposition parties withdrew not because they believed the elections were stolen but because they feared they were going to lose.
- **Participants cite fraud, intimidation and ensuing violence as principal reasons for discontent with the electoral process.** Negative attitudes about how the elections transpired center around the following beliefs: fraud and vote-rigging definitely occurred; the process should have been halted once the other political parties withdrew; there were many cases of intimidation and manipulation.
- **Only about half the groups express firm support for the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI).** Not surprisingly, those who believe the electoral process

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<sup>1</sup> There were actually five elections during Burundi's 2010 election cycle. The fifth was an indirect election of Senators.

was generally conducted in a free and fair manner tend to support the CENI, while those who were basically unsatisfied with the process are critical of the CENI.

- **The opposition and the CENI receive the largest share of criticism for the election-related violence.** Many participants admonish the opposition for withdrawing from the elections and the CENI for mismanagement, specifically for its inability to manage the conflict between the ruling party and the opposition, choosing not to rerun the communal elections, or favoritism toward the ruling party.
- **When asked about media reports of government intimidation of the opposition parties,<sup>2</sup> about half the participants denounce the government's behavior, and the other half mostly blame the opposition parties or feel uncomfortable speculating about the veracity of the media reports.** Those who criticize the government's behavior applaud the media for its reporting on these events and say that this intimidation demonstrates that true democracy does not exist in Burundi. Those who blame the opposition parties say that the government acted correctly in impeding their meetings as the opposition did not seek permission in advance to hold their meetings, and that they were a means of planning an insurrection.
- **Participants are also divided about whether it was necessary for opposition leaders to leave the country.** Those who claim the departure of opposition leaders was unnecessary say the leaders should have shown restraint and been patient: in the short term, waiting to see how the elections would unfold and, in the longer term, waiting for their legitimate opportunity to be elected. They say that by leaving, these leaders turned their backs on their supporters and demonstrated their lack of concern for the country's future. Those who believe the leaders' departure was unavoidable feel they were in imminent danger of being harmed or killed. Participants may not agree on the urgency of departure of these leaders but most are united in their concern that the opposition is plotting to take back power by force.
- **Most participants say that reconciliation between the ruling party and the opposition within the coming months is possible if both parties make a good-faith effort to engage in a true dialogue with the help of a neutral mediator.<sup>3</sup>**

## II. The General Direction of the Country

- **Most groups express divided, rather than outright positive or negative, views on the current direction of the country.** Those who generally feel, with few or no reservations, that the country is indeed moving in the right direction (about a quarter of the groups) tend to be residents of the countryside – farmers and Batwa groups – with the majority being women. Those groups (eight) who have overwhelmingly negative views about the direction

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<sup>2</sup> The specific question read as follows: “The media has reported that the government has interrupted meetings of the opposition, closed some of its offices, and arrested some of its members. What do you think about those reports?”

<sup>3</sup> Because of moderator error, only half of the groups were asked this question.

of the country are likely to be businesspeople or artisans – with four (4) of the groups being from Bujumbura.

- **Security and the government's social service and development policies are at the base of participants' optimism.** Along with a sense of security in their community, participants point to free primary school education, free healthcare for children younger than five years old, free pre-natal care and delivery at health care centers, and the construction of new roads, schools and hospitals as the basis for their sense that the country is moving in the right direction.
- **Ethnic tension is not a top-of-mind cause for concern.** Rather than ethnic cleavages, participants note that what currently divides the country is regional, political and economic differences.
- **Economic woes, insecurity and impunity are at the core of participants' pessimism.** Participants lament high rates of unemployment and inflation and, for farmers, the mounting cost of agricultural inputs – and the resulting poverty and hunger. They also complain about the lack of attention given to development of the agricultural and industrial sectors. Furthermore, participants talk of a “revolving door” situation with criminals – they say that those who commit crimes are routinely released after being apprehended, with no punishment or consequences. They urge the government to strongly condemn and rectify this practice.
- **Land-related disputes are the most frequently cited source of conflict.** Specifically, participants mention inheritance disputes among siblings and among children of different wives in polygamous situations, as well as antagonism between refugee-returnees and current residents of an area.
- **Participants lament egotism and corruption on the part of politicians.** Much of participants' outrage is reserved for politicians, whom they accuse of, at best, a complete lack of concern for the welfare of the people and, at worst, of corruption (stealing public funds).

### III. Security, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

- **About half of the groups say they feel unsafe because of banditry and the threat of renewed political violence.** The killings of people and cattle in Rukoko and the discovery of murder victims in Lake Tanganyika and near the Rusizi River are particularly troubling to participants. Some fear that they signal a new period of political infighting and instability.
- **Many participants complain about a lack of justice and infringement of human rights and civil liberties.** Many participants complain of a corrupt justice system, where those without power (the “little people”) do not receive justice and where bribery is commonplace. They also cite cases of detention without explanation, as well as torture and lack of freedom of speech.

- **In terms of civil liberties, participants feel most constrained about voicing their problems to local government officials and owning land.** By contrast, most feel they are able to move freely around the country without any problems.

#### IV. The Performance of the Government

- **The CNDD-FDD government receives high marks from participants for its social service and development policies.** On the other hand, it is blamed for corruption, human rights violations and a deteriorating economy. Nevertheless, a quarter of the groups do not reproach the government for anything.
- **Participants are highly concerned about corruption and say that it is pervasive in the country.**<sup>4</sup> Participants are more focused on the petty corruption they encounter in everyday life – the need to pay bribes simply to receive basic services, a job, and more insidiously, to obtain justice from the police or through the courts – than politicians’ stealing of public funds.
- **Participants are divided on the issue of the government’s protection of human rights;** most of those who give the government a fair or poor grade nonetheless exhibit some optimism for the future.<sup>5</sup> Those who give the government a low rating complain most vehemently about impunity. They are highly concerned about the multiplying number of unsolved murders. Most respondents who give the government a low rating exhibit some level of optimism that its record on human rights will improve in the future. They believe that as the government is looking for a fresh start, it will make strides in this area – but they say it will need to put forth significant effort for the human rights situation to improve.
- **Many participants are worried about the government’s de facto one-party rule.** Those who are most critical complain that it subverts the democratic process by giving the ruling party unchecked power. They also complain that it will lead to nepotism and favoritism, where those who are not party members are unable to secure access to goods, services, and most importantly, employment.
- **Participants have a more favorable view of President Pierre Nkurunziza than of the government as a whole.** When they assess blame, most implicate his collaborators for not following through on his policies. Nevertheless, they want to see him do more to help the economy, combat corruption, protect human and civil rights and reconcile with the opposition.

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<sup>4</sup> Participants were asked how much of a problem they think corruption is in Burundi – very much, somewhat, a little, or not at all.

<sup>5</sup> Participants were asked to rate the government’s record on protecting human rights, using a scale of excellent, good, fair, or poor.

- **Most participants would have voted for Pierre Nkurunziza even in the absence of a boycott.** When asked about which presidential candidate they would have chosen if there had been no boycott, the groups overwhelmingly choose Pierre Nkurunziza.

### V. Looking Toward the Future

- **Participants' responses indicate a slight downward trend in positive expectations for the future.** The biggest uncertainty surrounds the opposition leaders who are outside the country. Participants strongly desire reconciliation talks between the government and the opposition. In addition, they are looking for the government to address all the problems that have previously been identified: economic hardship, crime, impunity, unequal justice, infringement of civil rights, etc.
- **The election events of 2010, while turbulent, have not disenchanted Burundian participants with the democratic process.** They still enthusiastically embrace elections as the best means for choosing the country's leaders. They say that elections are a means of making leaders accountable to the citizens by allowing citizens to choose leaders who have the qualities that they find important and in whom they have confidence.

## PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

### I. The Electoral Process and Consequences

#### 1. **There is no consensus on attitudes toward the 2010 campaign process.**

Participants were asked to comment on the political campaigns that took place before the elections. Most groups express mixed views: neither wholly positive nor wholly negative.

There were clearly differences in how the campaigns proceeded in different areas and/or differences in the level of attention participants paid to campaign news via the media. Some participants note that the process was characterized by violence and intimidation either in their area or other regions, while others praise the campaign period because there was no violence. Some complain that provocative and vulgar language was used, while others laud the campaigns because the discourse remained polite.

#### 2. **A perceived lack of violence during the process is the principal source of optimism.**

Among those with positive views of the campaign period, the most important reason was their observation that it passed peaceably for the most part, with little to no violence. In addition, slightly more than half of the groups believe the campaigns allowed them to learn and understand the various party platforms.

*“The campaigns went well, and we were well prepared because there was sufficient security.”*  
(Male student, Kamenge)

*“The electoral campaigns went well. No one was killed or was a victim of violence.”*  
(Businesswoman, Kinama)

*“I think the campaign was OK. People went back home peacefully without attacking one another.”*  
(Woman farmer/pastoralist, Nkundisi)<sup>6</sup>

*“In general, the campaign enabled us to understand the parties’ political programs. On election day, our vote was based on the program we were convinced by.”* (Woman farmer, Buye)

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<sup>6</sup> When a group was composed of people from two livelihoods, throughout this report, both are noted in the attribution.

**3. Participants exhibit a strong desire for, and yet a deep level of skepticism about, fulfillment of candidates' campaign promises.**

Participants express their fervent hopes that campaign promises will be realized. Yet even many of those with overall positive views of the campaign period express a high degree of skepticism that these promises will indeed come to fruition.

*"I went to the electoral campaign events and I liked them because they were peaceful. If politicians carry out what they said they'd do, it'll be a good thing."* (Businesswoman, Kinama)

*"What we think of these campaigns is that now we hope the newly elected representatives will keep their promises."*  
(Woman farmer, Refugee-Returnee, Mutambara)

*"They said that if you voted for them, they'd do this and that for you, but it's a shame because they don't do it."*  
(Businesswoman/Civil servant, Nyakabiga)

*"They campaigned, promised wonderful things that they didn't implement. They achieve nothing."*  
(Male artisan, Buyenzi)

**4. Those who express primarily negative views of the campaign process point to examples of violence and intimidation that occurred. Some also fault the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) for its perceived lack of objectivity and bias toward the ruling party. Others lament the lack of information they were able to glean from the campaigns.**

Those with negative views of the campaign process note that, in certain areas, violence did occur as well as cases of intimidation and inter-party skirmishes.

*"Violence and terrorism have marked the electoral campaigns. Many have been detained and others had to flee the country because of rivalry between political parties. Here, for instance, the CNDD-FDD and FNL members threw stones at each other during a meeting."* (Male farmer, Ruyaga)

*"Politicians came teaching hate and while they quietly returned home, we killed each other."*  
(Male farmer, Refugee-Returnee, Gisuru)

*"The electoral campaigns did not go well. Some political parties, especially the CNDD-FDD and the FNL, asked supporters to identify those attending this or that meeting."* (Woman farmer, Turangure)

Some mention that the CENI did not strictly enforce the electoral code and bent the rules only for the ruling party, allowing them to campaign in schools or use official government vehicles.

*"The ruling party used state resources; some people were allowed to campaign in areas which were denied to others. Only the CNDD-FDD could campaign in schools."* (Businessman/Artisan, Ruziba)

About half the groups do not feel the campaign period armed them with enough information. They offer the following as reasons:

- Some parties merely criticized their opponents (using provocative and vulgar language) instead of putting forth their programs.
- Much of the discourse was pure demagoguery and empty promises.
- Some parties were not specific enough about their future plans or did not spend enough time explaining their programs.
- The various party platforms were too similar to be able to distinguish among them.
- Some parties failed to visit certain areas during the campaign period.

*“Political parties, especially the CNDD-FDD ... the words they used were not constructive. They used rather rude words meant to instill terror.”* (Businessman/Artisan, Iteba)

*“As they gave no explanation, it was impossible for us to understand their programs; the only thing they said was that we should vote for them.”* (Male farmer, Refugee-Returnee, Gisuru)

*“There was no way to understand the programs because all the candidates presented almost the same programs.”* (Businesswoman/Civil servant/Artisan, Mutambara)

### **5. Participants exhibited a high degree of knowledge about which elections were held and a fairly high degree of familiarity with candidate names.**

Each group, at the very least as a collective effort, was able to name the four specific direct elections<sup>7</sup> that took place:

- communal;
- presidential;
- legislative: National Assembly; and
- village-level councilor.

With respect to the candidates, Pierre Nkurunziza and Agathon Rwasa had the highest levels of recognition across all the groups. Others with fairly high awareness levels were Alexis Sinduhije and Yves Sahinguvu. Domitien Ndayizeye, Pascaline Kampayano and Leonard Nyangoma<sup>8</sup> had slightly lower levels of recognition.

In general, women and those in the countryside tended to have less knowledge of the full slate of candidates than men and those in Bujumbura Ville.

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<sup>7</sup> There were actually five elections in Burundi's 2010 election cycle. The fifth was the indirect election of Senators.

<sup>8</sup> Political party affiliations of candidates: Pierre Nkurunziza (CNDD-FDD), Agathon Rwasa (FNL), Alexis Sinduhije (MSD), Yves Sahinguvu (UPRONA), Domitien Ndayizeye (FRODEBU), Pascaline Kampayano (UPD-Zigamibanga), Leonard Nyangoma (CNDD).

**6. Voting in the communal elections was widespread; a downturn in voting commenced in certain areas during the time of the presidential elections as a protest against fraud and in solidarity with the boycott.**

Almost all participants claim to have voted in the communal elections. Those that did not vote in these first round elections cited personal and time conflicts (such as being ill or too busy) or procedural difficulties (such as arriving at the wrong voting location).

Beginning with the second round of elections – the presidential elections – some drop-off in voting occurred (according to respondent's self-reported behavior). In certain locations, this was a result of concern that fraud had been committed in the communal elections and a respect of the opposition boycott. Groups in the following areas were most likely to have abstained from further voting after the communal elections: Kamenge, Buyenzi (men), Ruyaga, Ruyigi, Rweza, Muyinga, and Iteba.

Men were much more likely than women to have refrained from further voting for political and/or ideological reasons. When women chose not to vote in the ensuing rounds, it was more often because of personal and time conflicts.

*"I didn't vote for the President because the elections were rigged; they cheated."* (Businessman/Artisan, Iteba)

*"As I realized the first elections didn't go well, I dropped out of the others."* (Businessman/Artisan, Muyinga)

*"I didn't vote in the presidential election because there was only one candidate. Even if one person voted for him, he was going to win the election."* (Male student, Kamenge)

*"I didn't vote in the presidential election because I was at the hospital, my child was seriously ill."*  
(Female farmer, Refugee-Returnee, Mutambara)

Even among those who were dissatisfied with the idea of voting for a single party, there were some who chose to vote in the subsequent elections out of a spirit of patriotism or conscientiousness.

*"Personally, I went because I love the country."* (Male student, Kamenge)

**7. Participants are divided on the issue of satisfaction with the electoral period – only about half of the groups note they are fully pleased with what transpired during the elections. Satisfaction with the outcome is the principal cause of optimism.**

Respondents were asked for their perspective on how the elections unfolded. About half the groups were generally satisfied, while the other half were either generally unsatisfied or expressed mixed views.

Positive sentiment toward the unfolding of the electoral process is usually linked, not surprisingly, to satisfaction with the outcome:

- The win by CNDD-FDD; and
- A feeling that peace and security now reign in the country.

This satisfaction usually trumps any concerns with the process itself.

Other reasons noted for contentment with the outcome are:

- The belief that people were free to vote for the candidate of their choice, without coercion or fear;
- The very high turnout; and
- Relief that the process was peaceful.

*“We are satisfied with the electoral process because we have voted for the person we trust, and who has already proven himself.”* (Woman farmer, Bugabira)

*“I thank God because we have peace and security.”* (Male farmer, Rusengo)

*“I am satisfied because each of us could freely choose our candidates.”*  
(Female farmer/refugee-returnee, Mutambara)

*“Yes, I am satisfied because everything went on peacefully.”* (Businesswoman, Kinama)

### **8. Those with positive impressions of the electoral period do not believe the allegations of fraud and consequently, some are cynical about the boycott.**

Participants with positive attitudes toward the elections say the allegations that the communal elections were stolen were never proven. They also cite the endorsement of the elections by the international community.

Some take a cynical view of the allegations and the boycott. They maintain the opposition parties withdrew not because they believed the elections were stolen but because they feared they were going to lose. They note that every contest has a winner and a loser, and the loser simply needs to accept defeat. Others allege the parties boycotted the elections because they had already spent all their money.

*“No one has proven that the elections were stolen or conducted in a wrong way.”* (Woman farmer, Gisuru)

*“I heard that the international community validated the results, so I thought that a small farmer like me had to acknowledge the verdict of the polls.”* (Businessman/Artisan, Ruziba)

*“When two people argue, there is a winner and a loser. The loser always accuses the winner of bribing his way to victory.”* (Male farmer/pastoralist, Rusaka)

*“It is clear why they withdrew from the electoral process; they understood they were wasting their money, so they dropped out.”* (Male farmer/pastoralist, Bugendana)

### **9. Participants cite fraud, intimidation and ensuing violence as principal reasons for discontent with the electoral process.**

Negative attitudes about how the elections transpired center around the following beliefs:

- Fraud and vote-rigging definitely occurred. Participants are able to cite specific examples, such as urns with ballots that were never counted, the mixing of counted and non-counted ballots, and polling centers that remained open later than regulations allowed.
- Some feel the electrical outages that occurred at certain polling centers impeded the process of proper vote-counting. These participants seem to be alleging that the electricity was cut deliberately.
- The process should have been halted once the other political parties withdrew.
- There were many cases of intimidation and manipulation. For example, some note that the voting screens did not provide enough privacy, thereby giving voters pause about choosing their preferred candidate if they believed their selection would be controversial.
- In addition, participants mention the ensuing violence and disorder: imprisonments, killings, and political leaders fleeing the country.

*“These elections were marked by massive fraud.”* (Businessman/Artisan, Itaba)

*“I didn’t approve at all. I don’t understand why elections went on as the others withdrew from the process.”*  
(Male student, Kamenge)

*“The CENI didn’t prepare the voting process properly as the voters were not hidden by the voting screens; everybody could look at your vote, even the parties’ representatives could see you.”* (Male farmer/pastoralist, Tora)

*“The elections did not go well. We hear about people jailed, killed, or fleeing; all this happened after the elections.”*  
(Businessman/Artisan, Muyinga)

*“The observers messed up as they ignored the electrical outages which occurred every five minutes. The CENI didn’t really manage the process properly as power cuts occurred during the vote counting.”*  
(Businessman/Civil servant, Kamenge)

### **10. Only about half the groups express firm support for the CENI’s positive assessment of the elections.**

Participants were asked for their reactions to the affirmations by the CENI and observers that the elections were “technically correct.” Naturally, their responses are linked to their overall thoughts about the conduct of the elections: those who believe the process was generally conducted in a free and fair manner tend to support the CENI, while those who were basically unsatisfied with the process are critical of the CENI.

Therefore, about half the groups support the CENI’s affirmation, while the other half generally are critical or express mixed views.

Likewise, about half the groups support the CENI's decision to continue with the elections after the boycott, and the other half are not supportive of their decision or express mixed views.

Those who support the CENI's affirmation and decision to continue with the elections note the following:

- All political parties had agents who were present during the process and collaborated with the CENI. The CENI merely reported the results that it was given.
- The local CENI presidents were mostly religious leaders, not politicians, so there was no reason for them to play politics.
- The CENI established credibility because it pointed out and fixed errors when possible (e.g., providing more ballots when they ran out at certain polling centers).
- By continuing with the elections, they maintained peace and avoided sabotaging progress in terms of instituting an electoral process in the country.

*"I too would say that the process went well, because each political party was represented by party agents, and they worked in collaboration with the CENI. The CENI declared the results that party agents had transmitted and it could not declare results that weren't sent by other polling stations."*

(Woman farmer, Refugee-Returnee, Mutambara)

*"I agree; evidence of this is that in almost every province the CENI's presidents were religious leaders who were not running for office."* (Businessman/Civil servant, Kamenge)

*"For me, it was OK, even when there weren't enough ballots, they managed to find some."*

(Woman farmer, Ntamba)

Participants who are critical of the CENI's and observers' role in the electoral process and the decision to proceed with the elections despite the boycott cite the following:

- It was against the CENI's and international observers' interests to condemn the process since the CENI was responsible for overseeing the elections and the observers financed them.
- The opposition parties were not given sufficient time to prove their allegations of fraud.
- The CENI showed favoritism toward the CNDD-FDD.
- The CENI should have suspended the elections to dialogue with the opposition and understand their concerns.

Others note the observers wrote a critical report – which confirms that the elections did not proceed in a free and fair manner.

*"The CENI couldn't say that things had gone wrong. Even when a teacher is evaluated, he must show that he did his very best to teach and explain that those who failed did not pay attention. The CENI had to maintain its decision."*

(Male student, Kamenge)

*“We believe that the CENI was partial. It ought to act as the father of the family who listens to his children and then makes a fair decision – but this didn’t happen.”* (Male farmer, Ruyaga)

*“...there is collusion between the CENI and those who have stolen the elections.”* (Male artisan, Buyenzi)

### **11. The opposition and the CENI receive the largest share of criticism for the election-related violence.**

Many participants place the blame for the violence before and during the elections on the opposition parties and leaders or on the CENI. By way of explanation, they admonish the opposition for withdrawing from the elections and the CENI for mismanagement: its inability to manage the conflict between the ruling party and the opposition, choosing not to redo the elections, or the preferential treatment it gave to the ruling party.

*“For the violence, I blame Agathon Rwasa, who wants to mobilize youth in this crisis.”*  
(Farmer/Pastoralist, Magamba)

*“The FNL which has divided Burundians bears the responsibility; some of its members went into exile, they joined Rwasa. That’s why even now as we live in peace, we can’t trust the FNL.”* (Male farmer, Bugabira)

*“For me, I blame the CENI, because its role was to reconcile the political parties.”*  
(Businesswoman/Civil servant, Kanyosha)

*“The CENI is to blame because it failed to manage the parties’ conflict.”* (Male farmer, Gakere)

A minority either blames the ruling party, believes that all the political parties were equally guilty, or attributes the violence to ordinary criminals.

*“Our political leaders are the ones to blame.”* (Batwa man, Vyegwa)

*“They are all guilty because they were all quarreling with each other.”* (Male farmer, Rusengo)

### **12. Participants are extremely grateful for the work of the media during the elections even as some acknowledge that journalists were subject to restrictions on their reporting by the government.**

The vast majority of participants followed the course of the elections through the media (principally, radio).<sup>9</sup> The sentiment towards the media’s coverage of the elections is overwhelmingly positive. Participants are grateful towards the media for keeping them well-informed and for staying neutral throughout.

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<sup>9</sup> A small minority of respondents mention that they do not own radios but some were able to hear the broadcast on radios owned by friends and neighbors.

*“During the elections, journalists did a lot, and we are grateful to them for it was really hard work; they told us how things were progressing, and with a radio we were able to follow the votes throughout the country; it was great.”*

(Female farmer, Ntamba)

*“I appreciated the journalists because the radio stations didn’t show any political preference.”*

(Female farmer/pastoralist, Gihanga)

*“The media informed us about the smooth course of the elections in some places, while elsewhere they talked about some irregularities, and we could follow the events closely.”* (Female farmer/pastoralist, Nkundusi)

Some, although still laudatory of the media, mention that journalists were impeded in their work by the government – that they often had to report second-hand information or were not allowed to participate in the counting of votes or to announce the results.

*“I commend the media. They did their best despite the impediments they faced. They had strict rules to follow. How can they report on vote counts when they were not allowed to count votes? They were not entitled to declare the results.”*

(Businessman/Artisan, Iteba)

**13. There is no consensus among participants about the government’s treatment of the opposition parties, with about half the groups decrying the government’s intimidation of the opposition and the other half mostly blaming the opposition parties for the government’s actions.**

Participants were asked to comment on media reports of government intimidation of the opposition parties.<sup>10</sup> About half the groups denounce the government’s behavior, and the other half mostly blame the opposition parties or feel uncomfortable speculating about the veracity of the media reports.

Those who criticize the government’s behavior applaud the media for its political reporting and say that this intimidation demonstrates that true democracy does not exist in Burundi.

*“It’s now obvious for us that there is neither democracy nor justice in Burundi.”* (Male artisan, Buyenzi)

*“In a democratic country, you don’t do this.”* (Male artisan, Buyenzi)

*“This demonstrates that for Burundians and their leaders, democracy is meaningless.”*

(Businesswoman/Civil servant, Kanyosha)

Those who blame the opposition parties say that the government acted correctly in impeding their meetings as the opposition did not seek permission in advance to hold these sessions and that they were a means of planning an insurrection.

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<sup>10</sup> The specific question read as follows: “The media has reported that the government has interrupted meetings of the opposition, closed some of its offices, and arrested some of its members. What do you think about those reports?”

*“I think that they were arrested because they were making trouble, convening meetings without local authorities’ permission.”* (Male farmer/pastoralist, Rusaka)

*“I think these reports were reliable; since they had decided to boycott, going on with their meetings made no sense. Allowing them to hold secret meetings without official authorization made no sense either; these meetings had no legitimacy.”* (Female farmer, Refugee-Returnee, Mutambara)

*“I think that in doing this, the government aimed to protect the people.”*  
(Businesswoman/Civil servant/Artisan, Ruyigi)

A minority feel they have no way of confirming the veracity of the reports; a few are convinced that the media reports were untrue.

*“That’s what we heard, but we are not sure if it’s the truth or a lie.”* (Businesswoman, Buyenzi)

*“These are lies, authorities didn’t forbid anyone to campaign. No opponent has been imprisoned. The government only encouraged us to vote for the rule of law and accountability.”* (Female farmer, Musasa)

**14. Participants are also divided about whether it was necessary for opposition leaders to leave the country. Most express grave concerns that those who left are planning to take back power by force.**

Almost all respondents are aware that some opposition leaders left Burundi. About half the groups believe it was unnecessary for them to do so, with the other half expressing mixed views or saying their departure was imperative.

Those who claim the departure of the opposition leaders was unnecessary say the leaders should have shown restraint and been patient: in the short term, waiting to see how the elections would unfold and, in the longer term, waiting for their legitimate opportunity to be elected. They say that by leaving, these leaders turned their back on their supporters and demonstrated their lack of concern for the country’s future.

*“There was no need for it. Flee a country you are struggling for? They ought to stay and seek an agreement; they lost this time, someday they will win.”* (Female farmer/pastoralist, Nkundusi)

*“No they didn’t need to leave the country, because it makes us go backwards. They ought to stay to see what the one we have chosen does for us; if he does wrong, they just have to wait for their turn in the next elections.”*  
(Female farmer/pastoralist, Rwibaga)

*“They should stay for their supporters. If you have a child and you wake him up to flee, he will be startled and scared because he is still frail. Most members of these parties have joined other ones after being abandoned by their leaders.”* (Female farmer, Rugari)

Those who believe the leaders' departure was unavoidable feel they were in imminent danger of being harmed or killed.

*"They had to flee because even today, the FNL Secretariat members are being arrested; they wanted to save their lives."* (Female farmer/pastoralist, Nkundusi)

*"Yes, because they were harmed and harassed; they feared being arrested; they have saved their lives."*  
(Businessman/Artisan, Ruziba)

*"Of course! The intelligence services were looking for Agathon Rwasa so he had to leave; maybe they wanted to kill him. Fleeing before being arrested was the only option for them. False charges such as possessing firearms were being developed against them."* (Businessman/Artisan, Iteba)

Although participants disagree on the urgency of departure of the opposition leaders, most are united in their concern about what activities the opposition leaders are engaged in outside the country. Participants believe that they are preparing a coup d'état.

*"We were petrified by their departure ..... they went away in order to disrupt our security."*  
(Businesswoman, Buyenzi)

*"I think that they went away to see how they could kill all of us and be the only leaders."*  
(Female farmer/pastoralist, Rwibaga )

*"They are preparing for war."* (Male farmer/pastoralist, Tora)

Nevertheless, a significant minority do not feel they have enough information to speculate on the plans of these leaders.

*"Nobody knows what they are doing abroad, if they have the Burundian people's best interest at heart, or not."*  
(Female farmer, Buye)

*"We don't know what they are doing as we are not in their minds."* (Male farmer, Refugee-Returnee, Gisuru)

**15. Most participants say that reconciliation between the ruling party and the opposition within the coming months is possible if both parties make the effort to engage in a true dialogue.<sup>11</sup>**

Most participants express cautious optimism about the ability of the ruling party and the opposition parties to reconcile in the near future. Most say it will depend on the good faith and willingness of both sides to engage in a true dialogue and assistance from a neutral mediator. Some surrender to the will of God to make it happen.

*"They will reconcile, if they come together for dialogue."* (Male farmer/pastoralist, Magamba)

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<sup>11</sup> Because of moderator error, only half of the groups were asked this question.

*“If they find a mediator who can convince those who fled to come back and bring them to negotiating table, I hope they will come to agree.”* (Male farmer/pastoralist, Bugendana)  
*“God willing, they will reconcile.”* (Female farmer, Turangure)

A minority are more pessimistic, noting that having the opposition leaders outside the country will make near-term reconciliation extremely difficult or impossible. Furthermore, they say that if a rapprochement had been possible, it would have occurred before their departure.

*“I don’t think it’ll be possible as this should have happened before they left the country; had this been the case, their reconciliation would have occurred in a short time, but now that they have gone away, I don’t think it’ll be easy in two months’ time.”* (Female farmer/pastoralist, Gihanga)

## II. Gender, Ethnic and Religious Dimensions of Voting Behavior

### 1. For most participants, the gender of a candidate is not a determining factor in their voting decision.

Most participants say that gender does not factor into their decision-making when they vote for political leadership. They say that their only considerations are a candidate’s platform and his/her level of competence.

*“We were only considering their ideologies and programs, what they would do for us.”*  
(Female farmer, Refugee-Returnee, Mutambara)

*“We don’t care about gender, the only thing that matters are clear projects.”* (Male farmer/pastoralist, Tora)

*“I also think that gender has nothing to do with this, a good program is the only point.”* (Male farmer, Rusengo)

The minority who note a specific preference for candidates of a particular gender tend to be men – expressing their inclination to vote only for male candidates. By way of explanation, some invoke divine law which they say stipulates that men are supposed to lead women, not vice versa; others claim that at this moment in time, the situation in Burundi is too unstable to take a chance on women leaders, whom they view as less competent or tough.

*“Divine law requires voting for a man. Holy writ teaches that only men should have a say.”*  
(Male artisan, Buyenzi)

*“Given the present situation, the time hasn’t come for women to lead some sectors of the country; first Burundi has to recover stability.”* (Businessman/Artisan, Ruziba)

The small minority of women who say they prefer to vote for female candidates – no men expressed this preference – explain that they are proud that women have now attained the status of being able to run for public office in Burundi. They believe that female leaders will address issues of concern for women.

*“I prefer voting for a woman because we have been exploited for so long.”* (Female farmer, Bugabira)

- 2. Participants are largely comfortable with the stipulation that 30 percent of government positions be reserved for women. Women are similarly supportive that the percentage of women holding ministerial positions in the current government exceeds the 30 percent quota, while men are divided on this issue.**

Most participants support the legal stipulation that women receive 30 percent of government positions. They note that women are more educated and capable than in the past and are thus fully capable of holding public office. In fact, some – mostly women, but even a small minority of men – say that this percentage should be increased, since women make up a higher percentage of the population than men.

*“It’s enough. Men have been governing ever since I was born. Today, women as well as men are leading the country. I appreciate this respect for human beings.”* (Female farmer, Musasa)

*“It’s not enough because women are educated. Some women have good ideas.”* (Female farmer, Rugari)

The minority (all men) who express misgivings about the 30 percent quota either feel that women need to compete for these positions on the basis of their competence or are generally uncomfortable with the notion of women as political figures.

*“I don’t think that positions should be filled based on gender but rather on individuals with skills to help the country develop. Otherwise they could nominate incompetent people.”* (Male civil servant, Rweza)

The vast majority of women<sup>12</sup> are similarly comfortable with the fact that 42 percent (9 out of 21) of the government ministers are women. They say that having these positions filled by women will mean that their problems will be taken seriously. Many would like to see this percentage increased in the future.

*“I think it’s a step forward, and we hope that in 2015 there will be more than ten.”*  
(Businesswoman/Civil servant, Kanyosha)

*“There are only a few of these ministries. The government should increase their number since girls are educated.”*  
(Female farmer, Rugari)

Men are divided on this issue. Those who are supportive trust women in positions of power because they believe they are less venal than men. Those who are opposed worry that women are not qualified enough or are not constitutionally strong enough to capably manage these ministerial posts.

*“I am glad that the government gave the ministries with important budgets to women; otherwise it would be disastrous as men would have embezzled the money.”* (Male farmer, Refugee-Returnee, Gisuru)

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<sup>12</sup> The only group of women that expressed some misgivings about the current number of female government ministers was that composed of young businesswomen from Buyenzi.

*“They were given prominent positions; they should give the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Justice, the two pillars of the country, to men not women.”* (Male farmer/pastoralist, Tora)

**3. As with gender, ethnicity is also not a deciding factor in the vote, according to participants.**

Participants are practically unanimous in their insistence that the ethnicity of a candidate is immaterial. Instead, they consider some or all of the following:

- the candidate’s platform;
- the candidate’s party; and
- the candidate’s ability to bring peace to the country.

*“I didn’t care if they were Hutu, Twa or Tutsi. What I needed was peace and the ability to grow a crop and harvest. I didn’t look at ethnicity for God created all.”* (Female farmer, Ntamba)

*“...political affiliation is not important; the candidate’s program was the point.”*  
(Businesswoman/Civil servant/Artisan, Ruyigi)

*“No, now we consider a candidate’s usefulness, regardless of their ethnicity.”* (Male farmer, Rusengo)

In fact, the only group that claims that it does pay attention to ethnicity is that composed of Batwa males – they note that they would prefer to vote for someone of their own ethnicity so that their needs for assistance will be taken seriously.

*“I would vote for a Mutwa so that he can support his fellow Batwa.”* (Batwa man, Vyegega)

**4. The trend continues: participants also reject the notion of voting according to religion.**

Participants are also practically unanimous in their insistence that the religion of a candidate is irrelevant. They note that all people in Burundi pray to the same God. Many assert, as before, that a candidate’s platform and competency are the only important considerations.

*“In my opinion, even if the candidate is Muslim or Protestant, if he can be useful to the country, I would vote for him.”*  
(Female farmer/pastoralist, Nkundusi)

*“Focusing on religion would be a mistake. Look at Somalia: people kill each other because of their beliefs. I think that peace and good governance are essential; the rest is insignificant.”* (Businessman/Artisan, Iteba)

There is a very small minority of male respondents in three groups who mention some trepidation about voting for Muslims. They have negative views of Muslim cultural values and fear their imposition in the country or associate Muslims with terrorism.

*"I can't vote for a Muslim, because they are known all around the world as uncooperative and kamikaze."*  
(Male farmer, Refugee-Returnee, Tora)

**5. Yet most participants are supportive of the idea that the government should reflect the religious diversity of the country.**

Most support the idea of religious diversity in the government because they feel it is important from an equality perspective and will help avoid creating divisions within the country. They also note that leaders from different faiths working together will act in a salutary, complementary fashion.

*"Yes ... with each faith represented ... human rights are respected."* (Female farmer, Ntamba)

*"There must be representatives of each faith because they have to help each other."*  
(Female farmer/pastoralist, Rweza)

The minority who do not believe that the government needs to reflect the religious diversity of the country say that competence trumps any other consideration.

*"It isn't necessary, instead it is necessary to choose the one who is most intellectually competent."*  
(Male farmer/pastoralist, Tora)

### III. The General Direction of the Country

**1. Most groups express divided, rather than outright positive or negative, views on the current direction of the country.**

Participants were asked if they felt Burundi was moving in the right, or wrong, direction.

Of the 40 groups, slightly more than a quarter (12) generally feel, with few or no reservations, that the country is moving in the right direction. They are all residents of the countryside – farmers and both Batwa groups – with the majority being women:

- Female farmers/pastoralists in Rwibaga, Tora, Buye, Musasa, Mutoyi, Gisuru and Mutumbara;
- Batwa men in Vyegwa and women in Kibungere; and
- Male farmers in Bugabira, Rusengo and Matara.

Eight (8) groups have overwhelmingly negative views about the direction of the country. They are likely to be businesspeople or artisans – with 4 of the groups being from Bujumbura:

- Male students in Kamenge;
- Male artisans in Buyenzi; businessmen and artisans in Ruziba; businessmen in Musinga (Muslims);
- Businesswomen in Kanyosha;

- Female farmers/pastoralists in Gihanga and Turangure; and
- Male farmers/pastoralists in Musigati,

The rest (20) of the groups have participants who express mixed views.

### **2. Security and social service policies are at the base of participants' optimism.**

Those participants with generally positive views regarding the direction of the country tend to identify the following as primary factors:

- gratitude and relief about the end of the civil war;
- security in their region or free movement without fear;
- government social service policies such as free primary school education, free health care for children younger than five years old, and free pre-natal health care and delivery at health care centers; and
- local development such as the construction of new roads, schools and health care centers and hospitals.

Some participants note the smooth comportment of the elections as one of the reasons for their confidence in the country's future. Additionally, some mention a newfound sense of freedom of expression for women and the elderly.

The Batwa participants feel that their living situation has greatly improved: they feel more secure, believe they are being treated with more respect, and now live mostly in dwellings rather than the bush, as they did in the past.

*"Here, we live in complete security."* (Male farmer, Bugabira)

*"Now we live in peace. We sleep peacefully at night and children are going to school for free."*  
(Female farmer, Gisuru)

*"We are grateful to this government which ensures free healthcare for children under five and free primary school enrollment. Women give birth for free in hospitals. Former governments didn't achieve this."*  
(Male farmer/pastoralist, Tora)

*"Now, women can express themselves freely in public with no one stopping them."*  
(Female farmer/pastoralist, Tora)

*"Burundi is going in the right direction; the elections went well."* (Male farmer, Refugee-Returnee, Gisuru)

*"The lower classes are free. We can sleep quietly. We are not forced to sleep in the bush. Before we had to sleep outside, now we are sleeping at home."* (Batwa man, Vyegwa)

**3. Ethnic tension is not a top-of-mind cause for concern among participants. The significant divisions that exist in Burundi are now regional, political and economic.**

The reasons furnished by participants for their pessimism regarding the direction of the country are almost as notable for what they omit as for what they include. There are barely any apprehensions expressed about current or future ethnic tensions between Hutus and Tutsis.

In fact, when the issue of relations among the ethnicities surfaced during the interviews, participants overwhelmingly spoke about them from a positive perspective.

*“Ethnic issues don’t exist anymore. Now Hutus can hang out and spend the night in areas like Ngagara or Nyakabiga without trouble, as Tutsis can also go and spend the night in Kamenge.”*  
(Businessman/Civil servant, Kamenge)

Rather than ethnic cleavages, participants note that what currently divides the country are regional and political differences.

*“It’s true that ethnic divisions are vanishing, but there are still regional divisions – regions that are in conflict with each other due to political reasons.”* (Female farmer/pastoralist, Tora)

*“I would ask the President to stop discrimination. If he wants to develop the country he should focus on all the provinces. Burundi has more than one province. Ngozi province is no different than the others.”*  
(Businessman/Artisan, Iteba)

*“Ethnic conflicts don’t exist anymore; now the only conflicts are conflicts of interest.”*  
(Businesswoman/Civil servant, Nyakabiga)

The gap between the rich and poor also fuels resentment.

*“Conflicts are related to social inequality; courts are receiving bribes from the rich, and the poor can’t win against a rich person.”* (Male farmer/pastoralist, Tora)

**4. Economic woes, insecurity and impunity are at the core of participants’ pessimism.**

Groups who express primarily negative or mixed views about the direction in which Burundi is moving are most likely to cite:

- economic hardship;
- insecurity (either in their particular region or elsewhere in Burundi, reported by the media); and
- impunity for those who commit crimes.

Participants lament the high rates of unemployment and inflation and, for farmers, the mounting cost of agricultural inputs – and the resulting poverty and hunger. They also complain about the lack of attention given to development of the agricultural and industrial sectors.

*“With so much poverty and unemployment, Burundi isn’t going in the right direction.”* (Male artisan, Buyenzi)

*“People are haunted by poverty, prices are continuously going up, poor farmers can’t afford basic needs.”*  
(Businessman/Artisan, Ruziba)

*“We can spend a whole day without selling a thing, how can we manage to support our children’s basic needs? It’s a very critical issue for us.”* (Businesswoman, Kinama)

*“In Bujumbura Rural, we haven’t any help, or any monitoring from our President; there are no associations, no development projects; poverty is overwhelming, day after day food becomes more and more expensive, so things are not going well.”* (Female farmer, Turangure)

*“In the fields, the harvest is not good anymore because the agronomists left and we miss their advice.”*  
(Businessman/Artisan, Ruziba)

Participants are full of tales of murder and banditry, either in their own communities, or those in other parts of Burundi – which they learn about through the media. Many talk of people being “terrified” by the crime wave. They say that the proliferation of small arms adds to the problem.

*“Every day, we are told here or through the radio that people are killed; Burundians fear this and are troubled by it.”*  
(Female farmer, Ntamba)

*“Because you have to pass two roadblocks on the road to Rubiza, nobody comes here at night. There are more roadblocks to get here now; it looks as if we are in a zoo. This doesn’t reassure us.”*  
(Businessman/Artisan, Ruziba)

*“Things we hear on the radio are not pleasant. They say that at night some are killed for their money.”*  
(Female farmer, Rugari)

*“So that people can sleep and eat in peace, the government must highlight security in all its programs. Otherwise, Burundi will not go in the right direction.”* (Businessman/Artisan, Ruziba)

Participants talk of a “revolving door” situation with criminals – they say that those who commit crimes are routinely released after being apprehended, with no punishment or consequences. They urge the government to strongly condemn and rectify this practice.

*“Someone commits murder and he’s not imprisoned; another one steals your goods, you denounce him to authorities but he is quickly released. Not to punish crimes is a threat for the country.”* (Female farmer/pastoralist, Nkundisi)

*“In my opinion, things are getting worse because when a criminal is jailed, after a while we hear that he has been released shortly after his arrest.”* (Male farmer/pastoralist, Rusaka)

*“There is still impunity, and investigations which come to nothing, so Burundi is not going in the right direction.”*  
(Female farmer/pastoralist, Rweza)

### **5. Land-related disputes are the most frequently cited source of conflict.**

Participants were asked to name the two main sources of conflict in Burundi. They discuss the issues they had earlier identified: economic woes (and the resulting poverty and hunger), rising rates of crime, and impunity. But the one conflict cited most often across all the groups involves conflicts concerning the land, specifically as they relate to:

- inheritance among children;
- disputes between siblings that now often seem to end in murder, but were in the past settled through reasoned discussions within the family;
- inheritance in a polygamous situation—particularly disputes between siblings with different mothers;
- refugee-returnees and current residents of an area, especially when refugees return and find that their land has been expropriated by those who remained in the country.

*“Most of the time, brothers and sisters are quarrelling for land. There is less and less land – leading children to disputes which can end with murder.”*  
(Female farmer, Musasa)

*“Polygamy creates problems when children have to share land, especially for the girls from different wives. The children of the first wife frown upon those of the second wife.”* (Female farmer, Buye)

*“In my opinion, conflicts are mostly land-based, especially for refugee-returnees. They find their land occupied by those who remained in the country.”* (Batwa man, Vyege)

### **6. Some women mention the negative impact that polygamy has on their lives.**

A few groups note the problems caused by polygamy. As mentioned earlier, they say that it can cause land disputes among the children of different wives. In addition, it can lead to unfair treatment if a man chooses not to give equal support to all his wives and their children, as women have little or no legal recourse to redress such situations.

*“Generally, we women are not happy. Your husband can bring along a second wife. If you complain, the illegitimate woman is not evicted, instead your husband can break up with you and go on living with the new one.”*  
(Female farmer, Rugari)

### **7. Participants lament egotism and corruption on the part of politicians.**

Much of participants' outrage is reserved for politicians, whom they accuse of, at best, a complete lack of concern for the welfare of the people and, at worst, of corruption (stealing of public funds).

Many participants say politicians are solely interested in gaining power and wealth, and reproach them for their unwillingness to engage in any kind of political compromise with their opponents.

*“Many politicians’ only objective is to drain state funds in order to buy houses, and then leave [power].”*  
(Businessman/Civil servant, Kamenge)

*“All leaders want to get rich at all costs.”* (Male civil servant, Rweza)

*“All politicians are solely looking for ...wealth.”* (Batwa man, Vyegwa)

*“Getting rich is easy for those at the head of government, so conflicts originate in the quest for power.”*  
(Male farmer/pastoralist, Tora)

*“Political parties are responsible for the conflict as members from different parties have no tolerance for each other.”*  
(Female farmer, Turangure)

*“The problem is that the political actors refuse to meet in order to dialogue. Isn’t that the source of these killings?”*  
(Female farmer/pastoralist, Nkundisi)

#### IV. Security, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

##### 1. Physical security is a major concern for about half the groups.

When asked a specific question about their own level of physical security, about half of the groups say they feel unsafe – because of banditry and the threat of renewed politically motivated violence. Some note that even if their own community hasn’t recently been touched by violence, they worry when they hear about incidents in surrounding areas.

*“There is no security; when you wake up safely, you thank God.”* (Female farmer/pastoralist, Gihanga)

*“At night we are hearing grenades and gunshots, so we don’t feel safe.”* (Businesswoman, Buyenzi)

*“I don’t feel safe because of road ambushes.”* (Businesswoman/Civil servant/Artisan, Ruyigi)

##### 2. Participants express trepidation about the dawn of a new round of politically motivated violence.

The recent killings of people and cattle in Rukoko and the discovery of murder victims in Lake Tanganyika and near the Rusizi River are particularly troubling to participants. Some fear that they signal a new period of political infighting and instability. They are suspicious of the government’s explanation that the killings are the work of bandits and are afraid that the perpetrators are actually reactivated rebel forces.

In addition, some (spontaneously) mention with alarm the political leaders who have gone into exile.<sup>13</sup> They worry, as noted earlier, that these leaders are planning to destabilize the country.

*"We are told that some people are joining the rebellion, but the radios don't attest to a rebellion as there is no named and confirmed leader. Yet, those who live near Kibira say that rebels do exist, even if the government doesn't believe it. We live in Muyinga, far from there, but it frightens us. If the government doesn't handle it, security will get worse."*  
(Businessman, Muyinga)

*"Day after day people are dying because of politics. Recently, we heard that 52 people have died in Rukoko."*  
(Businessman/Artisan, Ruziba)

*"Here and there, it's said that a rebel movement is being organized, but the government denies it and even with more than 52 people killed, it still attributes the crimes to armed bandits."* (Male student, Kamenge)

*"We are still suffering from a lack of democracy; we don't know where some politicians are, or what they are doing. That's not reassuring for us."* (Male civil servant, Rweza)

### 3. Some blame "saboteurs" for Burundi's tenuous political and security situation.

Interestingly, some respondents use a term such as 'saboteur' to describe those they believe are placing Burundi on a regressive path.<sup>14</sup> They use these labels to variously describe rebel leaders who they believe may be behind the events in Rukoko and elsewhere as well as ordinary criminals. The implication is that the government is doing its best to move the country forward, but it's the 'saboteurs' who are interfering with the progress. These terms were used not solely in areas known to be favorable to the ruling party.

*"I believe we are going in the right direction, at least with our government, but there are some troublemakers. Government and international organizations have to join together to prevent these "saboteurs" leading the country right back to war."* (Male farmer/pastoralist, Rusaka)

*"Burundi is going in the right direction, but there are "saboteurs" at work. We heard about them in Bujumbura. Here in Ngozi, we have peace but elsewhere others are unsafe because of political divisions."* (Female farmer, Buye)

*"With the events in Rukoko, it's clear that some people of bad faith want to boycott the President's excellent programs."* (Male farmer, Bugabira)

*"There are some enemies of the country who want to divide us. People are dying and we are finding their corpses every day. You see, while some are working for the country's development, others are wrongdoers."*  
(Female farmer, Musasa)

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<sup>13</sup> This discussion took place at the start of the groups, before the issue of the opposition leaders being outside the country was mentioned by the moderators.

<sup>14</sup> Similar terms used were "troublemakers," "wrongdoers," "people of bad faith," and "enemies of the country."

#### **4. Many participants complain about a lack of justice and infringement of human rights and civil liberties.**

Many participants lament a corrupt justice system, where those without power (the “little people”) do not receive justice and where bribery is commonplace. They also cite cases of detention without explanation and torture and lack of freedom of speech.

*“If you don’t have money, the justice system doesn’t make it easy for you. I would ask our President to work on the issue of justice.”* (Male farmer/pastoralist, Bugendana)

*“Nowadays, justice is unsatisfactory. It’s critical to improve it, or else Burundi will have no future.”*  
(Male civil servant, Rweza)

*“People are jailed for no reason, without any investigation; and once incarcerated the case is not prosecuted.”*  
(Businessman/Artisan, Ruziba)

*“Some citizens are tortured, like these journalists who had to flee the country because they published controversial information.”* (Male student, Kamenge)

*“People are terrified; you can’t voice what you think, because you fear reprisals.”* (Businesswoman, Kinama)

#### **5. In terms of civil liberties, participants feel most constrained about voicing their problems to local government officials and owning land. By contrast, most feel they are able to move freely around the country without any problems.**

Participants are divided about whether they have felt comfortable over the past five years voicing their concerns to local government officials. About half of the groups say this has not been a problem. For the others, some say that to do so puts one at great risk, particularly if one is not a member of the ruling party. Others note that graft, rather than fear is the issue, as the only way to have one’s case taken seriously is to offer a bribe.

*“We can express ourselves freely.”* (Businesswoman, Kinama)

*“No, you can’t voice your opinion, as you can be killed for that. You see that freedom doesn’t exist.”*  
(Female farmer, Ntamba)

*“Even if you belong to the same party, if you don’t offer a bribe to authorities, you’ll never receive an answer.”*  
(Businesswoman/Civil servant, Nyakabiga)

The story is similarly mixed with respect to the ability to own land as an individual. About half of the groups say that as long as one has means, it is not difficult. The others complain about the lack of legal safeguards. It is easy for another individual or the government to claim rights to your land. And if one is in a land dispute with a wealthy person, that person can easily pay a bribe and win the case.

*“When you have the means, there is no problem.”* (Businessman/Civil servant, Kamenge)

*“The land issue is critical. The President grabs land belonging to citizens for his own use.”*  
(Businessman/Artisan, Iteba)

About two-thirds of the groups note it has been easy to hold meetings without being interrupted as well as speak freely at these meetings, while about a third feel that it has been difficult. The stakes are raised considerably, though, if the meeting concerns a political issue; participants mention that even if the subject matter is non-political, the authorities worry that it might be and thus are suspicious of any meetings held.

*“In our community, we didn’t have any meetings stopped.”* (Female farmer/pastoralist, Tora)

*“You can’t hold a meeting without the authorities’ permission. When you gather three people without authorization, they can arrest you and say we want to overthrow the regime, or destabilize it.”* (Businessman/Artisan, Ruziba)

The one area that does not appear to be an issue is free movement – the majority of participants say that it has not been difficult to move around the country over the past five years.

*“Yes, we are absolutely free to go around wherever we want to go.”* (Male farmer/pastoralist, Ijenda)

*“It is easy, an identity card isn’t required; before if you didn’t have an ID card, or if you had forgotten it, the police would not allow you to go on.”* (Male farmer/pastoralist, Rusaka)

## V. The Performance of the Government

### 1. The CNDD-FDD government receives high marks from participants for its social service and development policies.

Most participants confer upon the government a grade of excellent or good.<sup>15</sup> The minority who give a grade of fair or poor tend to be men; additionally, most are from areas where the opposition has strong support (Kamenge, Ruziba, Ruyaga, Iteba).

Those who offer a grade of excellent or good praise the government for the same reasons (noted earlier) they feel optimistic about the direction of the country: social service policies, like free primary school education, and the construction of new roads, schools, health care centers and hospitals.

Additionally, some mention the government’s successful reintegration of refugee-returnees, in particular, the construction of houses for the returnees.

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<sup>15</sup> Participants were asked to rate the work of the CNDD-FDD government, using a scale of excellent, good, fair or poor.

Furthermore, some rural dwellers mention with appreciation government assistance to “associations paysannes” (rural associations), which provide agriculture and livestock-related advice and support. Some also laud the government’s initiative of planting trees.

*“I’m grateful to the government, as all children whether poor or rich, are going to school.”*  
(Female farmer/pastoralist, Rwibaga)

*“I would give the government an excellent grade, 100 out of 100, because you see, they are building houses for us, we no longer live in the bush; children are treated for free, they are no longer expelled from school because they lack textbooks; people are no longer detained in hospitals [if they cannot pay their bill]; the government did so much that we can’t possibly name everything.”* (Female farmer, Gisuru)

*“During the last five years, the President initiated many development programs. He helped to set up many community associations: he went to the different provinces and worked there with the people. He gave women access to free delivery health care services and free education for the children, he supported orphans and widows. Everything has been going well.”* (Female farmer, Turangure)

**2. The government receives blame for corruption, violations of human rights and civil liberties, and for a deteriorating economy. Nevertheless, a quarter of the groups do not reproach the government for anything.**

When asked what the CNDD-FDD government has done particularly poorly, participants’ responses fall into three categories:

- corruption;
- violations of human rights and civil liberties; and
- a deteriorating economy.

*“Corruption is pervasive in Burundi.”* (Businessman/Artisan, Kamenge)

*“What’s wrong in the country is the persistence of impunity.”* (Female farmer/pastoralist, Rweza)

*“The lack of jobs for unemployed people.”* (Businesswoman/Civil servant, Nyakabiga)

It is important to note, however, that about a quarter of the groups do not reproach the government for *anything*. Most of these groups were composed of women.

*“There is nothing wrong with CNDD-FDD, rather we can applaud it, and applaud it again.”*  
(Female farmer/pastoralist, Mutoyi)

**3. Participants are highly concerned about corruption and say that it is pervasive in the country.**

Participants are more focused on the petty corruption they encounter in everyday life – the need to pay bribes simply to receive basic services, a job and, more insidiously, to obtain justice from the police or through the courts – than politicians’ stealing of public funds.

*“It goes too far, to such an extent that you won’t be hired for a job if you can’t pay bribes.”*  
(Male artisan, Buyenzi)

*“When you don’t have any money to give, you can’t access basic services.”*  
(Businesswoman/Civil servant/Artisan, Ruyigi)

*“It’s too pervasive; in the justice system, if you don’t give money, you can’t submit a case to the court.”*  
(Female farmer/pastoralist, Gihanga)

**4. Participants are divided on the issue of the government’s protection of human rights; most of those who give the government a fair or poor grade nonetheless exhibit some optimism for the future.**

When participants are asked a specific question about the government’s record on protecting human rights, about half the groups give the government a grade of fair or poor.<sup>16</sup> The other half either exhibit mixed views or offer grades of excellent or good, though it’s important to note that only a tiny minority offer unqualified “excellent” grades. Again reflecting a gender split, women are more likely than men to give the government a high rating in this area.

Those who give the government a low rating complain most vehemently about impunity. They are most disturbed about impunity when it comes to cases of murder and rape. Furthermore, they are highly concerned about the multiplying number of unsolved murders.

They also mention unjust imprisonment and inhumane treatment and torture during imprisonment. Additionally, they note lack of freedom of speech.

*“Human rights are being trampled on and no one dares to talk about it.”* (Male farmer/pastoralist, Ijenda)

*“Poor, because if someone dies they say that his death is under investigation, but never are these investigations completed – and they don’t tell us anything more.”* (Businessman, Rweza)

*“Poor, as you can be arrested without being told why.”* (Male farmer, Rusengo)

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<sup>16</sup> Participants were asked to rate the government’s record on protecting human rights using a scale of – excellent, good, fair, or poor.

Those who give the government grades of good or excellent tend to equate its favorable social service policies (free education, free healthcare, etc.) with protection of human rights.

*“I would give the grade excellent because the government has done a lot: mothers give birth for free; children go to school for free; they have built health centers and schools.”* (Female farmer, Gisuru)

Most respondents who give the government a low rating exhibit some level of optimism that its record on human rights will improve in the future. They believe that as it’s looking for a fresh start, it will make strides in this area – but they say it will need to put forth significant effort for the human rights situation to improve.

*“I think [President Nkurunziza] will try as he did during these last years, and now that he is re-elected, I think he will go on trying.”* (Female farmer/pastoralist, Rwibaga)

### **5. Many participants are worried about the government’s de facto one-party rule.**

Many participants are worried about the implications of one-party rule by the CNDD-FDD. Those who are most critical complain that it subverts the democratic process by giving the ruling party unchecked power. They also complain that it leads to nepotism and favoritism, with those who are not party members unable to secure access to goods, services and, most importantly, employment.

*“Burundi is going in the wrong direction. When you apply for a job, they ask you your party affiliation, and then they say that you have to join their party to get the job.”* (Male student, Kamenge)

Others complain that justice is only on the side of those who are associated with the ruling party. In a dispute, your case will not be heard if you are affiliated with an opposition party or even if you’re non-affiliated. More ominously, if you are involved in a fight or dispute with a member of the CNDD-FDD, you can be seized, detained, and tortured.

*“It could happen that you are in a bar and start to quarrel with someone from a different political party. If the person happens to be a member of the ruling party, he can later get you arrested and tortured.”*  
(Female farmer/pastoralist, Gihanga)

Those who do not express any concerns note that it was the boycott of the opposition parties that brought this situation about, and that because of the CNDD-FDD’s superior track record, many of the opposition party supporters chose to support the CNDD-FDD during the elections.

### **6. Participants have an even more favorable view of President Pierre Nkurunziza than of the government as a whole. When they do assess blame, most blame his collaborators for not following through on his policies. Nevertheless, they want to see him do more to help the economy, combat corruption, protect human and civil rights, and reconcile with the opposition.**

The vast majority of participants have an extremely favorable impression of President Pierre Nkurunziza. They clearly have an emotional as well as rational attachment to him. On the emotional

side, he is regarded as a benevolent paternal figure; participants see him as a humble “man of the people” who cares about the concerns of the average person. One important manifestation of his concern is the fact that he has taken the time to visit them and even work alongside them.

*“He is a president who has become very close to the people through community projects.”*  
(Businesswoman/Civil servant/Artisan, Ruyigi)

*“We are very grateful to him for what he did. He plays soccer with us and we may touch him, on the legs and even on the head. We have never gotten so close to a president before. We only saw them on TV. This president even greets people.”* (Businesswoman, Kinama)

*“It’s the first time since I was born that I see a president visiting us, talking with us and doing community work with us.”* (Female farmer, Buye)

On the rational side, in a recurring theme in this report, they laud him for the government’s social service and development policies.

*“He achieved all his promises. He built schools and hospitals; there is free health care.”* (Female farmer, Rugari)

*“He did a good job as now women give birth for free and primary schools are free of charge. He did well.”*  
(Businesswoman/Civil servant, Kanyosha)

Some say he has not been well-served by his collaborators whom they accuse of not following through on his policies.

*“He has worked well, but we can’t say the same about his collaborators. If he had appointed a person with a big heart like him, human rights would have been respected; and if he doesn’t do so now the human rights situation will get worse. He must get rid of bad leaders.”* (Male farmer, Refugee-Returnee, Gisuru)

*“He had good programs, but the problem lies with his bad advisers.”* (Male civil servant, Rweza)

Although he has strong support, many participants would like him do more in the areas of developing the economy, combating corruption, protecting human and civil rights and opening a dialogue with the opposition. They would also like him to dismiss bad advisers and collaborators.

### **7. Most participants would have voted for Pierre Nkurunziza even in the absence of a boycott.**

Participants were queried about which presidential candidate they would have chosen if there had been no boycott.

The groups overwhelmingly choose the incumbent, Pierre Nkurunziza. In 29 out of 36<sup>17</sup> groups, he receives the highest amount of “votes.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Four of the 40 groups chose not respond to the question.

Support for other candidates is confined to a few groups in certain areas:

- Agathon Rwasa – Kamenge, Ruziba, Ruyaga, Magamba;
- Pascaline Kampayano – Buyenzi, Iteba;
- Alexis Sinduhije – Vyegwa (Batwa); and
- Domitien Ndayizeye – Ijenda.

## VI. Looking Toward the Future

### 1. **Participants' responses indicate a slight downward trend in positive expectations for the future.**

Participants were asked if they thought the situation in the country would be better, worse or the same in the next five years.<sup>19</sup> Compared to their responses regarding the current direction of the country, they exhibit slightly more pessimistic views toward the longer time horizon.

The biggest uncertainty surrounds the opposition leaders who are outside the country. Participants are strongly desirous of reconciliation talks between the government and the opposition. They believe dialogue and rapprochement are the basis for any further progress in the country.

*"I think that the winners and losers of elections need a framework for dialogue like the one we are using now in this room."* (Businessman/Civil servant, Kamenge)

*"I would ask the international community to urge the government to bring back its opponents to the negotiation table in order to maintain peace."* (Male farmer, Refugee-Returnee, Gisuru)

Additionally, they are looking for the government to address all the problems that have previously been identified: economic hardship, crime, impunity, unequal justice, infringement of civil rights, etc.

Some also recommend that a national dialogue be held among the Burundi people to aid in transcending the country's regional and political divisions.

### 2. **The election events of 2010, while turbulent, have not disenchanted Burundi participants with the democratic process. They still enthusiastically embrace elections as the best means for choosing the country's leaders.**

Participants in Burundi have clearly not lost faith in the democratic process. When asked whether they believe that elections are a good way for Burundi to choose its leaders, they overwhelmingly

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<sup>18</sup> It is possible that some participants may have felt reluctant to voice the name of a candidate other than the incumbent. However, they were not forced to offer a response and could have chosen to remain silent (as did four of the groups). Therefore, it is likely that the support for Nkurunziza generally reflects reality.

<sup>19</sup> A few moderators mistakenly asked about a two-year, rather than a five-year, horizon.

answer in the affirmative. They say that elections are a means of making leaders accountable to the citizens and allow citizens to choose leaders who have the qualities that they find important and in whom they have confidence. In view of the recent experience in Burundi, some add the caveat that if elections are to be successful, they must be well-organized.

*“It’s very important that people elect their leaders. For years and years, this country was governed by a dictatorship, but now our leader is chosen by the people who trust him, and he has sustainable power.”*

(Businesswoman/Civil servant, Nyakabiga)

*“Elections are a good thing because the power is in the hands of the people. You elect the leaders you think are honest.”*

(Female farmer/pastoralist, Nkundusi)

Even the boycott has not unduly discouraged Burundi participants. They were asked specifically if the boycott has had any impact on their feelings about elections and the electoral process. Their responses are much more instructive for what they do *not* mention as for what they *do*. Importantly, they say nothing about second-guessing the appropriateness of elections for Burundi nor display any bitterness toward the system. Instead, they tend to answer from a general, rather than a personal, standpoint, noting that the boycott discouraged some people from voting, as their candidate was no longer running, and has aroused a sense of fear throughout Burundi over concerns about what the exiled opposition leaders may be planning from outside the country.

# CONCLUSIONS

## Elections

Focus group participants followed the 2010 elections very closely. They demonstrate a high degree of knowledge of the four direct contests that were held, a fairly high level of recognition of the various candidates, and are able to discuss in detail the controversial events surrounding the electoral period. Most took part at least in the first round of voting for the communal elections. Some drop-off in voting after the first round did occur because of the opposition's charges of fraud and its decision to boycott the remaining electoral contests.

Their attitudes about the conduct of the elections are very polarized:

- Some are very pleased with the way the elections transpired, feel the process was peaceful and deny any allegations of rigging.
- Others feel the elections were characterized by fraud, violence and intimidation.

Importantly, however, the turmoil that accompanied the 2010 elections has not diminished their enthusiasm for the democratic process. They believe in the power of elections to produce competent leaders who are held accountable to the electorate.

Most profess to vote on the basis of a candidate's competency and platform only, ignoring gender, religion or ethnicity.

## General Outlook

Regional, political and economic cleavages among citizens, rather than ethnic rivalries, are currently at the forefront of Burundi participants' concerns.

In general, citizens of a country judge progress by, at minimum, whether they feel a sense of economic and physical security. In Burundi, many participants feel neither. Participants bemoan unemployment, inflation, and lack of development of the agricultural and industrial sectors and the resulting poverty and hunger. In some areas, participants are thoroughly terrorized by crime. Most are gravely concerned that the opposition leaders currently outside the country are planning an insurrection. The government's minimizing of the significance of the recent violence in Rukoko and elsewhere, instead of calming participants, is actually stoking more fear and rumor-mongering.

There are important bright spots, however. The first concerns the government's social service and development policies. Participants (those in rural areas, in particular) are extremely satisfied with advances made in the health and education sectors, infrastructure and rural development.

Another area of optimism is the democratic process. As noted above, participants are grateful that Burundians were able to choose their leaders through elections, even though the election period was controversial and turbulent.

However, after concerns about their economic and physical security, indignation about the injustice that they observe around them preoccupies participants, including:

- infringement of civil liberties and human rights;
- impunity for those who commit crimes;
- discrimination against those who are not adherents of the ruling party; and
- the necessity to resort to bribery to get justice.

They also voice grave concerns about the pervasiveness and consequences of land-related disputes. And although they laud the democratic and electoral process, they express deep anger and frustration at the behavior of political leaders who they say display no concern for the welfare of the people, engage in corrupt practices and refuse to dialogue with their opponents.

The one political leader who escapes much of the criticism is President Pierre Nkurunziza. His common touch and social welfare and development policies have made him an extremely popular figure, particularly among women. This high level of support for the president, in spite of a fairly polarized election and post-election environment, suggests that there is some basis for reconciliation among Burundi citizens.

But support for the president has a short shelf life – participants have very high expectations for positive change they want to see from the government. They are eager for the government to put actions behind its campaign promises. They are looking for advancements in many areas:

- economic security (attacking poverty, unemployment, and inflation);
- physical security (addressing crime and political violence);
- justice and civil rights; and
- rapprochement between the ruling party and the opposition.

Participants are particularly eager for reconciliation talks among the ruling party and its opponents. Most believe these talks are “sine qua non” for any future progress in the country.

## APPENDIX A: VIEWS OF OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES

Party	General	Positive Perceptions	Negative Perceptions
<b>FNL</b>		Cares for the people; fought against injustice; demobilized with discipline	Was in second place and still bowed out of the elections; by leaving Burundi is moving the country in reverse; killers – they’re behind the Rukoko killings; a Hutu divisionist party; vote for them or be killed
<b>FRODEBU</b>		First party to bring democracy to Burundi; associated with good governance; accepted to share power with others for the sake of peace; loved by the population; not associated with any armed forces; was able to reconcile all Burundians and can do it again	Responsible for starting the war in 1993 and the ensuing deaths of many; encouraged ethnic divisions
<b>UPRONA</b>	Seen as the leader of other political parties – the “parent” of the Burundi people	Led Burundi to independence; a party of sages and mature men; puts justice first; governed well when in power; was exclusionary in the past but no longer	Only cares about its own interests; did bad things when in power; persecuted some people; caused ethnic and regional divisions
<b>MSD</b>	Many groups cannot speak knowledgeably about the party; most say the jury is still out since MSD hasn’t yet held power; associated with young people	Has good programs, particularly related to agriculture; has a good ideology; does not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity; has a good vision for the future because it’s a party of youth	Withdrew from the elections; Sinduhije was insulting to other parties during his campaign

Party	General	Positive Perceptions	Negative Perceptions
<b>CNDD</b>	Almost half the groups know little about the party other than the leader is Leonard Nyangoma	Speaks the truth; on the side of the people	Nyangoma is an egotist, killed his compatriots who weren't from Bururi; CNDD discriminates on the basis of region – can only get ahead if you're from Bururi; CNDD sabotages the positive activities of other parties
<b>FRODEBU-Nyakuni</b>	Most of the groups cannot speak knowledgeably about the party or confuse it with FRODEBU		Almost exclusively negative impressions among the few who know it – was traitorous for breaking off from FRODEBU and keeping a similar name; lacks integrity and dignity; the leader sowed hate in Rwanda and divided FRODEBU because of his egotism; preached a message of hate during the campaign
<b>MRC-Rurenzangemero</b>	Most groups cannot speak knowledgeably about the party	Do not keep their word – withdrew from the elections but then accepted some government posts and left the ADC; only serves the province of Mwaro; bribes people with beer to vote for them	Has good projects; built a tea factory in Rusaka
<b>ADR</b>	More than half the groups know little about the party other than the leader is Alice Nzomukunda	Gives women a voice; does not try to intimidate others	
<b>UPD</b>	About half of the groups cannot speak knowledgeably about the party	Has good programs; has the interests of the people at heart; stands for reconciliation and tolerance	Collaborates with Muslim fundamentalists; is divisive; caused fear during the campaign of provoking an insurrection if one did not vote for them; wants to restore the regime of the King

## APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Province	Commune	Gender	Age <sup>20</sup>	Religion	Education	Profession
<b>BUJUMBURA VILLE</b>	<b>KINAMA</b> Marché de Kinama	Women	Middle	Christians and Muslims	Primary, Secondary	Businesswomen
	<b>KAMENGE</b> Centre Jeunes Kamenge	Boys	Younger	Christians and Muslims	Secondary, University	Students
	Quartier Kavumu	Men	Older	Christians	Primary, Secondary, University	Civil servants, Businessmen
	<b>BUYENZI</b> Ruvumera	Women	Younger	Muslims in majority	Primary, Secondary	Businesswomen
	4ème Avenue	Men	Middle	Muslims in majority	Primary, Secondary	Artisans
	<b>NYAKABIGA</b> Nyakabiga	Women	Older	Christians and Muslims	Secondary, University	Businesswomen, Civil servants
	<b>KANYOSHA</b> Quartier Kanyosha	Women	Middle	Christians and Muslims	Primary, Secondary, University	Businesswomen, Civil servants
	Zone Ruziba	Men	Younger	Christians and Muslims	Primary, Secondary	Businessmen, Artisans
<b>BUJUMBURA RURAL</b>	<b>KANYOSHA</b> Ruyaga	Men	Middle	Christians	Primary	Farmers
	<b>NYABIRABA</b> Turangure	Women	Younger	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers
	Matara	Men	Older	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers, Pastoralists
	<b>MUGONGO MANGA</b> Ijenda	Men	Older	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers, Pastoralists
	Rwibaga	Women	Younger	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers, Pastoralists
<b>BUBANZA</b>	<b>GIHANGA</b> Gihanga	Women	Middle	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers, Pastoralists
	<b>MUSIGATI</b>	Men	Younger	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers

<sup>20</sup> Younger refers to participants up to age 25; middle refers to participants ages 26-40; older refers to participants more than 40 years old.

Province	Commune	Gender	Age <sup>20</sup>	Religion	Education	Profession
	Musigati					
	Ntamba	Women	Middle	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers
<b>BURURI</b>	<b>RUMONGE</b> Iteba	Men	Middle	Muslims in majority	Illiterate, Primary	Businessmen, Artisan
	Mutambara	Women	Younger	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Refugee-Returnees, Farmers
	<b>MUGAMBA</b> Tora	Men	Older	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers, Pastoralists
	Tora	Women	Middle	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers, Pastoralists
<b>MWARO</b>	<b>NYABIHANGA</b> Magamba	Men	Younger	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers, Pastoralists
	Kibungere	Women	Middle	Generally without any religion	Illiterate, Primary	Members of the Batwa minority
	<b>RUSAKA</b> Rusaka	Men	Middle	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers, Pastoralists
	Nkundusi	Women	Older	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers, Pastoralists
<b>GITEGA</b>	<b>BUGENDANA</b> Bugendana	Men	Middle	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers, Pastoralists
	Mutoyi	Women	Older	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers, Pastoralists
	<b>RYANSORO</b> Rweza	Men	Middle	Christians	Secondary, University	Civil servants
	Rweza	Women	Younger	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers, Pastoralists
<b>RUYIGI</b>	<b>RUYIGI</b>	Women	Middle	Christians	Primary, Secondary, University	Civil servants, Artisans, Businesswomen
	Rusengo	Men	Younger	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers
	<b>GISURU</b> Gisuru	Women	Older	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers
	Gisuru	Men	Younger	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Refugee-Returnees, Farmers
<b>NGOZI</b>	<b>MWUMBA</b> Buye	Women	Younger	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers
	Vyegwa	Men	Middle	Generally without any religion	Generally Illiterate	Members of the Batwa minority, Potters

Province	Commune	Gender	Age <sup>20</sup>	Religion	Education	Profession
	<b>KIREMBA</b> Gakere	Men	Middle	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers
	Musasa	Women	Middle	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers
<b>KIRUNDO</b>	<b>BUGABIRA</b> Bugabira/Ruhehe	Women	Older	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers
	Bugabira/Ruhehe	Men	Younger	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers
<b>MUYINGA</b>	<b>MUYINGA</b> Quartier Swahili	Men	Middle	Muslims in majority	Primary, Secondary	Businessmen, Artisans
	Rugari	Women	Younger	Christians	Illiterate, Primary	Farmers

## APPENDIX C: METHODOLOGY NOTES

**Focus Group Research:** Focus groups are open-ended group interviews directed by a moderator and following a pre-set guideline. The purpose of focus group research is to understand the attitudes, opinions and experiences of participants who are recruited for the exercise. Focus groups are particularly useful in gaining a deeper appreciation for the motivations, feelings and values behind participants' reactions. In addition, the group format enables respondents to participate in an exchange of ideas – thus revealing a more in-depth understanding of why opinions are held – that may not emerge in individual in-depth interviews or quantitative surveys. Focus group discussions are comprised of a small number of participants, typically 8-12 per group. However, depending on the situation, groups may be slightly smaller or larger than the ideal. For example, a women's group in a more isolated area may benefit from being larger because it is likely that one or more of the participants will refuse to speak at length, even if pressed.

Focus groups are recruited to be homogeneous – so, for example, men's and women's groups are conducted separately – to enhance the comfort level of the participants and to clarify the views of a particular sub-group. The number of groups conducted varies widely based on the goals of the research, but the total number of participants is always relatively small and cannot be considered statistically representative of the larger population. It is important to always be aware that focus groups are a qualitative, and not a quantitative, research tool.

**Group Composition:** The focus groups in this report were stratified by gender, age, lifestyle and education. In addition, two focus groups were also held with the Batwa minority.

**Age:** Based on experience from past research in Africa, the age categories used are broadly defined as “younger,” “middle” or “older.” Younger refers to participants up to age 25, middle refers to participants ages 26-40, and older refers to participants over age 40. Since some people in Burundi do not know their ages, the categories are used as a general guideline rather than as a strictly enforced criterion.

**Education:** Participants sampled in the groups had widely varying degrees of education, ranging from none through university. As much as possible, the groups were stratified by educational background.

**Prevention of Influence of Authorities:** Traditional authorities and government officials are not allowed to sit in on discussions with ordinary citizens, even as observers. On the rare occasion when an area leader demands to be part of a group in which he was not meant to participate, that data is either excluded from the analysis or compared to the data from other groups to see if it is at variance.

**Staffing and Logistics:** All moderators were Burundi citizens – educated professionals –who were trained in moderator techniques by NDI. All groups were conducted in the local language, either Kirundi or Swahili, and transcripts were prepared in the local language as well as French.

**Group Locations:** The 40 focus groups outlined in this report were conducted in 22 locations throughout Burundi. (See the map at the beginning of this report and Appendix A for a list of focus group locations.)

**Facilities:** In more rural areas, there are few structures appropriate for focus group discussions. As a result, groups were sometimes conducted in open-air settings, although this reduces the privacy of the group.

**Outside Influence:** In all cases, local authorities are informed of the research activities before they begin. However, every effort is made to ensure there is no undue influence exerted on the participants in the groups. The focus group guideline is not shared with local authorities prior to the group, except in the rare cases when disclosure is required to proceed with the research. Also, in the majority of instances, the participants are gathered in some random fashion. In this study, there was no case in which the findings from one or more groups differed radically from findings in the groups overall, which suggests that any local influence that may have occurred did not impact the research.

## APPENDIX D: MODERATOR'S GUIDELINE

### I. INTRODUCTION

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I work for the National Democratic Institute, a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Bujumbura that is trying to learn more about what citizens of Burundi think about the important issues in this area. I am neutral and am **NOT** working for the government or any political party. I am the facilitator for today's discussion.

- There are no right or wrong answers.
- Everyone's opinion is equally important. We want everyone to speak.
- If you disagree with someone, that is okay.
- This discussion is only between those of us here.
- I have this recorder to help me when I write the report. Your name will not be used in the report. The report will only say a [woman/man] from [location] said this or that.
- The person here is taking notes to help with the report.
- Please speak loudly so the recorder can pick up your voice.

Any questions?

Thank you. Now let us begin.

### II. GENERAL SITUATION

1. How are things going in Burundi these days? Is Burundi going in the right direction or the wrong direction? **[GO AROUND THE GROUP AND ASK THIS QUESTION OF EVERY PARTICIPANT.] [FOLLOW-UP: Why do you say that?]**
2. What are the two main sources of conflict in the country?
3. Do you expect the situation of the country to be better, worse or about the same five years from now? **[FOLLOW-UP: Why?]**

### III. 2010 ELECTIONS

1. Are voters able to freely pick their candidates in Burundi? **[FOLLOW-UP: Why do you say that?]**
2. Now I'm going to read you a list of 10 registered political parties in Burundi. Please tell me if you have generally positive or generally negative feelings about each (if you have never heard of the party, that's fine, just say so):

**[ASK ABOUT EACH PARTY INDIVIDUALLY, AND FOLLOW UP WITH ‘WHY DO YOU SAY THAT’? MIX UP THE ORDER OF READING OUT THE PARTIES AMONG THE DIFFERENT GROUPS]:**

- FNL
  - CNDD
  - CNDD-FDD
  - FRODEBU
  - FRODEBU-Nyakuri
  - MRC-Rurenzangemero
  - UPRONA
  - MSD
  - UPD
  - ADR
3. As you probably know, elections have been held in Burundi over the past few months. Political parties campaigned.
    - a. What were your thoughts about these campaigns?
    - b. Did the campaigns enable you to know and understand the political parties’ programs?
  4. What positions or offices did people vote for in these elections?
  5. Before the election period began, did you have any concerns or fears about how the process would go? If so, what were they?
    - a. **[IF CONFLICT IS NOT MENTIONED, ASK:]** Were you concerned the elections would cause conflict?
  6. Was there anything that happened in this election that didn’t happen in the 2005 elections?
  7. Did you vote in the communal elections?
    - a. Did you vote in the presidential elections? If not, why?
    - b. Did you vote in the legislative elections? If not, why?
    - c. Did you vote in the collinaire elections? If not, why?
  8. Did you follow the programs on the radio stations? What do you think of the stations’ coverage during the electoral process? **[FOLLOW-UP: Why do you say that?]**
  9. Were you satisfied with the electoral process? **[FOLLOW-UP: Why or Why not?]**
  10. Both CENI (the Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante) and observers claimed that the communal elections were technically correct. What are your thoughts about their findings?

11. Do you know who the candidates for president were? If so, who?
12. As you may know, the main opposition parties boycotted the elections after the communal elections. Do you know why they chose to do that?
13. Did you support their decision? Why or why not?
14. If the main opposition parties had not pulled out of the presidential election, which candidate would you have voted for? **[EACH PERSON SHOULD BE ASKED TO ANSWER AND THE MODERATOR SHOULD COUNT UP THE TOTAL FOR EACH AND SAY IT OUT LOUD SO IT CAN BE RECORDED.]**

**[MIX UP THE ORDER OF READING OUT THE NAMES OF CANDIDATES AMONG THE DIFFERENT GROUPS]**

- Pierre Nkurunziza
- Agathon Rwasa
- Domitien Ndayizeze
- Alexis Sinduhije
- Pascaline Kampayano
- Leonard Nyangoma
- Yves Sahinguvu

#### **IV. GENDER, ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS OF THE VOTE**

Now I'd like to talk about some of your thoughts about political candidates, in general.

1. To what extent does it matter to you if a candidate is a man or woman? **[FOLLOW-UP: Why do you say that?]**
2. As you may know, according to the law, 30% of the seats in communal councils and the Parliament and the Cabinet in Bujumbura must be filled by women. What do you think about this?
3. Right now, 9 (42%) of the 21 Cabinet Secretaries in Bujumbura is composed of women. The Secretaries of Finance, Justice, Commerce, Information and Telecommunications, Health and Agriculture are all women. What do you think about this?
4. To what extent does it matter to you if a candidate is a Hutu, a Tutsi or a Batwa? **[FOLLOW-UP: Why do you say that?]**
5. As you know, there are four main religious communities in Burundi: Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and Animists. To what extent does it matter to you which of these communities a candidate belongs to? **[FOLLOW-UP: Why do you say that?]**

6. Is it important to you that the government reflect the religious diversity of the country?
7. How well do you think the government reflects the religious diversity of the country?
8. **[IF YOU ARE IN A REGION WHERE THERE WERE INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES ASK THE FOLLOWING:]** Can you name any of the independent candidates who ran in the communal and legislative elections? **[WE'RE JUST TRYING TO SEE IF PEOPLE HAVE ANY FAMILIARITY WITH THE INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES RATHER THAN LOOKING FOR THEM TO NAME ALL THE CANDIDATES]**
  - a. **[IF THERE IS ANY FAMILIARITY:]** If you voted in the communal or legislative elections, did you vote for any independent candidates? If so, why? If not, why not?
9. **[IF YOU ARE IN A REGION WHERE THERE WERE NO INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES ASK THE FOLLOWING:]** Had there been any independent candidates in your province or commune, would you have voted for them?

### **V. AFTERMATH OF THE 2010 ELECTIONS**

Now I'd like to talk about the post-election period.

1. Many observers have noticed an increase in unrest in the country before and during the elections. Who do you think is responsible for this increase in unrest?
  - a. **[IF POLITICAL LEADERS/PARTIES NOT MENTIONED, ASK:]** Do you think any particular political leaders or political parties are responsible? If so, who/which?
2. Do you know the CENI's response to the opposition's boycott? If so, what do you think?
3. The media has reported that the government has interrupted meetings of the opposition, closed some of its offices, and arrested some of its members. What do you think about those reports?
  - a. During the election period, three of the opposition leaders left Burundi. Were you aware of this?
  - b. Do you think it was necessary for them to leave? **[FOLLOW-UP: Why or Why not?]**

4. Do you think the CNDD-FDD and the opposition will reconcile within the coming months? **[FOLLOW-UP: Why do you say that?]**
  - a. What would your advice be to facilitate reconciliation?
5. What do you think opposition leaders will do outside of the country?
6. Do you think that elections are a good way for Burundi to choose leaders? **[FOLLOW-UP: Why do you say that?]**
7. Did the opposition boycott have any impact on your feelings about elections or the electoral process? If so, what kind of impact did it have?

## **VI. GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE**

Now I'd like to talk about your thoughts about the government.

1. Please tell me how you would rate the work of the CNDD-FDD government over the past five years in Burundi? – Excellent, Good, Fair or Poor. **[FOLLOW-UP: What is the reason for your answer?]**
2. What has the CNDD-FDD done particularly well? **[GET AT LEAST SIX PARTICIPANTS TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION]**
3. What has the CNDD-FDD done particularly poorly? **[GET AT LEAST SIX PARTICIPANTS TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION]**
4. Since the 2010 elections, the government, National Assembly, Senate and many communal councils are now comprised mainly of CNDD-FDD members. What do you think about this?
5. Tell me how much of a problem corruption in government is in Burundi – Very Much, Somewhat, A Little, or Not At All. **[FOLLOW-UP: What is the reason for your answer?]**
  - a. **[IF VERY MUCH, SOMEWHAT, OR A LITTLE:]** Do you believe the current government will be able to reduce the level of corruption in government? **[FOLLOW-UP: Why do you say that?]**
6. How would you rate the government's record on protecting human rights – Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor. **[FOLLOW-UP: What is the reason for your answer?]**
  - a. **[IF FAIR OR POOR:]** Do you think the CNDD-FDD's record on protecting human rights will improve? **[FOLLOW-UP: Why do you say that?]**
7. Pierre Nkurunziza has been President of Burundi for five years. What do you think about the job he has done as President?

8. During his campaign speech, President Nkurunziza committed himself to improve governance during his second term. If you could talk to him today, what advice would you give him on how to do his job better?

### VII. SECURITY AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

1. How safe do you feel in your community right now? [**PROBE ON ANY REASONS FOR FEELINGS OF INSECURITY.**]
2. Over the past few years, has the level of security in your community gotten better, worse or stayed the same? [**FOLLOW-UP: Why do you say that?**]
3. Over the next year, do you think the level of security in your community will get better, get worse or stay the same? [**FOLLOW-UP: Why or Why not?**]
4. Over the past five years, do you feel that you have more freedom or less freedom in your community? Why?
5. Over the past five years, has it become easier or harder or has there been no change in your ability to...
  - a. Hold community meetings without being fearful or being disrupted
  - b. Speak freely in meetings without fear
  - c. Move around Burundi without restriction or fear
  - d. Voice your concerns to local government leaders
  - e. Own land as an individual
  - f. Any other aspects?
6. Over the next year, do you think it will become easier or harder to hold community meetings without being fearful, speak freely, and move around without restriction? [**FOLLOW-UP: Why or Why not?**]

### VIII. CONCLUSION

1. To finish up ... what do you think Burundi will be like after 2011 (not necessarily what you want Burundi to be like, but what you think Burundi will be like)?

*Thank you for your time!*

## APPENDIX E: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Andrea L. Levy** is an independent consultant to several organizations, including the National Democratic Institute. She has worked in the research field for 19 years. She was formerly the Research Program Manager for NDI in Sudan and has also managed a research study for NDI in Somalia. Her international research experience includes projects implemented for the governments of Poland, Bolivia, Colombia, Wales, Indonesia and the Bahamas. Previous to working with NDI, she was senior vice president and director of research at SS+K in New York, where she managed and conducted opinion research for Fortune 500 companies from a variety of industries. She holds a master's degree in international relations from Georgetown University.



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