

**STOPPING AS SUCCESS:
TRANSITIONING TO LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT**

CASE STUDY: CARE BURUNDI

December 2018

Tracy Dexter, Search for Common Ground



STOPPING AS SUCCESS

This case study was developed as part of Stopping As Success (SAS), implemented by a consortium consisting of Peace Direct, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, and Search for Common Ground, with support and funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). SAS is a collaborative learning project that aims to study the dynamics at play when ending a development program, and provide guidelines on how to ensure locally led development. In doing this, SAS looks beyond the technical aspects of an exit strategy to identify examples that demonstrate a transition toward locally led development. The case studies produced by the project highlight the past and present realities faced by international non-government organizations (INGOs), local civil society organizations (CSOs), and local NGOs, focusing in particular on how partnerships evolve during transitions or devolvement to local entities.

I. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This case study examines the transition process initiated by CARE International¹ – an international actor with a long-term presence in Burundi – whereby a local spin-off NGO, Great Lakes Inkingi² Development (GLID), was created. CARE in Burundi planned a gradual transition in which it would maintain its presence, shifting its role from direct implementer to “organizational catalyst,” delivering services through an increased number of partners, innovating its approaches, and enhancing learning.

The transition process began in 2012 in response to CARE International’s gradual global transformation, the timeline of which had been accelerated due to the global financial crisis. As the transition in Burundi was going to involve a significant reduction in personnel, CARE proposed – and its staff agreed – to create an organization comprised of its trained and valued Burundian former staff. This organization would eventually “spin off” to become GLID, which would continue to implement CARE’s approach in communities, initially with CARE funding.

Unfortunately, after several of CARE’s major funding proposals to international donors were not approved, the spin-off to GLID had to be accelerated, meaning the transition took on a different dynamic for both organizations. Overall, the transition has been successful,



Acronyms	2
Stopping As Success	2
1. Introduction and Methodology	2
A note on methodology	3
2. Context	3
Civil Society in Burundi	4
Post-conflict and peacebuilding era	5
Closing political space	6
INGO–government relations	6
Changing approaches to aid	7
3. CARE in Burundi	8
A new global model	8
The transition process, and the creation of GLID	9
Rapid planning, slower implementation	9
4. Mapping the Transition	10
Principles	10
Programs	11
Planning	12
People	15
Reflections	16
5. Key Lessons	17

ACRONYMS

CNDD-FDD	Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie-Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy)
CSO	civil society organization
EU	European Union
GLID	Great Lakes Inkingi Development
GLR	Great Lakes Review
ICG	International Crisis Group
INGO	international non-governmental organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
RESO	Rassemblement, Echanges et Solutions entre ONG (Gathering, Exchange, and Solutions Between NGOs)
SAS	Stopping As Success
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	village savings and loan association

although it has taken longer than expected for both CARE and GLID to consolidate their respective changes. Over the past eight years, however, significant progress has been made.

TYPE OF TRANSITION

This case study is an example of a dual transition: an INGO, CARE, transforming its role from direct implementer to catalyst, alongside the establishment of a Burundian entity, GLID, to carry forward some of its work. The transition is meant to ensure that the two organizations work in a complementary, reinforcing way.



The focus of this study is on the transition to GLID, though several sections will also examine the dual nature of the transition (which includes CARE's own transformation).

A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

It is important to point out that the context in which this study was carried out illustrates how the form and timing of political triggers for exit may be unanticipated. Research was conducted at a time when civil society and NGOs were operating in an extremely sensitive socio-political environment. This reached a crisis point as the study was about to begin, with the Burundian government declaring, without warning, that all INGOs would be suspended until they fulfilled certain criteria demanded by legislation passed in 2017 on NGOs. This impacted many Burundian NGOs, as they received funding from international NGOs and donors. Offices were closed, tensions rose, and all attention was focused on how to manage the crisis.

Field visits outside of Bujumbura were impossible, meaning that community members were not interviewed for this study. The NGOs described in this case made clear to SAS that any attempt by an international researcher to visit development sites or participants could be dangerous, citing communiqués that encouraged government-affiliated youth gangs to monitor and help enforce the law regarding NGOs. Many INGOs have since complied with the conditions imposed by the government. Despite the fact that CARE and GLID's operations and offices were temporarily closed and travel to project sites was not possible during this moment of uncertainty, the author is grateful to have been able to interview staff in Bujumbura,

as well as partners, donors, and other collaborators, for a total of 23 key informant interviews.

The situation faced in researching the report drives home the point that, in the context of exits, it is not only financial exigencies but the political context that determines what measures are feasible in the short term, as well as what needs to be done in the longer term to sustain locally led development.

2. CONTEXT

Burundi is a small country and former Belgian colony in Central Africa. In addition to its beautiful landscapes, it is distinguished by being one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with its surface area of just 27,834 square kilometers home to a population of 11.2 million. Decades of political instability and structural violence put Burundi on the extreme lower end of the poverty scale: it is ranked 185 of 189 by the 2018 UN Human Development Report.³

Until 2016, donors provided at least 50 percent of the national budget. From 2000 to 2015, the World Bank provided US\$2 billion in aid, while the European Union (EU) provided US\$1.19 billion.⁴ Over the same period, the five biggest bilateral donors were Belgium (US\$614 million), the United States (US\$575 million), the Netherlands (US\$318 million), Germany (US\$278 million), and Norway (US\$218 million). While humanitarian and development aid to Burundi increased every year up to 2016,⁵ its character and disbursement changed over time, reducing the level of funding available to certain CSOs and INGOs that had previously benefited the post-conflict context.⁶

As of 2016, bilateral donors have frozen direct aid to the government and are channeling aid to the Burundian people through local NGOs and CSOs.

CIVIL SOCIETY IN BURUNDI

A key element of civil society's role in Burundi is to promote good governance and human rights, monitor government, and advocate on behalf of communities. CSOs are registered, along with other development and interest-based groups, as non-profit organizations. There are over 5,000 non-profit groups registered in Burundi, though many of these organizations lack permanent personnel, offices, or internal management

structures. For the purposes of this case study, CSOs will refer to “watchdog” or human rights organizations, while other non-profit groups such as GLID will be referred to as local NGOs.

Human rights groups emerged and became influential in the 1990s. Along with a few important CSOs, they helped prepare the country for its first democratic elections in 1993. Until then, Burundi had been ruled by military dictatorships and the country’s citizenry had not been engaged in political life, which was strictly controlled by the government. The resultant influx of international organizations and development agencies brought with it considerable funding, which facilitated the creation of numerous local NGOs and CSOs.

The number of Burundian CSOs and local NGOs began to grow after the assassination of the country’s first democratically elected president, which took place just months after the 1993 election. The death of the president, who was a member of the majority Hutu ethnic group, was attributed to the minority Tutsi ethnic group which had formerly ruled. Subsequent political violence gave rise to a Hutu-led rebellion and a civil war, which claimed in excess of 300,000 lives over the next decade. This in turn drew INGOs into the country to provide humanitarian assistance.

The level of violence after the assassination of the president caused bilateral missions to suspend operations. Furthermore, a coup d’état in 1996 prompted international sanctions and a regional embargo of the government. At the same time, there was an increase in the number of local NGOs, which were working in close collaboration with the INGOs through which most external resources were channeled.⁷ To this day, there is no official government mechanism for funding CSOs and local NGOs. Other avenues for local funding, such as individual philanthropy and corporate social responsibility, are practically nonexistent.

POST-CONFLICT AND PEACEBUILDING ERA

In the transition period following the Arusha Accords peace agreement in 2000, Burundian civil society grew and diversified, and new and independent media institutions were created with international support. CSOs and media were active in the electoral process, mobilizing citizens and providing independent electoral observation, which – along with United Nations (UN) peacekeeping – ensured

a peaceful democratic election in 2005. The result was that Pierre Nkurunziza of the CNDD-FDD⁸ party was elected president. The incoming government looked positively upon this watchdog role, and many development organizations – both INGOs and local – employed rights-based approaches and had strong advocacy functions.

During the implementation of the peace agreement and its prescribed elections, INGOs, CSOs, and local NGOs benefited from funding provided by programs such as USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) and the UN Peacebuilding Fund. The Peacebuilding Fund was able to offer some direct funding to CSOs, though it was usually based on service costs and was under the control and supervision of the UN. USAID’s Conflict Mitigation and Management Fund also provided limited direct funding for CSOs and local NGOs.⁹

In this post-electoral period, CSOs and the media promoted democratization, transparency, protection of human rights, and social cohesion. They also worked hard to fight corruption, which gained them visibility and social capital. INGOs, some of which did not have staff in Burundi, provided funding for CSOs and media, as well as capacity building support for areas such as project development, financial management, and monitoring and evaluation.¹⁰ CSOs and the media uncovered, publicized, and at times organized protests against government corruption, malfeasance, and impunity. Slowly but surely, the government began cracking down on its critics, particularly Burundian actors.

CLOSING POLITICAL SPACE

By 2009, the government was already beginning to view CSOs as political parties, and so created new organizations in parallel to existing CSOs in order to limit their effectiveness. Some CSO leaders and journalists became increasingly subject to harassment.¹¹

The confidence of major donors in the Burundi government began to fade around 2010 as the political situation began to deteriorate. This period coincided with the global financial crisis, which also affected international aid.¹² In 2015, confidence further diminished as a result of President Nkurunziza’s (ultimately successful) pursuit of a third term in office, despite Burundi’s two-term constitutional limit. This triggered a massive, initially peaceful, public demonstration organized by a CSO coalition. Severe government repression and armed

clashes followed, claiming hundreds of lives and resulting in hundreds of thousands of Burundians fleeing the country.¹³

During the fallout of the political crisis, which included a failed coup d'état, the government cracked down on civil society actors by suspending prominent local human rights organizations and other members of the CSO coalition, as well as shutting down many independent local radio stations. The years since 2015 have seen a further crackdown on civil society, including the violent targeting of human rights defenders, journalists, and their family members. Many activists were forced into exile. At the end of 2016, the government passed a law targeting local NGOs, requiring that financial resources of foreign origin pass through the central bank, accompanied by a document illustrating their origin and allocation. UN human rights experts warned of the "... restrictive and stigmatizing effect of recent legislation on NGOs, in a context of growing repression of human rights defenders."¹⁴ According to a Burundian NGO leader: "You simply can't denounce the government. You will be stopped. There's no space for human rights, or peacebuilding as such. Even development doesn't have as much space."¹⁵

INGO-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

The Burundian government, through the Ministry of External Relations, has had a legal framework and monitoring role regarding INGOs since 1999. However, it has historically had limited capacity to actually monitor or enforce laws regarding INGOs. An international NGO network called RESO¹⁶ was created in the late 1990s, during the civil war, as a forum for information exchange and coordination. RESO has also served as an interlocutor between the Burundian government, donors, and local NGOs, with the latter counting on RESO to advocate on their behalf. In 2005, for example, the newly elected government sought to update the 1999 law on INGOs, and for years RESO collaborated – with the input of the donors – to draft a law that would be legally and practically acceptable.¹⁷

The government's relationship with INGOs was relatively good until, as described below, aid began to be channeled primarily through INGOs and local NGOs. In 2017, laws regulating local NGOs and INGOs came into effect, with stringent banking provisions. For INGOs, the law imposes administration fees and requires large portions of their budgets to be deposited in foreign currency in the Burundian Central Bank. It also requires that

INGOs respect the demographic quotas set out in the constitution regarding employees in public service: 60 percent Hutu; 40 percent Tutsi; and 30 percent women.

This provision has been particularly problematic. All INGOs and donors affirm that their work – in a context where ethnic polarization is a root cause of violence – redresses the ills of exclusion. For some INGOs and their donors, quotas are not appropriate or even legal. Other INGOs, such as CARE, already had systems in place to ensure diversity, in accordance with the government position.

Given the difficult relationship between the government and CSOs, and the fact that the government often makes derogatory references to CSOs' external sources of funding,¹⁸ most INGOs avoid directly engaging with watchdog CSOs for fear of government retribution, including being forced to leave the country. Interviewees stated that the relationship between INGOs and CSOs is characterized by quiet, selective, and cautious engagement, though engagement with local NGOs is less problematic.

CHANGING APPROACHES TO AID

Slowly, due partly to global economic trends and partly to political concerns, a change in development cooperation has taken place in Burundi. In the summer of 2015, Belgium became the first country to suspend aid to the government and instead start channeling funding through international and local NGOs.¹⁹ Then, in 2016, following consultations under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement, the EU and its member states – until that point Burundi's main donors – withdrew direct budgetary support.²⁰ They also redirected aid from Burundian ministries to international NGOs, UN agencies, and member states' development arms.

USAID's CSO Sustainability Index notes that even before the donor freeze the landscape of donor funding had been changing, citing the example of the EU Commission, which has prioritized larger grant awards, usually through consortia.²¹ In this context, though local NGOs or CSOs can have access to direct funding as the lead of a consortium, they must compete with better prepared and resourced INGOs for the same pot of funding. USAID has adopted a similar model, conducting pre-award surveys in order to make a risk assessment/responsibility determination.

The EU has begun working with consortia to strengthen local civil society and assist local government-sponsored development committees. It is the latest in a series of activities that indicate greater support for “localizing” development. International Crisis Group (ICG) has found that some European donors are – or plan on – working directly with local NGOs, despite the fact that many have limited capacity, are under close government scrutiny, and require support.²² In light of its finding, ICG says: “It is vital to minimize risks that the provision of external assistance, which may be coveted by many Burundian actors (including the population, the authorities, and NGOs), exacerbate conflict dynamics at the local level. If they plan to channel aid through local NGOs, European donors should help those organizations build the capacity to manage funds in a tense security and political environment. This could include, for instance, measures to increase support for organizations facing government pressure, or diplomatic assistance in cases of authorities’ harassment of NGO employees.”

The Burundian network INAMA backs up ICG’s recommendations, suggesting direct cooperation with local credible and independent NGOs, while ensuring, first, the neutral and impartial character of implementation; and, second, that they do not face risks and pressures from the government.

Indeed, it will be difficult to “localize” if the government is suspicious of Burundian NGOs due to their affinity with internationals. Relationships between NGOs and the government are currently out of balance, partly as a result of donor measures. Sanctions resulting from the lack of respect for democracy and human rights required by the Cotonou Agreement are decried by the Burundi government as neocolonial. These accusations of neocolonialism have become powerful propaganda, particularly when deployed against Belgium and the EU. The government is angry with the INGOs that now channel the funds it previously had access to. That anger may be directed, by extension, to local NGOs and CSOs. Few local NGOs are now willing to speak out on political matters, or say anything that might further anger the government.

In September 2018, nearly two years after the promulgation of the law on INGOs, the government – through its National Security Council – announced that all INGOs would be suspended unless they could provide proof of being fully compliant with the new law. This implied that

INGOs would have to satisfy the specified ethnic quotas within three months, and applied, by extension, to local NGOs using INGO funding. CARE was the first INGO to publish a communiqué that it would comply with the measure, and asked its local partners to cease activities using its funds until the process was complete. CARE communicated within RESO – which considered forming a bloc to resist the measure – about the feasibility and benefits of compliance. Though ultimately RESO did not resist as a bloc, some of its members that did choose to resist exited the network. CARE was reinstated by the government as a legally compliant INGO, and, along with its partners, resumed work within weeks.

3. CARE IN BURUNDI

CARE first established an office in Burundi in 1994, in order to assist people affected by civil unrest. Its initial program focused on the distribution of non-food items to internally displaced people and returning refugees in northern Burundi. During the years of upheaval that followed within the Great Lakes region, CARE managed refugee camps in Burundi and in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Beginning in 2000, CARE embarked on a broad organizational transformation process, in line with progressive changes being made at the CARE International level. On a programmatic level, CARE focused on post-conflict needs, as well as longer-term development areas such as children’s empowerment; cross-cutting issues of governance and disaster risk reduction; and innovative projects aimed at combating sexual and gender-based violence. In addition, CARE pioneered, with great success, an approach to economic empowerment through its financial solidarity groups for women and youth: village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) known as “Nawe Nuze.”²⁴ This programming was implemented both directly and with local partner organizations.

A NEW GLOBAL MODEL

In June 2011, CARE began reflections on a major transformation, triggered and inspired by CARE International’s Vision 2020, which envisages a new role for CARE International as “An innovator and catalyst for transformational change in lives of marginalized women and girls and their communities, and a contributing partner in addressing global poverty and social injustice.”²⁵

Following the presentation of Vision 2020, CARE's international staff in Burundi began the process of alignment with CARE International in late 2011. The Great Lakes Review (GLR)²⁶ in effect launched the Burundi transformation, as it analyzed the options for a future country presence and agreed on the form and substance of an organizational change process.

In February 2012, a strategic planning workshop initiated and led by CARE International staff informed and engaged with many of the Burundian staff. The workshop resulted in a shared vision, which took the form of a strategic plan that combined ongoing office changes with major changes in CARE's role resulting from the GLR, including the necessity for downsizing. The Burundian staff agreed to take part in a transition task force, as well as create a CARE association consisting of former staff, which would eventually become a privileged partner of CARE. Following the GLR and ensuing strategic planning workshops, CARE staff came to understand that organizational change was inevitable, and would be a medium-term process extending over several years.²⁷

CARE's organizational change process in Burundi was driven partly by a strategic alignment with the CARE International transformation process. Key to this was a commitment to partnership as a means of addressing the core values of locally led development. It was also partly in response to financial constraints, which were a consideration at the CARE International level. Aid flows were decreasing as a result of the global financial crisis and the Burundian political environment.

Unfortunately, in 2012, financial constraints escalated into a crisis in Burundi, with key proposals not approved by international donors. This required a drastic acceleration of the organizational transformation process, with the previous plan for a multi-year process replaced by an emergency response to be carried out within months.

THE TRANSITION PROCESS, AND THE CREATION OF GLID

Although it was not a local initiative, Burundian staff members participated in important decisions concerning the transition. The process of GLID's creation and registration by the Burundian government was described in an internal learning document as follows: "There was much enthusiasm and energy

devoted to the task: statutes were drafted, legal issues were investigated and systems and procedures were adopted... Initially all CARE staff were eligible to be founding members (upon application) and they elected an executive committee made up of key CARE Burundi staff ... the organization had about 180 members and a 7-member executive committee, headed by the ex-head of Human Resources at CARE Burundi. GLID managed to absorb 40 ex-CARE staff initially and received its first funding [from CARE] immediately. Since most GLID staff were instrumental in implementing CARE's VSLA approach (Nawe Nuze), GLID has become the reference NGO in the country for Nawe Nuze, and a key partner for CARE Burundi in initiatives with funding, through CARE, originating from CI partners of \$2 million."²⁸

RAPID PLANNING, SLOWER IMPLEMENTATION

Early on, CARE supported GLID in carrying out an organizational development assessment and corresponding strategy, which became part of its strategic plan to acquire a separate identity and vision. This planning process also helped identify how sources of funding might be diversified, as all funding at inception came from CARE. Even so, the lack of experience in mobilizing funding was sorely felt, and a staff capacity development plan was created to address gaps in expertise regarding conceiving programs, writing proposals, fundraising, and marketing. Though CARE was providing significant funding through CARE International partners, as well as supporting GLID institutionally, the continuous program of training and coaching that GLID desired for staff development and to aid fundraising/proposal writing was not part of the accompaniment CARE provided.²⁹

A decrease in donor funding in Burundi and general uncertainty were challenges to the transition. GLID and CARE were transitioning in the context of a worsening political and socioeconomic situation, though neither organization suffered the pressures faced by NGOs engaged in monitoring governance and human rights. Despite challenges, the two organizations have persevered both independently and as partners.

In 2014, two years after GLID was created, a CARE learning mission observed and documented the transition process, assessing its progress toward the

envisioned end state of a viable new organization. The conclusion was that GLID needed to increase its visibility and play a more active role in the NGO community.³⁰ Though the Burundian former CARE staff leading GLID were talented, they did not have strong networks or social capital among the aid community, other organizations and donors, and government. In response, GLID recruited an external representative and an external coordinator with fundraising and proposal writing experience, and created staff development plans to build some of the required competencies.

Programmatically, both CARE and GLID have succeeded in scaling up Nawe Nuze. CARE is training and innovating, while GLID is collaborating directly with the government, which is beginning to implement the model. Overall, GLID is now much closer to being a viable, independent organization. As of 2018, GLID has three new partnerships in which it is the sub-contractor to INGO primes, supporting VSLAs in projects focused on youth sexual and reproductive health, and women's and adolescent girls' empowerment. GLID also has direct financing for a small project with a UN agency.

4. MAPPING THE TRANSITION

During the transition, CARE's intention was to continue its tested approach to community development work, using valued staff to carry forward its mission and values, setting up a local entity that could act as a privileged partner. Research for this study found that CARE and GLID have an important partnership, with GLID, supported by CARE, on its way to becoming an independent local development actor. Research also identified some unanticipated dynamics in this relationship. Four overarching themes emerge as key to planning a successful transition or exit: principles, programs, planning, and people. These are explored below.

PRINCIPLES

LOCAL OWNERSHIP IS A VALUE

In accordance with Vision 2020, CARE's transition from implementer to catalyzer was intended as a principled approach to avoiding the crowding out of important local work. According to CARE staff, when planning the transition in 2012, transferring the implementation role to local partners was of more

importance than financial concerns. Local ownership was thus a principle that was being put in action. As noted by a CARE staff member: "CARE can't serve the local community as an international organization. I must feel local – within the community – and have a good interaction with the local community."

Afurika Juvenal, the program quality leader and current Country Director, offered an image that helps explain the principle underlying the change toward greater local ownership: "The small trees cannot grow under the shade of the big tree, so we have to cut some branches to allow the small trees to grow." This refers to the fact that CARE in Burundi needed to create space for partners to grow, and for community level structures to develop into broader social movements.

VALUES IN PRACTICE: TOOLS AND SYSTEMS

GLID staff stated that integrity, transparency, respect for gender, and diversity are principles brought over from CARE that have become embedded in the organization and applied to all its activities. A strong work ethic is also seen as a legacy of CARE, and is part of the solid reputation GLID inherited.

All interviewees agreed that integrity, accountability, and diversity – when demonstrated and fully internalized by a spin-off organization – can act as anchors in fraught socio-political and economic contexts. Local NGOs, INGOs, and donors are concerned about Burundian entities resisting the country's personality-driven culture and prioritization of "family ties" (often a form of corruption). One donor remarked on the "limits" of local NGOs, saying that they do not have the tools to resist such pressures. ICG cautions about the pressures exerted on Burundians to share material benefits with the government.

These principles were operationalized with the help of systems and tools that GLID inherited from CARE, which allow the organization to build trust while resisting internal and external challenges. For example, the transparent hiring system largely avoided conflicts of interest, while financial accountability systems were used to avoid or detect corruption. These are aspects of GLID's organizational identity of which it is distinctly aware, proud, and genuinely grateful. Moreover, they form part of its emerging independent identity. GLID can draw on both the legacy of CARE as its parent organization, as well as the presence of CARE as it

exists now, as support. As one CARE staff member said about the transition: “... as new systems are put in place, it’s important to stay close.”

Former staff of CARE now in GLID are aware that overall success is linked to strong systems. Accordingly, some GLID staff have asked CARE for capacity building to address new needs identified in their operating environment. Internal accountability systems inherited from CARE are important for quality control and progress. Recently, GLID has established a new performance evaluation system in order to enhance staff motivation and capability, with individual development needs identified in these evaluations.

Though CARE and GLID’s programming is rights-based, a core value of CARE is neutrality, and GLID has sustained this approach. Empowerment work in communities does not involve adopting a partisan political approach or watchdog function. As political space closes, this neutrality provides an element of sustainability.

PROGRAMS

ALIGNMENT WITH NATIONAL NEEDS THROUGH A LOCAL APPROACH

GLID inherited technical and programmatic knowledge from CARE, particularly its approach to economic empowerment; namely, the VSLA loan model, Nawe Nuze. This model has been extremely effective at the grassroots level and is one in which GLID staff are experts, having created, trained, and coached the savings groups since their days with CARE. GLID credits its adoption of the CARE economic empowerment model as a factor in its sustainability. There is increasing demand for the Nawe Nuze model across different settings, and international partners and donors recognize that “localizing” this activity is essential to its effectiveness. GLID is involved in both scaling up the model in Burundi, and also adapting it,³⁴ This is one of the goals of CARE’s partnership approach, as it continues its own work on innovating the model.

GLID is progressively empowering project participants by handing over certain activities to communities, creating the Village Agent Network. This has improved direct support to groups and the quality of training. Girls in the VSLA groups were trained to become Village Agents, who were then in turn taught to train other girls,

expanding their knowledge, skills, and responsibilities within the community.

CARE and GLID are working with the Burundi government, which has adopted the Nawe Nuze approach, in order to increase coverage. An official in the Ministry of Human Rights, Social Affairs, and Gender recounted her positive experience collaborating with GLID on the ground. She leads programming from the government side and has herself been trained in the Nawe Nuze approach, setting up a solidarity group in the ministry as a result. Both she and an official in the INGO coordination office noted appreciatively that CARE has provided ample training to the Burundian staff taking over implementation, while at the same time CARE has maintained its training function for government partners. The roles of CARE and GLID are thus viewed as complementary by external parties.

Government representatives refer enthusiastically to qualitative measures of success, such as the testimony of women working with GLID and local authorities that have become self-sufficient through the program. The government, which participates in the spaces for dialogue created by the Nawe Nuze VSLAs and other projects, attests to GLID’s positive role in civil society.³⁵ Nawe Nuze builds human capital, especially in rural areas, which is one of the Burundi government’s three strategic orientations set out in its National Development Plan 2018–2027. GLID, implementing a CARE approach, is thus considered a leader in what is a crucial sector of development. Continued collaboration with the government is essential for sustaining GLID’s role in civil society, and thus a key ingredient for a successful transition.

A common pitfall faced by local NGOs is losing programming focus while pursuing funds to survive. It is likely that the type of programming GLID is implementing can help avoid this. GLID is not under pressure to change its mission, as Nawe Nuze is a respected project for which there is a great need, especially from the government, which does not regard it as a threat. According to GLID’s coordinator, the organization has good relationships with the administration, partially due to the fact that its actions are visible, and also due to the fruits of the work being seen and felt by the local community and local government.

Adapting to different target groups and different settings has helped GLID attract diverse and continued funding, without relying solely on CARE as a donor.

BRANDING CHALLENGES

In a transition setting, questions of both autonomy and co-existence arise. In the case of the CARE/GLID transition, this can be seen in the issue of co-ownership of Nawe Nuze. There is a perception that as long as this is the CARE approach, GLID may not be completely independent, as it is in the same “market” as CARE and cannot compete for the same funding pots using the Nawe Nuze brand. CARE recognizes that there should not be competition with GLID, and in fact aims to work with its partners in order to test new approaches. Collaborating but not competing for the implementation of an improved Nawe Nuze will be a subject of ongoing discussion in this current phase in the transition.

PLANNING

PLANNING WITH AS MUCH PARTICIPATION AS POSSIBLE

A transition or exit plan is an important change management tool. CARE was very aware of this, and even before the financial crisis it faced in 2012 was engaged in a planning process aimed at increasing staff participation. However, in the initial phases planning was not as inclusive and participatory as it could have been, particularly as the transition had to be accelerated before staff had time to fully buy in. CARE noted this in its learning project.³⁶ CARE’s plan was thrown off balance, but the principles, programs, and people involved in “planning for success” gave strength to the Burundian staff in creating – with CARE – a new entity.

PLANNING FOR ACCOMPANIMENT

As described above, the CARE staff quickly engaged in making changes to downsize. Within four months, GLID was formed and then sub-contracted to continue implementing Nawe Nuze. However, the current leaders of GLID – who were not present during the transition – note that there is still not a specific accompaniment plan for the spin-off and disengagement of CARE. They suggest it would have been helpful to have had a jointly produced framework agreement, signposting the main stages in the process and key milestones for GLID’s independence. In its 2016–20 strategic plan, CARE envisioned developing and signing broad-ranging strategic agreements with its partners,

as opposed to agreements limited to the context of specific projects. GLID does not yet have a strategic partnership agreement. Without it, clarity around roles and responsibilities in the principal/spin-off relationship is harder to achieve.

An example of this lack of clarity can be seen around capacity building for the transition. GLID suggests – and CARE largely agrees – that a plan to build staff and institutional capacity, particularly for financial sustainability, was not completed. This was despite CARE flagging that a systematic, sustainable staff capacity development program was required both internally as well as for its partners. CARE has, in its role as technical and financial partner on several grants, helped strengthen financial reporting and financial management systems, as well as providing quality assurance. However, both organizations agree that the relationship between an INGO and a spin-off organization is different from a standard INGO–local NGO partnership. The CARE director sees the need for continual dialogue regarding their relationship, as well as on the co-creation of benchmarks for full empowerment and autonomy.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

While start-up and continued funding from CARE has allowed GLID to continue its mission, this has also potentially limited GLID’s ability to function as an independent entity. Until 2018, 95 percent of GLID’s funding was provided by CARE. While GLID has a number of new partners, CARE is still a principal and GLID still seeks its support in looking for funding or writing proposals. As a GLID employee observed: “We need to know so we can understand how to ‘position’ ourselves ... At this stage, if CARE goes out, GLID can’t continue.” In addition to diversified funding, GLID’s autonomy – and thus true locally led development – would potentially be strengthened by receiving direct funding from CARE International for the Nawe Nuze work, rather than CARE in Burundi being the intermediary.

CARE has acknowledged the fundraising challenge, both for itself as well as its partners. Regarding the 2016–20 strategic plan, it said: “... the funding environment is getting tighter, especially given the deteriorating political situation in Burundi, and the [country office] is reliant on a limited set of funding sources ... partners need to be more directly involved in raising funds. All of this requires an improved funding strategy, capacities, and processes.”

One of the financial tools GLID would like to make use of is an independent audit. Until recently, however, it has not had a budget line that would permit this. Indeed, linked to but separate from mobilizing new funding, GLID pointed out a challenge that is not unique to the CARE/GLID relationship: difficulties in negotiating a budget. Other local NGOs describe this issue as related to power imbalances in the aid system, which, however much they are ameliorated by planning based on principle, plans, and programs, remain embedded within the system. The quest for true and equal dialogue points to this question of power imbalances, and represents one of the clearest and yet most subtle dynamics in INGO–NGO relationships.

Local NGOs and GLID have remarked that while there are increasing opportunities to collaborate and even co-design programming with international partners, there should also be more opportunity for dialogue and negotiation about budgets. Budget lines for overheads and unrestricted funding are still minimal, if they exist at all. Local NGOs perceive a vicious circle, as they are unable to access the resources they need for fundraising. This is probably the most common way in which local actors in Burundi address the question of power imbalances between international and local NGOs. It is, however, an issue that local NGOs are reluctant to raise, as they fear being eliminated from consideration by international organizations (mainly INGOs and, less commonly, direct funding from donors). This is a power imbalance that could be fairly easily addressed and should be looked at closely by donors. If a local NGO is deemed to have robust financial capacity, it should be granted ample unrestricted funding as well. Local NGOs understand that these may be modest percentages, but it represents more than just a monetary issue. It is symbolic of equality.

GLID also shares other local CSOs' concerns regarding the onerous task of reporting to international donors with different systems. GLID works with USAID, the EU, a bilateral donor, and also some private donors. The new INGO working with GLID had to invest significant unbudgeted resources to review, revise, and ultimately to train GLID in its financial procedures.³⁸ This meant investing in monthly training sessions and providing close accompaniment in the preparation of monthly reports. The INGO also used an incentive-related process, comparing the progress of each of the local partners. Following this successful capacity development regimen, the INGO was satisfied with the results of their accompaniment and with GLID's reporting.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Another key factor in CARE's transition was its capacity development plan, which was largely programmatic in nature. During the transition, GLID expected continued training aimed at helping it achieve financial stability, which, as discussed above, CARE did not provide. One of the reasons this was not fulfilled was due to the fact that CARE's transition included partnerships with dozens of other local organizations. It was therefore difficult, from a practical point of view, to provide specialized accompaniment, despite GLID being a privileged partner. Unfortunately, a lack of communication coupled with the absence of a specific plan on CARE's part, amplified the risk of GLID misunderstanding why certain support was not forthcoming.

Along similar lines, local NGOs and observers complain that some INGOs and international agencies provide capacity building tailored to particular skills within particular systems. This approach maintains power inequalities rather than developing the capacity to work independently. In fact, competition between organizations – both between INGOs and local NGOs, and between local NGOs – has given rise to cynicism among some local actors, who have expressed that INGOs are not interested in supporting local capacity if this might result in local organizations becoming competitors. The dynamic of unequal power, whether real or perceived, is a factor. This is a dynamic that donors should keep in mind, especially in programming that aims toward localization.

PEOPLE

STRONG LEADERSHIP

Good leadership has been critical to a transition process that has been both intense and long-term. CARE had set the bar very high with regard to the overall transition. As noted in their learning document: "Leadership is perhaps the single most important ingredient in the change management process. The leadership of the country office must have a clear vision of why the change is necessary, what the desired goal is, and what the final result should look like; a capacity to communicate this clearly and effectively; a total commitment to the process; the courage to embark into the process without fear or hesitation and to take difficult decisions and act firmly while simultaneously

being open to consultation and having compassion; honesty and transparency; the ability to anticipate and accept opposition and not let emotions take over; a willingness to embrace uncertainty and ambiguity; and a willingness to listen, learn, call for help, receive feedback, admit and correct mistakes and adjust the pace of change to better accompany the staff on the journey.”³⁹

The above quotation sets out the model of CARE’s principled and people-centered leadership, which was important for everyone in planning for success. According to the document, the Country Director who took on the transition applied “... remarkable courage, determination ... willingness to learn and adjust ... which allowed her to gain the respect and support of the staff and navigate the difficult waters of this transition successfully.”⁴⁰ This attitude was important to the transition and for the viability of a spin-off like GLID, which was led by CARE’s experienced former human resources director.

Great efforts were made by CARE leaders to prepare staff as well as possible for the transition. The CARE learning team found that there was appreciation for “... the genuine concern that was shown for staff wellbeing and the extent to which leadership considered and made provision for individual cases and made every effort to soften the burden of termination.”⁴¹

One of CARE’s donors said: “CARE Burundi has always been collegial. And the leadership is very important. The current director inspired confidence in the staff.” CARE leaders also take an approach of neutrality when communicating externally, which is important in politically fraught environments. GLID has adopted similar approaches, with staff displaying courage in embracing uncertainty and ambiguity.

DEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP

One of the challenges of the CARE/GLID transition has been a lack of clarity about the nature of the relationship. It lives, breathes, and grows, particularly as the two organizations still “live” together. The term “parrain” – meaning both “sponsor” and “godparent” in French – is often used to describe CARE in the context of the relationship between the organizations. This concept (and relationship) needs clarification in order for the spin-off organization’s strategic direction to be finalized. Should CARE sponsor or promote GLID in a market in which CARE is also a candidate?⁴² Should

GLID grow and break away from its parrain? The CARE director articulated the importance of clarifying the term and better defining the relationship and action plan going forward. This is equally important to GLID.

The CARE/GLID relationship has been in the hands of those focused on the management of grants, that is, the technical aspects of the partnership. This has been a big job for GLID and a small CARE staff working with 22 partners, especially without any memorandum of understanding or mapping of the relationship. As one of the CARE technical staff said: “We are still managing [our] transition today. We have to put it all together, manage the relationships as well as the finances.”

By clarifying and re-energizing the relationship, it will be easier for the two organizations to meet future challenges, such as how best to jointly identify and share whatever resources are available for implementing, as well as innovating, the Nawe Nuze brand; and for GLID to continue adapting and diversifying its programming and funding partners.

REFLECTIONS

Within a context of relative political and financial stability, CARE and GLID developed and consolidated a community-based development model and a reputation for accountability, diversity, and neutrality. CARE’s transition planning was based on creating space for local partners, including GLID, to grow. The process started well, though along the way it became apparent that the growth of GLID would have benefited from a jointly produced plan laying out the process of CARE’s accompaniment and the key milestones for GLID’s independence

As international and local analysts have forecast, the current Burundian context of closing political space and decreasing economic resources may further alter the aid landscape. Local NGOs will need to be strong in the four areas identified above, adhering to core principles while adapting to different target groups and settings; programming in alignment with government priorities and with a politically neutral stance; planning for programmatic and financial independence; and carefully choosing and supporting the people best placed to lead these efforts. International actors – whether exiting INGOs or donors – need clear accompaniment plans in order to ensure that local NGOs are financially sustainable and have the support they need, particularly in uncertain environments.

5. KEY LESSONS

INGOs should model the principles of integrity, transparency, accountability, and diversity, putting into practice robust systems to institutionalize them. For GLID, the principles underpinning its organizational and programmatic approach represent a valuable legacy passed on from CARE. Strong administrative systems, as well as continued coaching on reporting, have helped sustain these principles in action.

In certain contexts, the political neutrality of NGOs can be important to sustaining locally led organizational development. Since the CARE/GLID transition, local NGOs and actors – particularly watchdog CSOs – that have taken critical positions toward the government have become increasingly vulnerable to state interference. Some local NGOs have attracted unwanted attention due to being linked with donors and INGOs whose views and activities disturb the government. CARE's neutral stance, and its work in a cross-section of communities, – an approach continued by GLID – are factors that have protected the new organization from government restrictions or repression.

Tested and adaptable programming is a strong factor in creating sustainability. CARE developed a successful VSLA model, which it implemented directly for a number of years. Most members of GLID had been implementing staff within CARE and, as a local organization and CARE partner, were responsible for continuing the work they had previously been doing. GLID has been able to adapt its programming to the needs of other partners, who want to work with a local entity in order to integrate the Nawe Nuze approach into their programs. CARE's focus on its role as catalyst and innovator provides a collaboration model that facilitates sustainable, locally led adaptations.

Programming that aligns with government priorities as well as the long-term needs of the population strengthens sustainability. The VSLA model addresses two fundamental poverty reduction priorities: first, the empowerment of women; and, second, the economic empowerment of mostly rural people who lack income or access to credit. Almost all initiatives for change – whether initiated by donors or the Burundi government – include these priorities. Moreover, Nawe Nuze is a visible intervention that does not threaten the government, with the fruits of the work seen and felt by the local community and local government.

Ongoing, non-competitive collaboration between INGOs and newly formed entities can benefit both parties. CARE recognizes there should not be competition with GLID. In fact, CARE works with its partners to innovate and plans to test new approaches with GLID. Collaborating on, while not competing for, the implementation of an improved Nawe Nuze will be a subject for ongoing discussion in the current phase in the transition.

A transition/exit plan should be the result of an inclusive, participatory process. This will help prepare a local NGO deal with the new context in which it will operate, particularly when capacity development for financial sustainability is included. GLID, along with many other local NGOs in Burundi, has asked for capacity development (such as training on proposal writing and fundraising) to help mobilize resources. Local organizations also argue that dialogue on budgets – particularly a budget line for core costs, including for the independent audit required by potential funders – is necessary for sustainability.

A plan serves to define the parameters of INGO accompaniment and can be a tool to help manage expectations and relationships. Both CARE and GLID would have benefited from a measurable transition plan to help define and guide the post-transition evolution of their relationship and mutual expectations, particularly regarding financial diversification.

Strong leadership that models principles and people-centeredness sets an example internally for staff (and future leaders), while creating social capital externally. CARE's leadership was careful and diligent in piloting a complex transition, which included developing a new type of partnership. GLID leaders and staff, meanwhile, tasked with developing a local organization, remained competent and willing despite an unexpected acceleration in the transition's pace, and marked contrasts with the resources they were used to.

A transition entails a living, breathing, growing relationship with certain expectations that should be managed. Leaders within both CARE and GILD have shown courage in uncertain circumstances and willingness to work on their shared mission as partners on Nawe Nuze. They also recognize the importance of strengthening their distinctive relationship.

ENDNOTES

1. CARE International in Burundi is a CARE USA country office and member of the CARE International confederation. For ease of reference, CARE International in Burundi will be abbreviated to CARE throughout this report.
2. Inkingi is the central pillar in a traditional home.
3. United Nations Development Program, “Human Development Reports 2018: Burundi.” hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BDI. Burundi has long been among the poorest countries in the world, but poverty is increasing, with its per capita GDP slipping from US\$790 to US\$702 between 2013 and 2017. Close to 72.9 percent of its population live below the poverty line. See: World Bank, “The World Bank in Burundi.” www.worldbank.org/en/country/burundi/overview
4. OECD, “Financing for Sustainable Development.” www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development
5. OECD, “Financing for Sustainable Development.” www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development. USAID funding for the health sector, for example, increased steadily from US\$2.5 million in 2005 to about US\$30 million in 2016/17. As the political landscape changed, the funding for governance decreased over the same period from about US\$10 million to about US\$3 million. USAID, “Foreign Aid Explorer.” https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd/BDI?fiscal_year=2018&measure=Obligations
6. The net bilateral official development aid flows of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors reached a high of US\$413 million in 2010, dropped to US\$286 million in 2012, and hit a low of US\$217 million in 2015. IWACU Open Data, “The Open Data Portal about Burundi.” <https://iwacu-burundi.org/opendata/iob-bu-086-aide-bilaterale/>
7. Eva Palmans, “Evolution de la Société Civile au Burundi,” in *L’Afrique des Grands Lacs. Annuaire 2005–2006*, Filip Reyntjens and Stefaan Marysse (eds), Paris: L’Harmattan, 2007, p. 210.
8. The CNDD-FDD – Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie-Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy) – was (and remains) the ruling party. The CNDD-FDD is a former Hutu rebel movement that joined the government in 2004, before going on to win elections in 2005, 2010, and 2015.
9. United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, “How We Fund.” www.unpbf.org/how-we-fund/; <https://results.usaid.gov/results/country/burundi>
10. Eva Palmans, “Evolution de la Société Civile au Burundi,” in *L’Afrique des Grands Lacs. Annuaire 2005–2006*, Filip Reyntjens and Stefaan Marysse (eds), Paris: L’Harmattan, 2007, p. 229.
11. USAID, “2009 NGO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa, 1st Edition,” September 2010. Available: www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/2009_NGOSI_Africa.pdf
12. International Crisis Group, “Helping the Burundian People Cope with the Economic Crisis,” Africa Report No. 264, 31 August 2018, p. 12. Available: www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/burundi/264-soutenir-la-population-burundaise-face-la-crise-economique
13. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has registered almost 275,000 Burundian refugees and asylum seekers in other countries since 2015. In March 2018, UNHCR and Burundi’s Ministry of Interior reported a slight reverse trend, with over 20,000 Burundian refugees having returned home since September 2017.
14. United Nations Human Rights-Office of the High Commissioner, “Burundi: UN Experts Raise Alarm at Growing Repression of NGOs and Human Rights Defenders,” 6 February 2017. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21145>
15. Three members of a CSO who were preparing a conference on human rights abuses were arrested and accused of preparing an activity likely to disturb security. They were convicted and sentenced to ten years in prison. Voa Afrique, “Dix ans de prison pour trois membres de la société civile au Burundi,” 9 March 2018. www.voaafrique.com/a/dix-ans-de-prison-pour-trois-activistes-de-la-societe-civile-au-burundi/4287768.html
16. Rassemblement, Echanges et Solutions entre ONG (Gathering, Exchange, and Solutions Between NGOs).
17. RESO received support from donors to advocate against certain measures the government wanted in the law, particularly related to banking and taxation, that were inconsistent with cooperation agreements.
18. Radio Publique Africaine, “Le gouvernement burundais accuse la société civile de bénéficier des aides destinées à la population.” www.rpa.bi/index.php/2011-08-15-07-10-58/politique/item/2559-le-gouvernement-burundais-accuse-la-societe-civile-de-beneficier-des-aides-destinees-a-la-population

19. BBC News, "Bruxelles suspend des projets au Burundi," 2 October 2018. www.bbc.com/afrique/region/2015/10/151002_burundi_belgique.shtml
20. The Agreement provides for the suspension or change in terms of EU aid if one of the parties does not respect human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law.
21. USAID, "2012 Civil Society Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa." Available: www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/CSOSI_AFR_2012.pdf
22. International Crisis Group, "Helping the Burundian People Cope with the Economic Crisis," Africa Report No. 264, 31 August 2018, p. 19. Available: www.crisisgroup.org/afrika/central-afrika/burundi/264-soutenir-la-population-burundaise-face-la-crise-economique
23. International Crisis Group, "Helping the Burundian People Cope with the Economic Crisis," Africa Report No. 264, 31 August 2018, p. 14. Available: www.crisisgroup.org/afrika/central-afrika/burundi/264-soutenir-la-population-burundaise-face-la-crise-economique
24. In Kirundi, "Nawe nuze" means "You too, welcome."
25. Sherif Rushdy, "Learning about Organizational Transformation," CARE Burundi, 2014, p. 9.
26. This inaugurated a series of reflections and working sessions that were facilitated by external experts and regional CARE staff. Sherif Rushdy, "Learning about Organizational Transformation," CARE Burundi, 2014, p. 7.
27. Sherif Rushdy, "Learning about Organizational Transformation," CARE Burundi, 2014, p. 12.
28. Sherif Rushdy, "Learning about Organizational Transformation," CARE Burundi, 2014, p. 35.
29. Very recently, GLID was able to hire a project manager, whose proposal writing and fundraising experience has helped the organization secure three new partnerships.
30. Sherif Rushdy, "Learning about Organizational Transformation," CARE Burundi, 2014.
31. The CARE learning study reflected on this point: "... instead of thinking of the partnership approach as one that increases risk and may reduce quality, it has to be seen as reducing the risk of CARE being blind to the realities of the field and distorting development approaches and responses by its foreign image ..." Sherif Rushdy, "Learning about Organizational Transformation," CARE Burundi, 2014, p. 47.
32. Sherif Rushdy, "Learning about Organizational Transformation," CARE Burundi, 2014, p. 12.
33. International Crisis Group, "Helping the Burundian People Cope with the Economic Crisis," Africa Report No. 264, 31 August 2018, p. 17. Available: www.crisisgroup.org/afrika/central-afrika/burundi/264-soutenir-la-population-burundaise-face-la-crise-economique
34. In adapting Nawe Nuze, GLID is careful to adhere to its principles. For example, they did not agree to provide start-up funding (a "handout"), as that goes against the mission and values of the CARE approach.
35. It is significant that a government agent used the term civil society, as most CSOs are categorized as political opposition and mistrusted.
36. Sherif Rushdy, "Learning about Organizational Transformation," CARE Burundi, 2014, p. 12.
37. Care International Burundi, "About: Key Focus Areas," www.care.org.bi/about_keyfocusareas.php
38. This USAID-funded INGO had conducted an initial institutional assessment of GLID, which gave a satisfactory result, partly due to CARE systems and procedures being successfully complied with. Tailoring the reporting required assistance.
39. Sherif Rushdy, "Learning about Organizational Transformation," CARE Burundi, 2014, p. 34.
40. Sherif Rushdy, "Learning about Organizational Transformation," CARE Burundi, 2014, p. 35.
41. Sherif Rushdy, "Learning about Organizational Transformation," CARE Burundi, 2014, p. 38.
42. The question is linked to calls for proposals for consortia (EU, Netherlands, and others) in which local organizations are eligible to be the lead, sub-contracting INGOs or local NGO partners, a scenario that becomes more likely with the proposed "localization" of aid delivery.
43. Sherif Rushdy, "Learning about Organizational Transformation," CARE Burundi, 2014, p. 47.