

**REPORT ON THE WORKSHOP FOR PROMOTING DIALOGUE BETWEEN  
RETURNEES AND RESIDENTS IN THE INTEGRATED RURAL VILLAGE OF  
NYABIGINA, IN THE KABONGA ZONE OF NYANZA-LAC**

(Makamba, April 24 – 26, 2012)

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**0. Introduction**

In close collaboration with the Administrators of the Nyanza-Lac Commune, the Rema Ministries NGO:

- in reference to the keynote of His Excellency the President of the Republic, regularly presented to the nation and in which he asks all citizens to do their utmost to reconcile the sons and daughters of the land;
- bearing in mind that the Burundian government seeks to showcase the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina as a model for the entire Burundian population and for the International Community in terms of social integration and economic development, both for its residents and returnees;
- having taken the time needed to establish an overview of the village's many problems that may potentially hinder the peaceful cohabitation sought by all;
- having secured financial backing from the Danish Refugees Council (DRC) with a view to implementing this programme for dialogue between returnees and residents, from the planning stage through to its completion;

sent out an invitation to a number of officials working in different fields of activity in Burundi to participate in a workshop for promoting dialogue between residents and returnees in the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina.

Among them were:

- Administrative Managers at the local level in the Nyanza-Lac Commune;
- the President and Vice President of the Nyanza-Lac Communal Council;
- Administrators from Rema Ministries' seven partner "communes" (Rumonge, Nyanza-Lac, Mabanda, Kibago, Kayogoro, Bukemba and Giharo);
- the Senior Advisor to the Governor of the Makamba Province;
- the Director of repatriation and land use planning, the Director of the CNTB<sup>1</sup> and the Director of the PARESI<sup>2</sup> ;
- international organization representatives (UNDP, UNHCR, IRC);

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<sup>1</sup> CNTB : Commission Nationale des Terres et autres Biens (national commission for land and other properties).

<sup>2</sup> PARESI : Programme de Réinsertion des Sinistrés (project for the repatriation and reinsertion of conflict victims).

- representatives of national NPOs or NGOs (Iteka League, Maison de Dialogue, Association Dushirehamwe, Turikurutonde, Iriakanabu, etc.);
- journalists hired to make a documentary of this undertaking;
- Rema Ministries supervisors and administrators.

## **2. Participation and work schedule**

### **2.1. Number of participants**

47 participants convened from the various ministries, communes, the bureau of the Governor of Makamba, international organizations, local NGOs and MENYA Media Studio.

The list of participants is appended to this report.

### **2.2. Time allocated to the workshop**

Given concerns resulting from ongoing tension between returnees and residents within the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina, three full days of discussion were held in a secluded location to review this conflict situation, and to decide on the means and avenues for resolving clearly identified problems.

The workshop was held at the Hotel Muyogo, on the road towards Rutana, on the outskirts of the town of Makamba.

### **2.3. Activity timetables**

The first two days (May 24-25, 2012) and the afternoon of the third day (May 26) were dedicated to discussions via plenary meetings to exchange ideas on the prevailing situation in the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina, and to highlight the key problems faced by the village's returnees and residents alike.

Discussions were held from 8 am to 12 pm, and then from 2 pm to 4:30 pm.

The afternoon of the third day was spent working in groups, followed by a plenary meeting in which conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

Upon completion of the workshop, the participants were invited to a cocktail reception where they were acknowledged for the decisive results of their work.

## **3. Purpose of the workshop**

This workshop was organized to give detailed consideration to the many problems faced by returnees and residents of the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina with the purpose of finding means and avenues for restoring harmony and peaceful cohabitation between these two opposed groups.

#### **4. Programme goals**

The goals of the programme targeted by the Administrators of the Nyanza-Lac Commune and the Rema Ministries NGO are as follows:

1. Breaking the silence and tackling the ignorance of residents and returnees living in the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina;
2. Providing the right information and promoting dialogue on questions at the origin of misunderstandings;
3. Initiating the exchange of ideas and taking the necessary measures to counter the increasing level of animosity between residents and returnees in the village;
4. Initiating processes to restore trust between the various groups and the administrative authorities on different levels;
5. Instigating the decision-making process on how returnees are to receive food and other forms of assistance, and especially on the possibility of cultivating allocated land;
6. Putting an end to returnees' untimely visits to the Ombudsman's office and other offices, in particular the Ministry of Solidarity or the UNHCR, and jointly seeking an alternative solution;
7. Establishing a unique message for the population of Nyabigina;
8. Organizing joint visits on the ground to Nyabigina to approach the population with a message of peace, and to propose solutions that contrast with the promises made to the various groups;
9. Documenting this process so that it may serve as a model for future mediation efforts.

#### **5. Expected results**

1. An improvement in relations of mutual understanding and peaceful cohabitation between the residents and returnees in the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina.
2. Restored trust between all levels of administration on the one side, and residents and returnees on the other.
3. The supply of balanced information to the entire population of Nyabigina.
4. Improved support in terms of food and other forms of assistance to returnees and residents, and better understanding of how returnees can gain access to cultivable land allocated to them.
5. A written report of this mediation process to act as a reference for similar situations that may arise in the future.

## 6. List of issues discussed in the plenary meetings

- Issue 1: Residents who accepted to hand over plots of land for construction were promised that they would be given other equal-sized plots in the area reserved for cultivating crops. Unfortunately, this issue has yet to be resolved.
- Issue 2: Some residents have still not been given homes because their names were not originally listed by the authorities at the local level or by the PARESI Focal Point when the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina was built.
- Issue 3: It is reported that some residents may have given up land both for construction and for crops. Unfortunately, this issue has yet to be resolved.
- Issue 4: It is reported that a promise was made whereby residents who gave up plots of land for construction would receive houses built by PARESI in return, however the assembly has been unable to ascertain whether there is any truth in this information.
- Issue 5: It is reported that Government or NGO agents fail to contact either the communal administrative authority or the authority locally when conducting visits on the ground, even though they are often unfamiliar with certain realities there. This creates difficulties for the local authorities who must step in resolve problems for which they is not necessarily responsible.
- Issue 6: There has been an "error of procedure" in the distribution of food and other support in Nyabigina, where such assistance was granted only to returnees living in the Integrated Rural Village. As a result, residents have withdrawn from their initial agreement, promptly taking back the cultivable land they had given up to returnees living in the village.
- Issue 7: The list of people who surrendered a part of their cultivable land has not been properly established, and requires certain revisions.
- Issue 8: Villagers fail to understand the procedure for designating those who are to be hired for work on UNHCR projects initiated in the village. In fact, most of the residents and returnees living in the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina are unaware of the hiring procedure for these projects financed by UNHCR.
- Issue 9: It is said that some land ownerships have not been split up, for unconfessed reasons.
- Issue 10: It is also said that certain people who gave up land holdings to returnees no longer have sufficient cultivable land of their own. Unfortunately, this issue has yet to be resolved.

- Issue 11: It is reported that certain returnees have received plots for building houses and land for cultivating crops, whereas they already have their own addresses which, incidentally, were known to everyone. It seems that those concerned were mostly part of a group of women living in the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina.
- Issue 12: The issue concerning the exploitation of palm oil trees situated in the plots and fields allocated to returnees has not yet been resolved.
- Issue 13: Titles of ownership for cultivable land were promised to returnees living in the Integrated Rural of Nyabigina and to the residents who gave up these plots. However, to date, this promise has not been followed up.
- Issue 14: Border police officers (*Police de l'Air, des Frontières et des Etrangers - PAFE*) would need to be posted to guide non-Burundians married to Burundians (men or women) and to help them obtain the necessary documents to reside in Burundi.
- Issue 15: Returnees living in the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina are unaware of the registration procedures at the Vital Statistics and Immigration Offices, and of the legal proceedings.
- Issue 16: The CNTB is taking too long to settle disputes concerning land and other assets belonging to returnees residing in the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina. This is slowing down development projects, since officials don't know whether or not the returnees are going to stay in the village where they can reacquire their land holdings.
- Issue 17: A lack of collaboration has been observed between returnees living in the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina and the administrative authority at the local level. It seems not all the returnees are being properly informed of Burundi's administrative organization.
- Issue 18: Apparently, some returnees living in the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina have received cultivable land, but are being blocked by residents who, for their part, believe they have suffered an injustice at the hands of the government.
- Issue 19: The Burundian government has been unable to fulfill all the promises it made to returnees before their repatriation.
- Issue 20: There is a misunderstanding within the population as to whether the land holdings in the village of Nyabigina are part of the State-owned "paysannats", or whether they represent cultivable land belonging to the population.

- Issue 21: Returnees in the village of Nyabigina are under the impression that they have yet to fully enjoy their citizens' rights, especially those from the Congo who continue to be called "Babembe", "Congolese", "Congo Refugees" and other harmful names.
- Issue 22: Returnees frequently ignore the administration's officials, appealing instead to their leaders in the village in the hope that they alone will be able to resolve their problems.
- Issue 23: Returnees complain that they are not represented within the local authority. This would explain why they believe that their problems will never be fully resolved.

### **7. List of issues dealt with in groups**

- Issue 1: What measures could be envisaged to allow returnees to gain access to the cultivable land that has been allocated to them?
- Issue 2: What measures could be envisaged to keep the promises made to returnees prior to their repatriation by the Burundian government?
- Issue 3: What measures could be envisaged to quickly settle the land conflicts opposing returnees to Nyabigina with the CNTB so that these returnees may know their fate once and for all?
- Issue 4: What measures could be envisaged to enable returnees to access the fields located in their allocated land holdings, but whose access is blocked by discontented residents?
- Issue 5: What answer can be given to the question as to who should oversee the palm oil trees situated in the plots and fields allocated to returnees living in the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina?

### **8. Recommendations made for each of the issues raised:**

- 1. For the issue concerning residents who accepted to hand over plots of land for construction and who were promised that they would be given other equal-sized plots in the area reserved for crops**, after listening to the explanations provided by the Senior Advisor to the Governor, it emerged that this land cannot be made available because the returnees have not all been allocated plots for construction or cultivable land.

For residents who gave up five, six or more plots of land for the construction of homes, but who have not themselves received a home simply because their names do not figure on the list of beneficiaries, a technical team will be created, overseen by the senior advisor to the Governor of Makamba, to conduct investigations and meet this claim.

The PARESI Focal Point has ensured that if any such cases exist, it will be able to provide for them as for the first beneficiaries. Consequently, the list of residents who surrendered part of their cultivable land or who gave up plots of land for construction will be revised by the technical team, and confirmed by all the village's stakeholders.

2. **Residents who surrendered cultivable land to returnees** will obtain ownership titles in line with their remaining land holding share once these titles have also been delivered to returnees allocated cultivable land. A technical team will be tasked with identifying all potential beneficiaries to prepare these documents and have them signed.
3. **Concerning the Government or NGO agents who fail to contact the communal administrative authority when conducting visits on the ground**, the workshop's participants recommend a complete change of practice; from now on, provincial authorities, communal authorities and those stationed at the base will work together to plan, implement and evaluate activities in the corresponding "commune".
4. **Concerning the "error of procedure" observed in the distribution of food and other supplies in Nyabigina**, the Director responsible for repatriations has affirmed that this error can no longer occur, and has promised that his agents will cater to returnees and residents in the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina. This reassuring response has appeased the atmosphere considerably.
5. **Concerning those who complain about a lack of transparency in the process for hiring villagers to work on projects financed by UNHCR**, the UNHCR Manager for the Southern Zone has emphasized that the sole deciding factor is the vulnerability of the families. Only poverty-stricken persons are to be hired for UNHCR projects and programmes. He also pointed out that the local administrative authorities are responsible for ensuring complete transparency of the hiring process, in particular through meetings in which those concerned can conclusively validate or invalidate the names of persons presented.
6. **Concerning those who complain that some land holdings have not been split up for unconfessed reasons**, the technical team led by the Senior Advisor to the Governor of Makamba has been tasked with conducting investigations to meet this claim. The decision whereby any person residing on a farmer's land must surrender a part of this land to returnees is final.
7. The technical team assigned will also examine the cases of residents who transferred land holdings to returnees, but who no longer have sufficient cultivable land of their own.

8. **Concerning returnees (women) who are said to illegally occupy plots of cultivable land**, the technical team assigned will examine certain cases and propose the appropriate measures.
9. **Concerning the exploitation of palm oil trees situated in plots and fields allocated to returnees**, a proposal has been made to provide the same amount of new palm tree plants as those counted in the returnees' plots and fields, even if it means planting them both for returnees and residents. The resident owner of the existing palm trees may continue to exploit them for a three-year period, whereafter they must be surrendered to the returnee, as the newly planted trees will have started to yield.
10. **Concerning the need expressed by couples with non-Burundian spouses for advice and guidance on how to obtain a residence permit in due form**, a recommendation has been made to the Administrator of the Nyanza-Lac Commune that would involve organizing regular visits to Nyabigina to inform and instruct returnees on various aspects of Burundian life. If necessary, the Administrator would be assisted by qualified agents. This would be an excellent opportunity to discuss matters concerning immigration and settlement in Burundi for foreigners, as well as the organization of the Vital Statistics Office, courts and tribunals, etc.
11. **In connection with disputes concerning land and other assets placed in the hands of the CNTB, and which are slowing down returnee initiatives**, the CNTB has been asked to handle the files of returnees to the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina more quickly so that they may decide whether or not they wish to stay there.
12. **Concerning the lack of collaboration between returnees living in the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina and the administrative authority stationed at the base**, it has been strongly recommended that returnees should recognize officials at the base and observe their directives. In parallel, the communal authority has been invited to include returnees in the various decision-making bodies so that they may feel that they are being represented.
13. **Concerning returnees' difficult access** to their allocated cultivable land due to resident blockades, returnees must be allowed to proceed with the final harvesting of their fields on 31 June 2012 to prepare the land for the next crop season in September 2012.
14. Concerning promises made by the government to returnees prior to their repatriation, the government has been urged – along with leading partners such as UNDP and PARESI – to continue funding social and economic development activities so that the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina may serve as a model for the entire country. However, any cases deemed unworkable must be clearly explained by the government to the population.

15. **Concerning returnees from the Congo subject to insults from all sides**, the Communal Administrator of Nyanza-Lac has promised to hold a series of awareness-raising meetings to promote harmony and peaceful cohabitation between the various groups living in the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina. In the event of any further offensive behaviour, punishment will be dealt out to those found to be guilty of aggressiveness and contempt.
16. **Returnees who fail to observe the administrative hierarchy when making claims to the authority** have been asked to methodically refer to the communal authority in the event of any problems, since it alone may evaluate cases brought forward and, if necessary, escalate them either to the provincial level or to the responsible ministry.
17. **Concerning returnees who complain that they are not sufficiently represented within the local authority**, the Communal Administrator of Nyanza-Lac has been asked to include them in the administrative structure, notably by electing the chiefs of 10 households, units or hills to resolve their concerns in terms of being denied the ability to express their views, or suffering injustice at the hands of residents.

## CONCLUSION

Upon completion of the workshop on the evening of May 26, 2012, the participants were invited to a cocktail reception.

Theodore Mbazumutima took this opportunity to remind those present of the challenges faced by the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina, as well as the main conclusions and recommendations formulated by the workshop, and the activities scheduled as part of the program for "promoting dialogue between returnees and residents in the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina in the Kabonga zone of Nyanza-Lac"

He congratulated the technical team and its President for the trust that had been placed in them, and for the considerable responsibility that lay on their shoulders.

Mr Mbazumutima also reminded that participants that they were all invited to visit Nyabigina on 15 May 2012 to share the workshop's conclusions and recommendations with the population, and to present the technical team responsible for the programme's implementation. This visit will be a chance to offer renewed hope to the villagers, as well as to restore trust between residents and returnees on the one hand, and in the communal authority and the authority stationed at the base on the other hand.

The participants arranged to meet at the Communal Bureau of Nyanza-Lac on the morning of May 15, 2012 before setting off on their visit Nyabigina to meet the population.

Mr Mbazumutima asked the Communal Administrator of Nyanza-Lac to inform the villagers in advance of this visit, and to invite them to attend.

He also asked participants from the ministries, international organizations and local NGOs to bring their action plans with them with a view to implementing the recommendations made during the course of this workshop.

As Project Coordinator, Mr Mbazumutima officially closed the event, thanking all those who had responded to the joint invitation by Rema Ministries and the Administrator of the Nyanza-Lac Commune. He wished the participants a safe return and called on them to defend the interests of the returnees and residents living in the Integrated Rural Village of Nyabigina.

**Written in Makamba, 26/04/2012**

**RAPPORTEUR:**

**Simeon Sabuzi**

**PROJECT COORDINATOR:**

**Theodore Mbazumutima**

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Last name</b>	<b>First name</b>	<b>Position</b>
1	<b>Bangirinama</b>	<b>Andre</b>	Head of the Kabonga zone
2	<b>Bazeyi</b>	<b>Jean</b>	Returnee from Rumonge, Karagara
3	<b>Bizimana</b>	<b>Renovat</b>	<b>MIPAREC</b>
4	<b>Bizimana</b>	<b>Dismas</b>	President of the Nyanza-Lac Municipal Council
5	<b>Bukuru</b>	<b>Charlotte</b>	Nyabigina resident
6	<b>Butoyi</b>	<b>Bernard</b>	Communal Administrator of Mabanda
7	<b>Habonayo</b>	<b>John</b>	
8	<b>Hakizimana</b>	<b>Esperance</b>	Nyabigina returnee
9	<b>Harerimana</b>	<b>Emmanuel</b>	Nyabigina resident
10	<b>Harerimana</b>	<b>Frederic</b>	<b>Rema Ministries</b>
11	<b>Havyarimana</b>	<b>Remy</b>	<b>Maison Lueur d'Espoir, La Maison</b>
12	<b>Kabura</b>	<b>Prudence</b>	Communal Administrator of Nyanza-Lac
13	<b>Kabura</b>	<b>Cyriaque</b>	Senior Advisor to the Governor of Makamba
14	<b>Kameya</b>	<b>Jean-Claude</b>	PARESI, Coordinator of the Makamba antenne
15	<b>Manirambona</b>	<b>Michel</b>	Nyabigina resident
16	<b>Masabo</b>	<b>Ezechiel</b>	Nyabigina resident
17	<b>Mbazumutima</b>	<b>Theodore</b>	<b>Rema Ministries</b>
18	<b>Nyaboho</b>	<b>Martin Blaise</b>	Bishop of the Diocese of Makamba
19	<b>Misago</b>	<b>Zachee</b>	Communal Administrator of Kayogoro
20	<b>Mpawenayo</b>	<b>Kassim</b>	Nyabigina hill chief
21	<b>Mugabonihera</b>	<b>Amisi Peniel</b>	VP of the Nyanza-Lac Communal Council
22	<b>Nahimana</b>	<b>Adele</b>	Nyabigina returnee
23	<b>Nahimana</b>	<b>Esperance</b>	Nyabigina returnee
24	<b>Nakumuryango</b>	<b>Remy</b>	IRIAKANABU, Nyanza-Lac
25	<b>Ndabirore</b>	<b>Monique</b>	Nyabigina resident
26	<b>Ndikumana</b>	<b>Gerard</b>	Communal Administrator of Rumonge
27	<b>Ngoga</b>	<b>Eric</b>	Makamba IRC
28	<b>Nindereye</b>	<b>Pierre</b>	Twungubumwe association
29	<b>Nitunga</b>	<b>Francois</b>	<b>Rema Ministries</b>
30	<b>Niyonkuru</b>	<b>Omer</b>	Director of land use planning
31	<b>Nizigiyimana</b>	<b>Jean-Bosco</b>	<b>CTAS Kibago</b>
32	<b>Nizigiyimana</b>	<b>Renee Micheline</b>	<b>Rema Ministries</b>
33	<b>Nkeshimana</b>	<b>Isaac</b>	Nyabigina resident
34	<b>Nkurunziza</b>	<b>Ernest</b>	<b>Synergie de la Reforme Agraire (Land Reform Synergy)</b>
35	<b>Nsabimana</b>	<b>Ildephonse</b>	<b>Iteka League, Bujumbura</b>

36	Nsabiyumva	Jerome	Turikurutonde association
37	Nshimirimana	Yves	<b>PAFE (border police officer)</b>
38	Ntimirangeza	Leonard	Nyabigina hill chief
39	Ntunzwenayo	Ernest	Nyabigina village chief
40	Nyandwi	Juma	Nyabigina returnee
41	Nyandwi	Goreth	Nyabigina resident
42	Sabuzi	Simeon	<b>Rema Ministries</b>
43	Sebarinda	Merthus	Iteka League, Nyanza-Lac
44	Simbarakiye	Reverien	Repatriation director
45	Singirankabo	Celestin	Nyabigina deputy hill chief
46	Sinuguruza	Japhet	Nyabigina hill chief
47	Yamuremye	Fabien	PARESI director