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Burundi

Country Reference Framework

(Updated version of February 2026)

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Country reference framework Burundi

Background

In FYP1 the VLIRUOS country strategies presented the strategic niche for future VLIRUOS cooperation in a specific country, leading to strategy-based calls for proposals.

In FYP2, however, we shift towards an approach whereby a country reference framework provides information rather than strategic guidance. The country reference frameworks will be used mainly to support teams of academics when identifying and formulating project proposals, by providing a context analysis focused on Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and the higher education sector in a given country, and by providing an overview of Belgian cooperation actors, their ongoing projects and partners in that country in view of exploration of opportunities for synergy and complementarity.

The country reference frameworks consist of three components:

(i) overview of VLIRUOS projects in the country;
(ii) context analysis focused on the Agenda 2030 framework and the higher education sector;
(iii) overview of Belgian cooperation actors (ANGCs involved in thematic or geographic JSFs & Enabel), their local partners and their regional/thematic focus.

The frameworks have been elaborated based on information available at the time of drafting this actor programme and through consultations with both Flemish and local project promotors, and with geographic JSFs, when applicable, to ensure relevant information for coherent project formulation is included.

Prior to the launch of competitive calls, the ANGCs active in the country/region will be invited to list a number of research themes/questions that can be addressed by HE&SIs in the framework of VLIRUOS funded projects or scholarships. Synergy and complementarity will be integrated as an element in the selection of project proposals, more in particular when discussing the (developmental) relevance and coherence of the proposals and the extent to which the multi-stakeholder partnership principle has been reflected in the project's implementation set-up. By this mode of operation, the thematic JSF on Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development links up with the other geographic JSFs.

Evidently, the frameworks will be updated regularly in consultation with the HEI&SI stakeholders and with the respective geographical JSFs and, where appropriate, also with ARES, and especially prior to the launch of competitive calls by VLIRUOS, to be compatible and responsive to evolving/emerging needs and priorities of academic and international cooperation actors active in the country/region/sector.

1. VLIRUOS in Burundi

1.1. Overview projects & scholarships (2003 – 2025)



Legend

Université du Burundi

Projects 2000-2025				Scholarship Type	Finished	Ongoing
Type	**Budget (€)**	**Number**		**ICP**	19	2
Total	***5.911.300***	***18***		**ICPPHD**	1	
IUC	4.520.000	1		**ITP/KOI**	18	
TEAM	766.923	3		**SRS**	5	
SI	604.439	13		**Total**	43	2
Crossscutting	19.938	1				

The cooperation of Flemish higher education institutions with Burundi goes back a long time and since 2005 many projects were executed, mainly with the University of Burundi. From 2000 to 2024 VLIRUOS spent nearly € 6 millions in Burundi, including an Institutional University Cooperation (IUC) with **the University of Burundi**. This IUC partnership was initiated in 2010 and ended in 2022. The cooperation continues through SI and TEAM-projects. Currently 2 SI projects are ongoing.

More detailed information can be found on the VLIRUOS website vliruostats (statistics).

1.2. Ongoing projects during FYP 2 (2022-...)

List of projects in FYP 2022-2027						
Type	**Runtime**	**Title**	**Flemish promoter**	**Local promoter**	**Local institution**	**Total budget (FYP 2) (€)**
IUC	2021-2022	Institutional University Cooperation programme with the University of Burundi (UB) (phase-out)	Stef Vandeginste (UA)	David Nahimana	Université du Burundi	20.000
SI	2022-2024	Training trainers in drone remote sensing with application to afforestation	Jos Van Orshoven (KUL)	Anicet Sindayihebura	Université du Burundi	69.994,10
SI	2022-2024	Burundi WRAP (Women's Rights Awareness and Protection)	Patricia Popelier (UA)	Pacifique Niyonizigiye	Université du Burundi	69.744,40
SI	2023-2025	TechnoRehabLab[2]: A rehabilitation research centre to improve the management of hip and knee osteoarthritis in a low-income country, a proof of concept in Burundi	Bruno Bonnechere (UH)	Alexis Sinzakaraye	Université du Burundi	69.938,00
SI	2023-2025	Community-based biodiversity conservation in the Rusizi plain, Burundi – RUBICOM	Jonas Schoelynck (UA)	Joel Ndayishimiye	Université du Burundi	69.950,66
SI	2025-2027	Sustainable Management and Conservation of Aquatic Resources in Burundi: Ecological Assessment of Impacts and Land Use Change in Rural Areas	Hugo Gante (KUL)	Gaspard Banyankimbona	Université du Burundi	69.998,50
SI	2025-2027	COMPASS – COnstructing remote sensing and MaPping capacities to Assess geohazards, for a more Sustain-ableSociety	Benoit Smets (VUB)	Seconde Ntiharirizwa	Université du Burundi	69.630

Abbreviations (type): IUC=Institutional University Cooperation; SI=Short Initiatives.

Abbreviations (Flemish institutions): KUL=KU Leuven; UA=University of Antwerp, UH: University of Hasselt.

Competitive calls for new projects will be launched and announced on our website. Nationals of Burundi are eligible[1] to apply for scholarships for the International Master Programmes (ICP).

[1] Admission requirements, application procedures and selection procedures differ across the programmes and host institutions.

2. Burundi and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

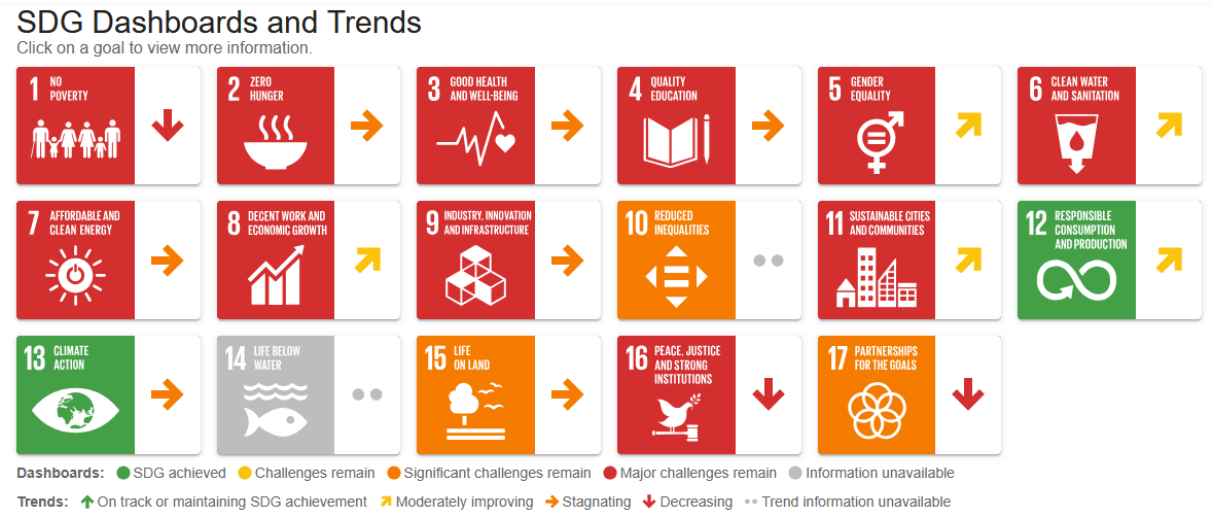
2.1. Burundi and the Sustainable Development Goals

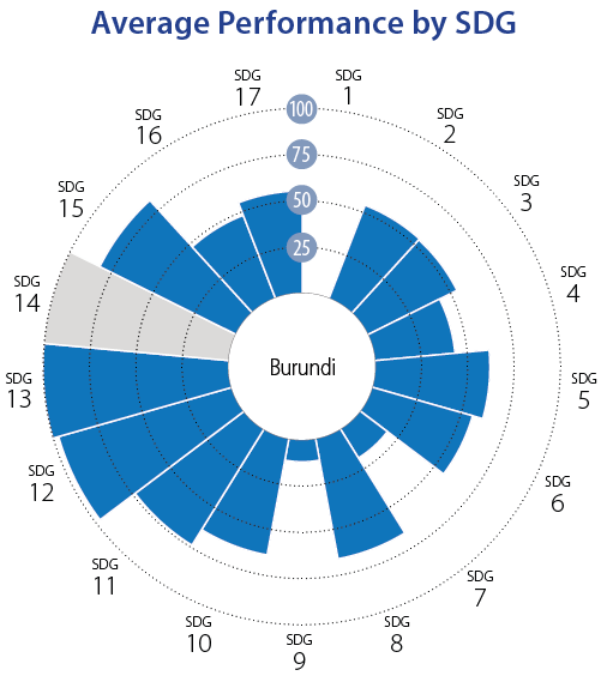
By joining the global dynamic of adoption and ownership of the 2030 agenda, Burundi is committed to integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), outlined in the voluntary national review 2024. These have been integrated into a **National Development Plan for Burundi** (**PND Burundi 2018-2027**) (in French).

Progress in SDG implementation has faced several challenges, including the adverse effects of climate change, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, institutional constraints, and limited financial resources to support national development priorities. Since August 2023, Burundi has a Vision "Burundi, an Emerging country by 2040 and a Developed country by 2060". In order to align with this Vision, the National Development Plan, PND - Burundi 2018-2027, has been revised through an Action Plan 2023-2027. Thus, Burundi has a new framework for its development action until 2027.

This plan includes three challenges and five pillars with strategic orientations, axes and objectives. The overall objective is to “Structurally transform the Burundian economy for strong, sustainable, resilient, and inclusive growth, creating decent jobs for all and leading to the improvement of social well-being”. The strategic objectives are translated into the following components: 1. Transform growth-driving sectors for a sustained economy and job creation; 2. Improve basic social services; 3. Protect ecology and heritage; 4. Governance, peace, and reconciliation; 5. Develop international cooperation for efficient resource mobilization.

Taking into account the global aspect of the SDGs, the sustainable development report assesses where each country stands regarding achieving the SDGs. Burundi ranks 144th out of 167 countries included in the report. The Burundi country profile shows that the majority of goals is facing significant challenges.





As an umbrella organization that works with calls for proposals, VLIRUOS supports interventions for and through higher education institutes, supporting them in the areas of education, research and uptake and thereby strengthening them in their role as development actor. Doing so, the impact of the interventions supported by VLIRUOS can be found in a large variety of sectors. In line with its major intervention area, VLIRUOS positions itself within the education sector, especially focused on higher education, research and innovation (SDG 4 and 9). However, through its interventions, VLIRUOS intervenes in different sectors as well. VLIRUOS recognises that given the complexity, scale and interconnectedness of current societal challenges, meaningful social, economic and ecological transformations can only be realised by starting from a holistic and integrated approach to the SDGs. When translated into SDGs, the projects that were financed by VLIRUOS in Burundi covered mainly, apart from SDG 4 and 9, SDGs 2, 3 and 16. Top sectors for VLIRUOS in this country for the past decade are health, sustainable agriculture and food security, education and technology transfer.

More background information and context analysis on Burundi can be found in the **geographic Joint Strategic Framework** for Burundi, which will be shared with (potential) project promotors when new calls are launched.

Additional sources on progress related to higher education & science (SDG 4)

- UNESCO-UIS: overview data resources indicators related to SDG4
- Our World in data:
  - Indicators related to educational mobility and inequality
  - Indicators related to tertiary education
  - Indicators related to projections of future education (demand)
  - Indicators related to science and research

2.2. Higher education landscape in Burundi

There is an education development policy (2022-2030; French), containing a 'higher education' part. The strategy shows the strengths as well as the challenges to be taken up by the Burundian system of higher education and scientific research. The guidelines in here are: Diversification of technological sectors and adaptation of training offers; Guidance of students in technical and scientific sectors; Improvement of quality; Scientific research and incubation of results; Governance of higher education institutions (autonomy, development of partnerships, etc.).

More specifically, the expansion and modernization of Higher Education and Scientific Research is translated as follows:

(1) Develop new engineering science training programs to meet the needs of the job market and ensure strong regional integration, and modernize existing training programs to better align education with employment;

(2) Allocate students rationally among technical and scientific fields of study;

(3) Develop quality assurance in higher education and scientific research;

(4) Foster the emergence and implementation of innovative business creation projects that leverage the skills and results of laboratories within public research and higher education institutions;

(5) Make statistical data available and strengthen the financial autonomy of institutions.

According to the innovation index , research and development are still weak in Burundi. Despite the many challenges facing Burundi, including the lack of funds allocated to research and development, opportunities can be observed in particular the existence of local expertise in virtually all priority areas of national life that can contribute to the development of the country. In any case, efforts are still necessary to make this research sector livelier and more attractive which is of capital importance in the development of any country.

Burundi takes part in the Interuniversity Council for East-Africa that envisions to become the leading EAC Institution for an exemplary Common Higher Education Area for a prosperous and sustainable East African Community. It encourages and develops mutually beneficial collaboration between Member Universities and between them and Governments and other organisations, both public and private.

Burundi also takes part in the East African Science and Technology Commission to promote and coordinate the development, management and application of science, technology and innovation activities in the region.

According to the Webometrics Ranking, no Burundian University falls within the 2000 ranking worldwide. Within this same ranking, the University of Burundi takes the 8160th place.

2.3. Leaving no one behind

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community pledged to leave no one behind and to endeavor to reach the furthest behind first. The principle of leaving no one behind can be defined as a three-part imperative: to end absolute poverty in all its forms, to stop group-based discrimination that results in unequal outcomes for disadvantaged populations, and to take action to help the furthest behind.

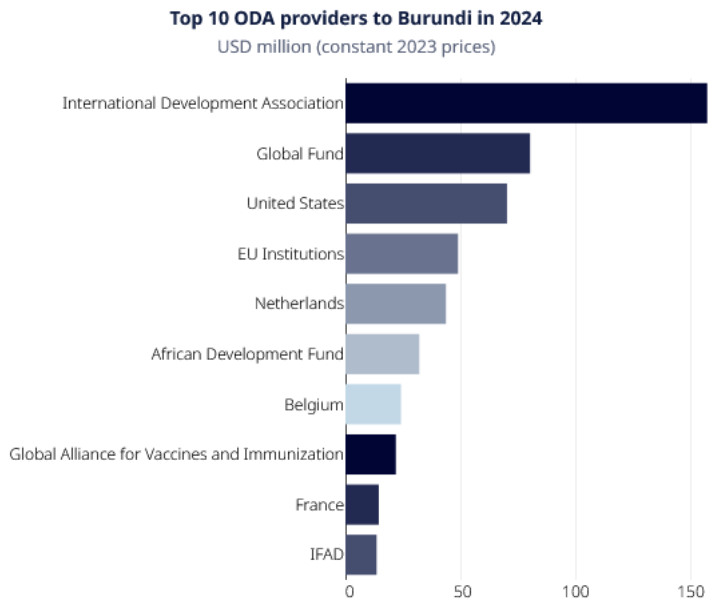
According to the Integrated SDG Insights, Burundi's pace of economic growth during the cycle 2023-2025 is in acceleration. Accordingly, Burundi's commitments to achieving the SDGs are focused on promoting the development of rural communities and the structural transformation of its economy. Despite the generally positive impact of this pace of growth on extreme poverty reduction (at $2.15 a day), there are still significant challenges to accelerate the pace of progress from the high prevailing levels. Burundi's ambition to have "every adult with access to a decent job", by 2040, is constrained by the current decline in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per person employed – and challenges pathways to create growth in decent jobs. In addition, the proportion of people living below 50 percent of median income has risen, reflecting an increase in income inequality. However, there are increasingly jobs in expansion of renewable energy consumption towards a green transition, in combination with technology access and skills transfer, this should create opportunities.

According to the National Development Plan **PND Burundi 2018-2027**, the dynamics of economic growth include other pillars of development, including social security through the strengthening of existing social protection structures and the promotion of financing mechanisms, notably the development of solidarity-based insurance focused on protecting vulnerable populations, especially the elderly, providing support for the unemployed and people living with disabilities, as well as creating a youth employment fund and revitalizing the fund to support private investment.

2.4. Multistakeholderpartnership - Stakeholder analysis

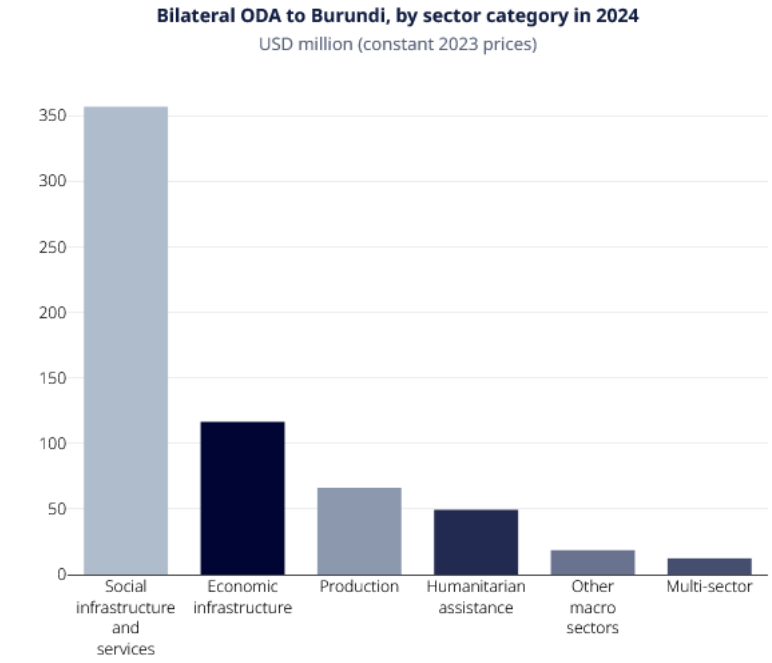
The complexity, scale, and interconnectedness of the current societal challenges that the SDG framework is seeking to address, requires a concerted effort of a wide variety of different stakeholders. As such, the principle of multistakeholder partnership – which promotes cooperation and partnerships at different stages and spanning the boundaries of civil society, private sector, government, and academia – is ubiquitous across the 2030 Agenda. An analysis of these stakeholders is essential for each partnership.

Looking at the international partners of Burundi , the International Development Association represents the main donor of gross official development aid (ODA) in Burundi, followed by the Global Fund. With the withdrawal of USAID funds since the Trump administration took over in 2025, this situation is expected to change in the following years.



ɹurces: OECD (2025) , Aid (ODA) disbursements to countries and regions [DAC2a]

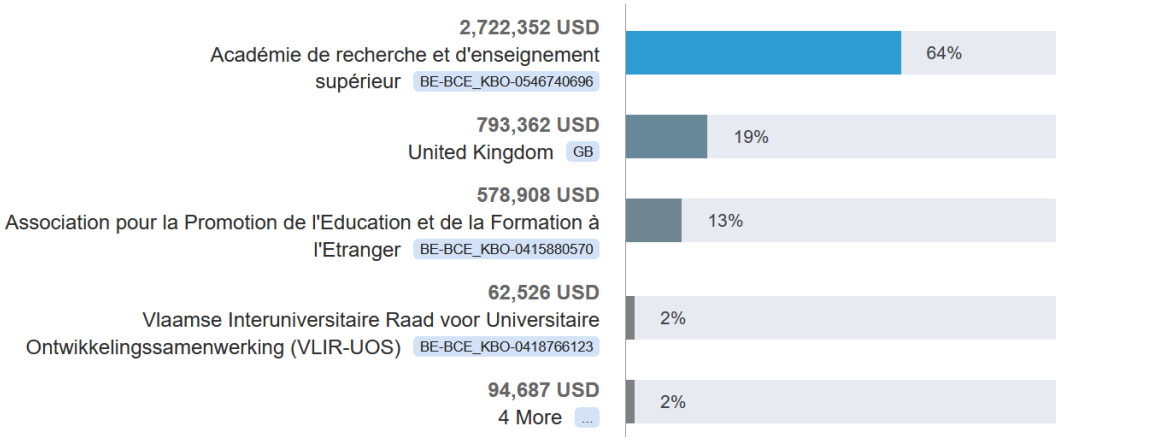
The sector receiving the biggest funding is Social infrastructure and services.



Sources: OECD (2025) , CRS: Creditor Reporting System (flows)

Based on data from the International Aid Transparency Initiative IATI D-Portal, ARES is the main donor in the higher education sector.

Where does the money come from? (IATI all years)



*All years in total, top 5.

VLIRUOS contributes to the 2030 agenda by realizing a societal impact, implying an impact on local communities, civil society, governments, private sector or other higher education institutions. In what follows we list the role and the desired change among the main actors involved in the change process that VLIRUOS envisages to support through *its interventions*.

Actor	Role and interest/influence
Higher Education Institutions	HEIs in Burundi are important boundary partners in the realization of VLIRUOS outcomes in terms of its contribution to Agenda 2030, and the potential contribution to local sustainable development. As project owners they are expected to contribute to HEIs' enhanced institutional performance in the core tasks relating to education, research and societal service delivery strengthening the HEI's visibility and recognition as a centre of excellence. In the long-term, partner HEIs are also expected to have a multiplier effect on the higher education system and development sector in the country or region through their engagement in (global) knowledge-driven partnerships with academic and non-academic stakeholders.
DGD (incl. Belgian embassies in partner countries)	DGD has an advisory role in the VLIRUOS selection commissions and follows-up on the VLIRUOS portfolio and the thematic JSF on Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development. The Belgian Embassies can play a role in facilitating the uptake of knowledge, the identification, mobilisation and relation building with other stakeholders (e.g. links with European Union, national government, other donors), the contextual updates etc.
Students, professionals, and alumni	**Students** can be direct (e.g. as a recipient of a PhD scholarship within a project) or indirect beneficiaries (e.g. enjoying improved/innovative didactical approaches) of the projects. As direct beneficiary, their changed role will be about the generation and use of newly acquired knowledge, competences (e.g. global citizenship) and networks in view of sustainable development. Alumni from VLIRUOS-projects will be important stakeholders in connecting VLIRUOS projects with each other, with other actors, etc.
Academics/researchers	As direct beneficiaries of the projects, academics and researchers affiliated within Flemish and partner HE&SIs play an important role in co-creating, disseminating and creating conditions for uptake of knowledge relevant to the achievement of the SDGs in line with the needs, policies and priorities of the partner HE&SIs, local/national or regional stakeholders.
Members of the thematic JSF on Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development	VLIRUOS, ITM and ARES have initiated the JSF on HESD4SD to further unlock the developmental potential of higher education and science cooperation for sustainable development and make it accessible to other local, Belgian and international partners as scientific advisor to other partners' projects, partners or policy bodies, as a platform for sharing state of the art scientific results, information, expertise and experience and for exploration of possibilities for synergy and complementarity. In Burundi, both ARES and VLIRUOS are present.

Belgian Actors of the Non-governmental Cooperation	VLIRUOS continuously tries to identify and encourage synergy and complementarity between Belgian ANGCs and academic stakeholders. Through the uptake of research results, mobilisation of local stakeholders, participation in trainings or courses, identification and communication of relevant research questions/opportunities, hosting of international internships, facilitating student mobility… these actors play a critical role.
International organizations and other donors (e.g. WHO, UNESCO, World Bank, European Commission…)	Interventions undertaken by international organisations like UN agencies such as FAO or international donors active in higher education cooperation can be complementary in the achievement of the objectives of projects. They can, for instance, play a role in the use and upscaling of new knowledge or practices or serve as seed money for bigger interventions financed by these international organisations.
Academic/science (inter)national and regional networks	Regional or (inter)national academic/science networks (e.g. CAMES, IUCEA) are among the potential indirect beneficiary as targeted HE&SIs strengthened in their research/educational capacities can improve the functioning of the networks they are part of through the co-creation, exchange and uptake of knowledge among academic stakeholders. Similar effects can be realized in the case of alumni and scholarship networks/associations when former scholarship students act as agents of change within these networks.
Public sector: Local or central government and political community	Engage in evidence-based governance that puts knowledge to the test by being a stakeholder in the co-creation of inclusive (innovative) solutions and effective user of research results to foster good governance for sustainable and coherent policies.
State owned/Private sector	Individuals and companies who operate for profit within the boundaries of the specific country situation and emerging private sector development can play a role within projects as users of the knowledge, applications and services (co-)created as result of the project and therefore contribute in particular but not only to SDG 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure.
Civil society, social movements and local communities	Civil society actors, social movements and local communities are expected to co-create, access and use the knowledge and research products generated within the framework of *projects* thereby making a potential contribution to the entire range of SDGs. However, significant challenges in democracy, human rights and governance remain. According to Amnesty International the government continued to interfere in the internal affairs of the political opposition. Arrests and enforced disappearances of opposition members continued. Discrimination against LGBTI people and unmarried women continued. There were more than 86,000 internally displaced people due to climate-related extreme weather, and more than 289,500 Burundians remained as refugees in neighbouring countries. Moreover, Human Rights Watch states that the ruling National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces has maintained its monopoly on power after the elections.

3. Synergy and Complementarity with other (Belgian) cooperation actors in Burundi

3.1. VLIRUOS approaches to synergy and complementarity

Drawing upon their longstanding common history, VLIRUOS, ARES and the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) jointly developed the thematic Joint Strategic Framework on Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development (JSF HES4SD). Through cooperation with civil society, private and public sector, the JSF initiators[2] aim to further unlock the huge developmental potential of higher education and science cooperation for sustainable development and make it accessible to other Belgian, local and international partners, in different ways: as partner in a multi-actor partnership, as scientific advisor to other partners' projects, partners or policy bodies, as a knowledge broker for sharing state of the art scientific results, information, expertise and experience and for exploration of possibilities for synergy and complementarity. This reference framework for Burundi will feed into the **platform** that the initiators of the JSF HES4SD plan to create to proactively communicate opportunities and facilitate such cooperation. More precisely, the platform can be used to:

(i) communicate about the launch and results of competitive calls for projects;
(ii) communicate other opportunities for projects or scholarships;
(iii) gather/exchange on collaboration opportunities (e.g. requests for scientific advice);
(iv) share information about ongoing projects, events and seminars in the country/region.

3.2. Bilateral cooperation (Enabel) in Burundi

Belgium ranks 7th on the ODA overview for Burundi, meaning that Burundi is a very important partner of the Belgian Development Cooperation. For more than 50 years, Belgium and Burundi have worked together on activities benefiting the population and civil society.

This cooperation continues through Enabel and the main sectors of intervention are agriculture, health and education. The agricultural sector employs 90% of the active population and covers 95% of the country's food needs. The interventions focus on hydro-agricultural works, support to water users, protection of watersheds, coaching of farmers' organizations and seed producers, processing and added-value creation of production through support to micro enterprises and agricultural research. In the provinces of Kirundo and Muramvya, the health system's decentralization process, the development of adequate health staff, a quality healthcare package and community empowerment are supported. Furthermore, Enabel is supporting the creation of a high-performance health information system to ensure the monitoring of public health. The education programme is concentrated on basic and vocational training. Several interventions focus on transformation of the programmes, teachers training and the provision of teaching and learning materials.

[2] The three JSF initiators represent 60 Belgian higher education institutions (HEIs), being 11 universities, 32 university colleges, 16 school of arts, and ITM.

3.3. Belgian actors of the non-governmental cooperation in Burundi

3.3.1. Thematic Joint Strategic Framework on Higher Education and Science

Together with ARES and ITM, VLIRUOS forms a thematic joint strategic framework on higher education and science for sustainable development (JSF HES4SD): hes4sd.be

However, ITM has no projects in Burundi. More info specifically about ARES in Burundi can be found on Moove ARES

Collaboration with the geographic JSF of Burundi will be facilitated by systematically sharing information on projects and grants, by allowing Belgian ANGC to submit their needs in applied research or training, and by encouraging multi-stakeholder partnerships through competitive calls for proposals (VLIRUOS/ARES).

3.3.2. Burundi Joint Strategic Framework

	Description of the strategic goal	ANGCs (active members)
SG1	Gouvernance et participation citoyenne inclusive	11., Search for Common Ground, RCN Justice&Democratie, SOS Villages d'Enfants, Africalia
SG2	Santé et Nutrition	MEMISA, APEFE, MSV, MdM, LC, AD, CDEB, CRB, RKV, JFW, VSV-Belgique, LFTW
SG3	Sécurité alimentaire et nutritionnel durable et résilience socio-écologique	All

3.3.3 Other Thematic Joint Strategic Frameworks

Besides collaboration with the thematic JSF on Higher Education and Science, there will also be collaboration with the thematic JSF of Decent Work through ANGCs in Burundi that work on 'Decent work' related topics.

The Decent Work JSF (DW JSF) contributes to the four strategic targets, which correspond to the four pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. It is important to emphasize that these four pillars are inseparable, interdependent, and mutually reinforcing. In a complementary and synergistic manner, the DW JSF's ANGCs will contribute to all the targets, which in turn contribute to social and climate justice and the UN's 2030 Agenda. The four strategic targets are 1/creation of decent jobs, 2/guarantee rights at work, 3/extend social protection, 4/strengthen social dialogue and other forms of institutionalized dialogue for all.