



Kingdom of the Netherlands

spark

## AGRIBUSINESS INCUBATION NETWORK (ABIN) PROGRAMME IN BURUNDI



ENDTERM EVALUATION – FINAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2019

**PARS** Research  
Pan African Research Services Ltd

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is a result of close collaboration between SPARK and Pan African Research Services Limited (PARS). Special thanks go to all the stakeholders who enabled the success of this end term evaluation.

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Agri Business Creation	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
ABIN	Agri Business Incubation Network	MS	Microsoft
BBIN	Burundi Business Incubator	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
BBN	Burundi Bureau of Standards and Quality Control	OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
BIF	Burundian Francs	PARS	Pan African Research Services Limited
CNTA	National Center for Agricultural Technologies	PPP	Public Private Partnership
DAC	Development Assistance Committee	REGIDESO	Regie de Production et de Distribution d'eau et d'electricite
EKN	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands	SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization	SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
FGD	Focus Group Discussions	TOR	Terms of Reference
IITA	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture	UMVA	Universal Methods of Value Access
IPFB	Inter-Profession Fruits Burundi	VSLAs	Village Savings and Loans Associations
Kg	Kilogram	WFP	World Food Programme
KII	Key Informant Interview		

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SPARK has been implementing a programme funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Burundi known as Agri Business Incubation Network (ABIN) since 2014. The aim of the programme was to address Burundi's most pressing concerns, particularly food security and poverty alleviation.

This report presents a production of findings from the external end-term evaluation carried out by PARS Research for the Agri-Business Incubation (ABIN) programme. The evaluation aimed to gauge the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the programme, to identify lessons learned from the programme's 2014-2019 implementation and to formulate recommendations for similar future programming.

The evaluation was conducted across the three programme provinces in Burundi - Cibitoke, Bubanza and Rumonge. Key stakeholders were invited to give their opinion on the programme. The findings contained in this report were as a result of analysis of data collected in the field with beneficiaries through focus group discussions as well as key informant interviews conducted with a wide range of stakeholders including: programme staff, donor representative, local government officials and other local partners. Secondary data was collected from programme documents and data. Below is the summary of the findings:

### Relevance

The programme objectives were valid and continue to be relevant, given the country context, the needs of the target group, donor and local partners. In Burundi, Agriculture is the mainstay with approximately 90% of the population relying on subsistence agriculture. Arable land available is highly subdivided into smaller, overworked, and less productive plots. In turn, this leads to food shortages, poverty, and a lack of clean water which contribute to a 60% chronic malnutrition rate among children<sup>1</sup>. ABIN was also deemed unique by stakeholders as it offered services and innovations that were new and previously inaccessible to farmers and agribusinesses. The machinery at the incubation centres was also deemed to be unique and of high quality as no other organization was able provide them to community members.

The challenges of food insecurity and poverty were echoed by the beneficiaries who cited the main challenges they faced as unemployment (40%), poverty (33%) food insecurity (17%) lack of capital/finance

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<sup>1</sup> Burundi CIA Fact book 2019

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(7%) and lack of training (3%). The programme was deemed relevant by the beneficiaries as it sort to address these challenges.

The programme partnered with different stakeholders during its implementation. However, the existing partnerships at the time of the evaluation included CNTA (National Center for Agricultural Technologies), Burundi Fruits inter-professional organization, the office of local development and management of cooperatives movement and the federation of fishermen. According to these partners, the programme was relevant as it was in line with their mandate.

ABIN worked closely with the local governments in the provinces. The representatives of local governments believed the programme was relevant as it addressed issues of food security, poverty and unemployment which were rampant in their provinces. ABIN also complemented the Country's vision 2025, specifically Pillar 3 on economic Growth and the Fight against Poverty<sup>2</sup>. The pillar is anchored on the development of key sectors such as agriculture, which ABIN targeted.

ABIN was also in line with the donor's country strategy. According to the Royal Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Burundi, their country strategy included food and nutrition security sector. The strategy aimed at development reaching the family level at the rural areas and ABIN was seen as a pilot and a pioneer in changing the mind-set of the average farmer family.

## **Effectiveness**

ABIN successfully targeted women and youth (potential and existing agri-entrepreneurs) in three rural provinces of Burundi. The provinces targeted were vulnerable as they had been affected by the war and had a high number of people ex-combatants who were susceptible of continuing with violence activities. The programme reached all its target beneficiaries through community engagement, from previous projects and through existing community institutions. ABIN was always accessible to beneficiaries during its implementation period as 87% of the beneficiaries affirmed to get all the necessary information at the right time without wasting time and resources.

In terms of achievement of objectives, the programme established a total of 2 incubation centres; 1 in Cibitoke and 1 in Rumonge. The third planned incubation centre in Bubanza did not materialize due to lack of a suitable location for construction. However, with Cibitoke nearer to Bubanza, it was shared by community members in the two provinces. The incubator in Cibitoke was fully functional but the one in

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<sup>2</sup> 2011, Vision Burundi 2025, Ministry of Planning and Communal Development/Forecasting Unit  
United Nations Development Programme in Burundi

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Rumonge was partially operational, pending electricity connection. The incubators were centres of training for agro-processing and any other entrepreneurial themes. ABIN developed training modules and trained the community on processing, cooperatives formation, VSLAs, business plan development and financial literacy.

For the purpose of ensuring agro-entrepreneurs innovate, add value and increase their levels of production, ABIN provided the beneficiaries with training, coaching and mentoring on entrepreneurship development. Initially, ABIN had targeted to build capacity of 36 male and 24 female entrepreneurs but ended up exceeding the male target by 155% and the female target by 96%. During the evaluation, 1,187 entrepreneurs had participated in the incubation program, 963 in the outreach program, 1,037 in the intensive incubation program, and 416 emerged from the processing program.

ABIN also influenced the display of merchandise for the entrepreneurs through marketing training and construction of fruit and vegetable stalls. The stalls which were strategically placed near roads ensured their product were visible to their customer and kept away from direct sunshine through constructed shades. To address post-harvest losses, ABIN helped entrepreneurs construct evaporative coolers/charcoal coolers in Bubanza. These helped the entrepreneurs reduce their losses by keeping their produce fresh for longer and also increased their revenue by renting them out to other producers and sellers.

ABIN was also innovative in introducing the smoking of fish for fishermen and fish entrepreneurs in Rumonge. The innovation was introduced through training and construction of smoking ovens. This meant entrepreneurs could smoke and store their fish for weeks and sell them at better prices, and they could also transport them to other markets and sell larger volumes at better prices. Although the cold rooms were not yet functional due to delay in electricity connection and the transportation truck was not yet used by the Rumonge entrepreneurs, their operationalization was set to solve challenges of storing and transporting fresh fish.

## **Efficiency**

### **Cost-efficiency**

The activities of ABIN were considered cost efficient by stakeholders. The main finances were utilized in setting up of the incubators which the management ensured the equipment were of high value and quality for money. The functional incubators had already started making revenue which was saved for future use.

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ABIN leveraged on its partnership with the local government to reduce some of the unforeseen programme costs. The local government was key in the advocacy role in process of acquiring electricity for the Rutumo incubation centre. This resulted in ABIN acquiring the transformer at an affordable price, given the electricity company had initially quoted a very expensive price under the perception that ABIN was being implemented by an international NGO. The local government also paid compensation fees to community members whose land was used to install electricity poles.

The interventions of ABIN were value for money, but the purchase of the refrigeration truck was untimely. It was rarely used since the incubation centre in Rutumo was not fully operational. The management of Staff however was in constant look out for potential users and luckily found some who rented the truck.

### **Implementation and Programme timeliness**

ABIN's timeline was negatively affected by several factors. The 2015 conflicts forced the programme activities to halt for about six months due to volatility of the situation in the country. ABIN also experienced delays in the first year as the pursuit for suitable management took almost nine months and the government's decision to shut down all NGOs in 2018 caused a three month delay as SPARK applied for fresh registration as an NGO in Burundi. Operationalization of the Rutumo incubation centre was also negatively impacted by long bureaucratic procedures in connecting electricity to the centre. Despite challenges ABIN took advantage of the timeline extensions by the donor to implement the rest of the programme activities to the satisfaction of the beneficiaries.

### **Impact**

#### **Social cohesion**

ABIN brought together individuals from different ethnic backgrounds to work together in cooperatives, VSLAs and in the project. According to stakeholders, ABIN initiated unity in the community and reduced negative ethnicity. Government representatives also noted that ABIN's engagement of youth created unity and peace in the community. The engagement of youth in the programme was viewed as a way of engaging idle youth would have otherwise been influenced to participate in conflicts. Engagement of ex-combatants who were susceptible to continuing with violence activities also promoted peace in the community.



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ABIN through cooperatives and VSLAs enabled women to interact with each other and share ideas of development while also empowering them to contribute to household needs and have a voice in the household. Women of different ethnic and political backgrounds could come together and implement a plan, which they could not achieve individually. This was evidenced by the merging of cooperatives into federations which could achieve more than a single cooperative. The success of the federations was evinced by one in Bubanza which had developed a business plan, submitted it to World Bank and won funds to construction a processing unit.

### **Addressing food security**

ABIN contributed to food security in the provinces by helping transform harvests into value added products for storage and consumption. This diversified the beneficiaries' access to food. Prior to the programme, during the peak harvest seasons, community members were under pressure to sell their produce swiftly to avoid wastage and in turn ended up fetching low prices as the markets were already flooded with the produces. With the incubation centres, community members learnt how to process, store and sell their produce later when the market prices were favourable. ABIN helped beneficiaries to process cassava into cassava flour which provided options in consumption. They could prepare 'Bugali', which is a common household delicacy or bake cakes for consumption and sale. Cassava leaves are also popular vegetables and the beneficiaries were also taught how to process and store them for future consumption. Fruit processing also diversified food choices for the community. Juice from different fruits with different nutrients provided healthy diets for the community and for sale. The processing of honey at the incubation centres ensured they consumed safe and healthy honey.

ABIN introduced smoking as a way of preserving fish for better market prices and later consumption. The beneficiaries were trained and aided in building smoking ovens. Smoked fish was readily consumable and in a condition to be transported to other provinces within Burundi, providing food in other provinces too.

ABIN's contribution to food security was noticed by many stakeholders. In particular 13% of the beneficiaries rated ABIN's efforts in food security as very effective, 57% as effective, 23% were not sure and only 7% felt ABIN's efforts in food security were somewhat ineffective.

### **Creation of employment in the three provinces**

Most of the stakeholders agreed that ABIN had created employment both directly and indirectly. The entrepreneurs who had been trained had started processing and selling of their produce. For instance a

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honey processing cooperative was exporting honey to Oman, and a women's group in Cibitoke was processing cassava products and baking of cakes and selling them as their main source of income. In Bubanza, women were producing fruit juice and others earned their income from fruit stalls that were built with the help of ABIN. In Rumonge, the sale of smoked fish was deemed a source of income for beneficiaries and others. A Burundian living in Canada also approached ABIN and developed an export business of smoked Ndagala to Canada. During this process, his company hired up to 20 people per week in Rumonge.

ABIN's support and formation of VSLAS created access to finance for new business ventures, boosting the diversification of existing businesses. The VSLA formed under ABIN were helping their members in diversifying their income avenues and several members had diverged into rearing of pigs which increased their incomes.

Overall, beneficiaries celebrated ABIN and rated it as effective in terms of job creation for youth and women. A majority 58% of the beneficiaries rated ABIN's efforts in addressing unemployment as effective, 17% rated it as very effective, and 15% were undecided and only 10% felt ABIN was somewhat ineffective.

### **Unintended impacts**

The negative impact of the programme was the interference in the affairs of the cooperatives by other stakeholders. The success of the cooperatives under ABIN had attracted negative aspects as some of the community members wanted to join the cooperatives forcefully and without contributing any fees.

### **Sustainability**

#### **Sustainability of agribusinesses formed under ABIN**

Based on the views of different stakeholders and the views of the consultant, about 90% of the agribusinesses supported were likely to continue after the programme ended. Fruit and vegetable business in Bubanza were likely to continue as the VSLAs were strong in supporting the members and the members were keen to continue with the businesses. Application of the skills gained was also a key indicator of continuation and all the beneficiaries interviewed (100%) were committed to continuing practice of what they had learnt.

#### **Sustainability of the agribusiness incubators**

At the time of the evaluation, the incubators were not sustainable. All of the stakeholders interviewed agreed the incubators were not sustainable except the government stakeholders. The exit strategy for the incubators was vague as the private investor who were meant to take over the centres had not been established and the existing cooperatives were in no condition to take over operations. The exit strategy also failed in communicating to the beneficiaries on what was to happen after the programme, and these left many beneficiaries uninformed and afraid. However, the programme had engaged a law firm working with them to see their options in the exit strategy. The incubator in Rumonge was also not fully functional for it to be even considered sustainable. Incubators were also built on land that belonged to other institutions which posed a challenge on who will own them after ABIN ended.

The existing value chain network were weak and likely to collapse after the programme. The only strong linkage was between farmers and entrepreneurs as they needed raw materials for processing while farmers needed the income. The link to financial institution was poor and as the financial institution were not willing to offer credit to the entrepreneurs.

### **Lessons learned and best practices**

The evaluation captured key lessons and best practices in the formation and supporting agribusiness incubators in Burundi, supporting agribusinesses and the opportunities to promote the creation and development of agribusinesses and the opportunities in establishing value chain networks in Burundi as follows;

#### **1. Formation and supporting agribusiness incubators in Burundi**

The incubators are key components in developing agribusinesses but need a strong management system that balances the operations and needs of the beneficiaries. The incubators also need high quality machinery and technical expertise in operating them. Transferring the expertise to entrepreneurs is also key to survival of the incubators. Certification of processors is key for access to markets.

The key opportunities in promoting the institutional aspects of the incubators include a private public partnerships (PPP), development of a committee that oversees the operation of the incubators and construction of the incubators in own or communities' land. Formation and training of cooperatives is also an opportunity that can prepare them enough to run the incubators.

#### **2. Best practices in supporting agribusinesses and the opportunities to promote the creation and development of agribusinesses in Burundi**

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Research and innovation enables agribusinesses to exploit new ideas, improve processes, and bring new and improved products and services to the market, increase efficiency and, most importantly, improve profitability.

The key best practices included capacity building and offering technical advice to entrepreneurs. This changes and strengthens their mentality which expand their capacity to operate and expand efficient businesses.

Incorporating VSLAs to agribusinesses provides an access to finance component that boosts the businesses capital and increases their sustainability.

Scouting and identification of strong and reliable markets is vital for agribusinesses. Without identifying markets for the end produce, products may lack market and end up in losses for the business.

The key opportunities lie in developing other incubators within Burundi, offering technical advice to agribusinesses and developing business in other value chains such as rice, sweet potatoes and bananas.

### 3. Best practices and opportunities in establishing value chain networks

Conducting value chain analysis prior to a programme helps in identification of gaps and foreseeable challenges whose solutions can be devised prior to developing the network.

Strong value chain networks are vital to developing agribusinesses. Networks that include farmers, processors, technical advisers, markets and financial institutions are key for the success of agribusinesses.

In the context of Burundi, finding alternatives to financial institutions such as VSLAS in a value chain network helps agribusinesses in access to finance. This is due to the reluctance of financial institutions to offering finances to new businesses due to perceived high risks.

Key opportunities in developing networks that include research and learning institutions. Most learning institutions in Burundi lack proper equipment for training and learning. Incorporating them would provide learning opportunities. Incorporating value chain analysis research for future value chain networks will help in identifying solutions to challenges before they even begin.

## Recommendations

A second phase of ABIN programme is highly recommended with emphasis on the sustainability of the incubators, certification of agribusinesses, and development of key value chain networks. The equipment and resources of ABIN should be handed over to the next phase or to another Spark led programme

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that is supported by the EKN. This will ensure continuity of the programme so that people can continue learning and being trained without losing the infrastructure. The next phase and future programming should;

- Engage the national governments by lobbying through the embassy and local leaders. This will improve the relevance of the programme at a national stage and will reduce the bureaucratic procedures that challenged agri-entrepreneurs in the ABIN programme
- Scout and vet local partners and staff for implementation. This will improve the efficiency of programming as most suitable and reliable partners will be identified at the inception phases, avoiding poor performance and dropping out of partners
- Develop attractive remuneration for staff. High staff turnover is usually remuneration based as staff look for better options. This impacts the programme negatively as more time is spent looking for replacements. Better remunerations will attract the best staff and reduce high staff turnovers
- Develop a reliable exit plan from the onset of the programme. This plan should be communicated with the beneficiaries during the programme inception to avoid confusion at the end of the programme.
- Capacity building of cooperatives and VSLAs on management and basic accounting. This will improve their operations and thus enable them to file their transactions which will improve their chances of access to credit from financial institutions.
- Develop a stable value chain networks by conducting thorough value chain analysis, identifying the challenges and developing interventions for the challenges.
- Develop a strong monitoring system that can be linked to the UMVA (Universal Methods of Value Access on the internet) system. This will improve real time monitoring of outcomes for programmes.

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

SPARK is a Non-Governmental Organization from the Netherlands which offers access to higher education and supports entrepreneurship development in fragile states so that young, ambitious people can lead their societies into stability and prosperity<sup>3</sup>. SPARK started activities in Burundi towards the end of 2011. Since then, SPARK Burundi has helped in the creation of more than 300 SMEs and several direct and indirect jobs have been created especially for young people. To achieve this, SPARK Burundi works with local organizations, various government institutions, and the private sector in order to contribute to the economic development and stability of the country<sup>4</sup>.

With funding from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Burundi, SPARK has been implementing the Agri Business Incubation Network (ABIN) programme since 2014. The aim of the programme was to contribute to the creation of incubators and employment opportunities in rural areas, particularly those of women and youth, in three targeted intervention provinces of Burundi.

### Country Context

Burundi is a small country with a surface area of 27,830 km<sup>2</sup> and a projected 11.2 million population as of 2018. It is the second most densely populated country in Africa with 470 inhabitants per square kilometre<sup>5</sup>. It is considered one of the poorest countries in the world with a poverty rate of [74.7%](#). With a growing population and two-thirds of its population under 25 years, a birth rate of about 6 children per woman, the country's population creates an added strain on a poor country. Burundi's economy was largely affected by the 1993-2005 civil war<sup>6</sup> and again in the wake of the political and security crisis in 2015. The economy has been in recession since 2015 and the people's living conditions and access to services deteriorated. With worsening unemployment and poverty rates, step up in aid to the people through Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) is vital in combating poverty, food insecurity,

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<sup>3</sup> SPARK'S Mission

<sup>4</sup> Agri-Business Incubation Network (ABIN) 2018 Narrative Report

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burundi/overview>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/burundi/264-soutenir-la-population-burundaise-face-la-crise-economique>

unemployment and access to basic services. The agricultural sector is the mainstay of the country's economy, employing about 80% of the population. Arable land is scarce and poverty overwhelmingly affects small rural farmers.<sup>7</sup> Thus aid in diversification and expansion of agribusiness is vital for job creation and battling food insecurity.

### **Programme design**

On the backdrop of the challenges of food insecurity, poverty and unemployment in Burundi, The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands funded the Agri-Business Incubation Network programme, designed and implemented by SPARK. The programme was implemented in Cibitoke, Bubanza and Rumonge in rural Burundi, targeting five value chains; i.e. Cassava, Tropical fruits, Honey, Tomato and Fish. These value chains were selected based on their availability in the target provinces as well as their economic impact on the livelihoods of the community members. The programme's goal was to increase the availability of food and jobs in rural areas, especially for women and youth. Specifically, the programme had four strategic objectives which included;

1. To establish a network of agribusiness incubation centres in rural areas of Burundi, particularly in Cibitoke and Rumonge.
2. Provide services for potential agro-entrepreneurs (especially for women and youth) and existing agro-enterprises to enable them to innovate, add value, and increase their production level.
3. develop new markets and;
4. Encouraging women to get involved in socio-economic activities.

The strategic objectives of the programme were conceptualized into 3 result areas which were:

1. Operationalization of three agribusiness incubation centers including in-house expertise, an established network of external services, and a value chain and entrepreneurship strategy for the target provinces. Incubation centers are an inspiring example of initiatives in other regions;
2. Sustainable development of agribusiness: rural agro-enterprises increase their capacity and competitiveness through better absorption capacity and access to technological innovations, improved access to finance and commercial links;

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burundi/overview>

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3. Existence of a dynamic network of entrepreneurs, private and public institutions, experts and investors who constitute a platform for innovation and the visibility of business success

### **Study Purpose and objectives**

In September 2019, Spark engaged PARS to conduct the end term evaluation of Agribusiness Incubation Network Programme (ABIN) in the Programme provinces with the aim of establishing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the programme, identifying lessons learned from the programme's 2014-2019 implementation and formulating recommendations for similar future programming.

Specifically, this final evaluation aimed at answering the following evaluation-questions:

#### **Relevance**

- How relevant was the programme to the needs of its target group?
- How relevant was the programme to the needs of its donor?
- How relevant was the programme to the needs of its local partners?
- Were the activities, outputs and outcomes of the programme consistent with the objectives of the programme and their attainment?
- ABIN's implementation focus was gender sensitive, good governance and environmental development in the most conflict affected society; thus ABIN's relevance to the social, economic, environmental and political aspect of the target country (Burundi) was also measured.

#### **Efficiency**

- How efficient was the programme's operational structure?
- Were the activities of the programme cost-efficient?

#### **Effectiveness**

- How effective was the programme in reaching its target group?
- To what extent did the programme promote the institutional aspects of the supported agribusiness incubators?



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- To what extent did the programme promote innovation and visibility of successful agri-entrepreneurship in Burundi?
  - How effective were the local partners of the programme in implementing their activities?

### ***Sustainability***

- How sustainable are the agribusinesses supported by the programme?
- How sustainable are the agribusiness incubator supported by the programme?
- How sustainable is the network of (agri) entrepreneurs, private and public institutions, experts and investors established by the programme?

### ***Impact***

- To what extent did the programme contribute to food security in the Bubanza Cibitoke and Rumonge provinces?
- To what extent did the programme create employment opportunities in the Bubanza Cibitoke and Rumonge provinces?
- Is there any unintended (positive and/or negative) impact in the Bubanza and Cibitoke provinces induced by the programme?

### ***Lessons Learned***

- What are the (most pivotal) best practices in supporting agribusiness incubators in Burundi?
- What opportunities exist in promoting the institutional aspects of agribusiness incubators in Burundi?
- What are the (most pivotal) best practices in supporting agribusinesses in Burundi?
- What opportunities exist in promoting agribusiness creation and development in Burundi?
- What are the (most pivotal) best practices in establishing a network of (agri) entrepreneurs, private and public institutions, experts and investors in Burundi?
- What opportunities exist in establishing a network of (agri) entrepreneurs, private and public institutions, experts and investors in Burundi?

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## **Recommendations**

- What can be done in similar future programmes to promote further their relevance?
- What can be done in similar future programmes to promote further their efficiency?
- What can be done in similar future programmes to promote further their effectiveness?
- What can be done in similar future programmes to promote further their sustainability?
- What can be done in similar future programmes to promote further their impact?
- What general practical and context-relevant considerations could be taken in the management and implementation of similar future programmes?

The PARS team conducted both desk and field research in order to produce this report, which contains the final evaluation, a synthesis of lessons learnt as well as recommendations for future programming.

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## EVALUATION APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

### Evaluation approach and framework

The end term evaluation of the Agri-Business Incubation Programme (ABIN) adopted the OECD/DAC<sup>8</sup> framework and guidelines for best practice in evaluation.

### Methodology

The approach of this evaluation was founded upon the principles of: systematic inquiry; competency; integrity and honesty; participation; and respecting the interests of partners and the public. In line with this, PARS Research employed participatory mixed methods for the evaluation. This was attained through a multi-method design of in-depth interviews/Key informant interviews and focus group discussions, direct observation and the review and analysis of programme documents as well as other related secondary sources of information.

The evaluation was implemented in three main phases: An inception phase, a field investigation phase and a synthesis and feedback phase.

The Inception phase included discussions and agreement on methodology, evaluation schedule, and logistics, detailing the primary and secondary sources of data; development of tools to be used and applied in the field/data collection phase and preparation of the inception report.

The field investigation phase involved field missions applying the plan (Annex 2) developed during the inception phase. These included visits to programme implementation areas of Cibitoke, Bubanza and Rumonge. During the visits, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected.

The synthesis, review and feedback focused on analysis and interpretation of findings from the field investigation for the preparation and submission of the Final Evaluation report.

### Data collection Methods

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

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The evaluation adopted a mixed methodology design, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect primary and secondary data. The key methods used included a literature review, focus group discussion, key informant interviews, observation and case studies. These methods were done as follows;

### Literature Review

This phase mainly involved **contextual research**; through thorough and systematic **document review and analysis** of qualitative and quantitative information, contained in relevant document sources. To support the desk review, secondary information was availed by the programme staff and in addition, PARS identified other sources for appropriate additional information. Documents for review included but not limited to:

- Programme proposal (including log frame)
- Programme baseline and midterm survey report
- The 2018 narrative report
- 2016 narrative report
- 2015 Narrative report
- ABIN Monitoring Protocol - Final Updated
- M&E working document\_ABIN2019
- Existing data collection and monitoring tools (from the midterm evaluation)

Other relevant documents from external sources included:

- Reports on similar programmes or other interventions targeting agribusinesses
- WFP Burundi Country Brief, July 2019
- Burundi Vision 2025
- ABC Endterm evaluation

## Qualitative methods

The key qualitative methods used include focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Qualitative information enabled the evaluation to acquire valuable insights regarding people's subjective perceptions, expert information, and deep-rooted beliefs and feelings. The methods used were as follow:

### Focus group discussions (FGDs)

This is a qualitative research method in which 8 to 12 respondents are invited to a central location to discuss the subject. Sampling of the participants was done randomly after beneficiaries were invited to a central location. In focus groups, interaction of people's perceptions and beliefs can bring about a collective response that is extremely valuable and which provides detailed information on the intangible and often ambiguous habits and attitudes, which cannot be obtained through standard quantitative interviews. A trained moderator steered the focus group discussions through the use of an unstructured discussion guide.

Focus group discussions were conducted with target Agri-entrepreneurs in rural Burundi (programme areas). Specifically, they were conducted in Cibitoke, Bubanza and Rumonge. Respondents were invited to articulate details of their experiences with regards to their interaction with the ABIN programme, their attitude and perception of the programme, how they had taken advantage of the programme and what they had gained. A total of 5 focus group discussions were conducted. These were as follows:

Table 1: Final Program Evaluation FGDs

Region	Youth	Women	Total
Cibitoke	1	1	2
Bubanza	1 (Youth women-led cooperatives)/(Adult Women-led VSLAs )		1
Rumonge	1 (fishing coop members)- mixed youth men and women	1 (VSLAs)	2
Total	3	2	5

## Key informant interviews (KIs)/In-depth interviews

This is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive one on one individual interviews with a small number of respondents, to explore their perspective on specific topics, using an interview guide.

KIs/In-depth interviews are useful when you want specific details about a programme. The primary advantage of KIs is that they provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as quantitative surveys. They also provide a more relaxed atmosphere in which to collect information. People feel more comfortable having a conversation with you about their perception and views as opposed to filling out a questionnaire. During the field work phase of the evaluation, a total of 8 Key informant interviews were conducted with stakeholders as shown in the table below.

Table 2: KIs conducted

Region		No. of key informants
	<b>Key informant Interviews</b>	
<b>Cibitoke</b>	Governor's representative; cooperatives head;	2
<b>Rumonge</b>	Governor, President of the Federation of fishermen	2
<b>Bujumbura</b>	Pyt Douma (Spark Consultant), CNTA, Donor representative (EKN), IPFB representative/Vice chairperson of the manufacturers association	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>8</b>

## Observation

In order to verify physical assets introduced by the programme as well as observe the entrepreneurial activities the beneficiaries of the programme, observation was used and photographs taken. Photographs taken included of the incubation centres, beneficiaries utilizing the centres and in their economic activities.

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## **Case studies**

Case studies aim to provide descriptive data on the emerging good examples, practices or models in the programme that can be documented and showcased for learning, scale up and replication among others. Two case studies with beneficiaries were conducted and photos of the beneficiaries in their activities taken. The case studies were with 1 youth entrepreneur and 1 female entrepreneur.

## **Quantitative Methods**

### **Mini survey**

Face to face interviews were conducted with participants of focus group discussions to get a quantitative view of the aspects of the programme. A sample size of 30 respondents was chosen as it is the minimum analysable sample in a professional research.

### **Data collection**

Both quantitative and qualitative tools were used. The consultant used prior developed guidelines to collect information from all respondents. The tools for FGDs, KIIs and the mini survey were agreed on by the client and the PARS. KIIs and FGDs data was collected through trained moderator and recorded with an audio recorder. SPARK's staff were involved as observers. A quantitative questionnaire was administered to beneficiaries prior to their participation in the focus groups.

### **Data entry and analysis**

Data from the mini survey was analysed using SPSS and MS Excel. The consultant summarized the qualitative information collected from KIIs and organised groups. Most of the information collected has been incorporated in the main report, especially in generating the findings and recommendations.

### **Justification of methods and techniques used**

The consultant determined the methodology based on information provided by the TOR and SPARK. The tools adopted are universally accepted in the end term evaluation data collection. The development of the guidelines was discussed and agreed with SPARK prior to the field study to ensure data collected was relevant to the needs of the evaluation.

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### Security and risk mitigation

Security of evaluators and participants in an evaluation is an utmost priority for PARS. Given the security situation in Burundi, PARS utilized its experience working in similar environments to ensure a successful evaluation, without risking the lives of both the evaluators and the participants of the evaluation. The use of Burundian staff and guidance from the SPARK team in the field were the strategies used to mitigate any security risk.

### Ethical Considerations

The research team members in the evaluation were professional qualitative researchers. The respondents and participants were assured of confidentiality of the data collected and informed consents were sought prior to interviews and taking of photographs. The ‘Do No Harm’<sup>9</sup> principle was employed at all times during the evaluation to protect respondents and participants. Data collected will be the property of SPARK and will be submitted along with the final evaluation report.

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Do No Harm’ principles state that aid is not neutral. Aid – and how it is administered – can cause harm or can strengthen capacities for peace in the midst of conflict-affected communities.



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## FINDINGS

### Relevance

The programme objectives were valid and continued to be relevant given the country context, the needs of the target group, donor and local partners. ABIN sought to address the challenges of poverty, food insecurity and unemployment.

#### Relevance to Burundi's context

In the country's context, Burundi is a densely populated country with factors such as land scarcity and poverty placing the majority of its population at risk of food insecurity. Agriculture is the mainstay with approximately 90% of the population relying on subsistence agriculture. Arable land available is highly subdivided into smaller, overworked, and less productive plots. In turn, this leads to food shortages, poverty, and a lack of clean water which contribute to a 60% chronic malnutrition rate among children<sup>10</sup>.

#### How relevant was the programme to the needs of its target group?

The programme objectives were also in line with the needs of the target group. ABIN targeted agri-entrepreneurs and potential agri-entrepreneurs who cited their challenges prior to joining the programme as; poverty, unemployment, poor agribusiness skills, lack of capital, post-harvest losses and lack of market linkages. The challenges were as presented in the chart below based on a questionnaire administered to beneficiaries.

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<sup>10</sup> Burundi CIA Fact book 2019

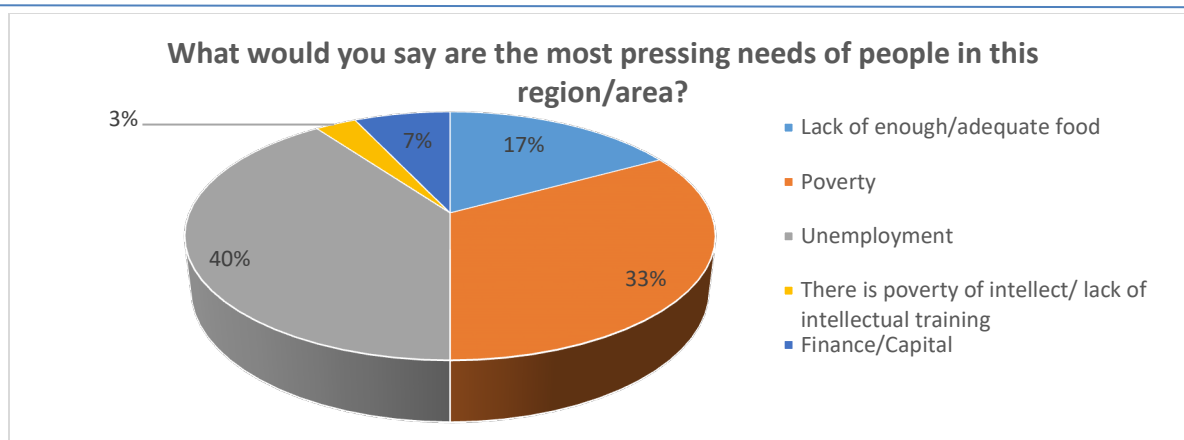


Figure 1: Pressing needs/ challenges affecting people in the target regions of Burundi

The programme sought to address these challenges and in implementation considered the needs and culture of the people through continuous engagement with community. Poverty also affected the design of the programme as some of the target beneficiaries could not afford to contribute the 60% required to implement their business plans.

*“Before the programme, we did not have any knowledge about financial management of a cooperative.” – FGD, Bubanza*

*“Before ABIN we did not have an understanding of how to do business.”- FGD, Women, Cibitoke*

*“The programme did not impose anything on us, instead they would ask us what we want to do and then, they would support us. Also, I can say that they respected our culture because our people have been producing honey for generations and through ABIN, we are producing and adding value through processing.” FGD, Cibitoke.*

ABIN was also seen as unique by stakeholders as it offered services and innovations that were not previously available to the community members. Innovations such as the charcoal cooler, smoking of fish, cassava baking ovens as well as farming mushrooms from cassava waste were seen as key innovation introduced by the programme. The machines at the incubation centers were also of high quality and value such that organizations could not afford to provide them to the community.

*“The machinery in these incubators is of high value and great quality. I don’t see it spoiling in the next twenty years. We couldn’t get such machinery due to their cost and to see Spark providing them in the community is a very high achievement.” – KII, CNTA*

**How relevant was the programme to the needs of its local partners?**

The programme partnered with different stakeholders during its implementation. Some partnerships fell through but despite the challenges, the programme maintained a great synergy with relevant partners such as CNTA (National Center for Agricultural Technologies), Burundi Fruits inter-professional organization and the office of local development and management of cooperatives movement, federation of fishermen.

CNTA worked under the ministry of environment and were in charge of managing post-harvest through conservation of harvest in different forms for long lasting storage and prevention of food wastage. CNTA's mandate was to transfer technologies at the center to people in rural areas. CNTA partnered with ABIN through training beneficiaries on cassava processing technologies. ABIN aided CNTA in carrying out their mandate and ensuring feasible technologies are availed in the rural areas.

*"In Cibitoke we worked with ABIN on the cassava value chain, we trained on technologies to transform cassava into two types of flour, improved and GARI. We also trained 20 women who are now working on the cassava value chain."* – KII, CNTA

The office of local development and management of cooperatives movement's mandate was the oversight of cooperatives and it partnered with the programme in formation and sensitization of cooperatives in the programme.

Burundi Fruits inter-professional organization is an organization for fruit processors and was key in mentoring and training beneficiaries with their vast experience in fruit juice processing.

The federation of fishermen's mandate was the regulation of fishing and beach management. Fishermen and fish traders targeted by the programme were members of the federation. Regulation on fishing to avoid depletion was set to be promoted by ABIN's cold storage systems. This will ensure fishermen and businessmen would store fish during peak fishing seasons to sell later and thus prevent fish depletion.

### **How relevant was the programme to the needs of its donor?**

The programme was in line with the strategy of the donor. The Royal Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Burundi has a country strategy which features a food and nutrition security component. This aims to contribute to the stability and development of Burundi through investment in the rural population, at the family level. This includes changing the mind-set of the average farmer family. ABIN was seen as a pilot and a pioneer in changing the mind-set of the average farmer family.

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## **Were the activities, outputs and outcomes of the programme consistent with the objectives of the programme and their attainment?**

Interviews with staff and discussions with beneficiaries affirmed that the activities of the project were geared towards achieving the programme's main goal and addressing the pertinent challenges of unemployment and food insecurity in the 3 provinces.

Despite ABIN's efforts and successes in increasing the availability of food and jobs in rural areas, it cannot completely eradicate the challenges of food insecurity and unemployment in the country by itself given time and scope limitations. It is therefore important to incorporate advocacy from the EKN, partner with other EKN programmes and lobby with the governors to solve some of the issues that affected implementation of activities.

### **Effectiveness**

In this section, the evaluation assessed the extent to which the objectives of the *ABIN programme* were achieved.

#### **Effectiveness in reaching the target group**

ABIN targeted Women and youth (potential and existing agri-entrepreneurs) in rural Burundi. The provinces where the programme was implemented were selected based on the vulnerability of the people as the selected 3 had been affected by the war and with a high number of people ex-combatants who were susceptible to continuing with violence activities. The programme reached all its target beneficiaries through community engagement, from previous projects and through existing community institutions. Apart from direct recruitment from the community, the programme engaged beneficiaries of SPARK's programmes previously implemented in Burundi as ABC only focused on production while ABIN was focused on processing. Recruiting of fish traders was done by engaging small groups of women that were selling fish on the market and aiding them to develop cooperatives. The federation of fishermen was also used to introduce fish traders to the programme.

*"We targeted province that had experienced war and people were selected by approaching the communities, small groups of women entrepreneurs, the federation of fishermen and previous beneficiaries of the ABC programme."* – Staff, mini group

#### **Achievement of objectives**

## Establishment and operationalization of a network of agribusiness incubation centres in rural areas of Burundi

The programme established 2 incubation centres in Cibitoke and Rumonge. The incubators were centres of training in terms of agro-processing and any other themes in the entrepreneurial world. ABIN developed training modules and trained the community on processing, cooperatives formation, VSLAs,



*Figure 2 Cassava and fruit processing equipment in Cibitoke incubation center*

business plan development and financial literacy. The incubation centre in Cibitoke was functional with fruit, cassava and honey processing being undertaken by beneficiaries. Cooperatives were charged a small fee whenever they started producing. This fee was meant to cater for future maintenance of the incubator. The incubator was also used by households within the area to process cassava for consumption. The incubator in Rumonge was partially in operation as the electricity was yet to be connected. This incubator was meant for processing and storage of fish. The cold room equipment had been purchased but were yet to be installed due to the delayed electricity connection. Notably, during the evaluation, business women were smoking fish and storing them in the storage suits built by ABIN.







*Figure 3: Beneficiary smoking fish (Ndagala) and the fish after smoking*

The planned incubation centre in Bubanza did not materialize due to lack of a suitable location to construction. The ideal location would have had to be next to a road, have running water and electricity. Finding such an area was deemed difficult and the funds reallocated to other project activities. However, with Cibitoke nearer to Bubanza, the Cibitoke incubator was available for both provinces.

### **Promotion of the institutional aspects of the supported agribusiness incubators**

At the time of the evaluation, ABIN had employed two supervisors for the incubators. The roles of the supervisors was to oversee and manage the activities of the incubators. The programme sensitized and trained entrepreneurs on formation of cooperatives and the use of the incubators.

The programme built capacity of entrepreneurs by training, coaching, and mentoring them on entrepreneurship development from established incubation centres. Initially, ABIN had targeted to build capacity of 36 male and 24 female entrepreneurs. Notably, the programme exceeded the male target by 155% and the female target by 96% as shown in the table below.

*Table 3: Outcomes on result area I*

Indicator Description	Target	Indicator Result

<b>Monitoring protocol</b>		
Number of <u>potential male</u> entrepreneurs provided training, coaching, and/or mentoring on entrepreneurship development from established incubation centres (or BBIN)	<b>36</b>	<b>82</b>
Number of <u>potential female</u> entrepreneurs provided training, coaching, and/or mentoring on entrepreneurship development from established incubation centres (or BBIN)	<b>24</b>	<b>42</b>
Number of <u>existing male</u> entrepreneurs provided training, coaching, and/or mentoring on entrepreneurship development from established incubation centres (or BBIN)	<b>24</b>	<b>13</b>
Number of existing <u>female</u> entrepreneurs provided training, coaching, and/or mentoring on entrepreneurship development from established incubation centres (or BBIN)	<b>16</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Logical framework</b>		
Number of learning and incubation centres built	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
Number of learning and incubation centres equipped	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
The Incubation Centre of Rutumo has been supplied with electricity	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
Number of service contracts signed with a third party	<b>20</b>	
Number of staff recruited for the Incubation Centre of Rutumo	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
Number of staff supporting the incubation centres trained to be trainers	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>

*Source: Project Narrative report.*

The cooperatives would then process their products for market test and later sign a co-managing contract with the centre and start processing in the centre with well-defined terms of working. At the time of evaluation, five cooperatives had already signed co-managing contracts to use the processing lines; i.e. CDIC on the cassava processing line; COOPACI & COTRA-MIEL on the honey treatment line, BESTA FOOD & FAFIFRUITROBU on the fruits processing line<sup>11</sup>. These cooperatives paid a specific fee

<sup>11</sup> 2018 ABIN Narrative report

per day of work and thus generating revenue for the incubation centres. Noteworthy, ABIN had an operating budget for the incubators and funds from the cooperatives were saved for future running of the incubators.



*Figure 4: ARABIC 4 Fruit processing machine in the Cibitoke center and fruit jam processed at the incubation center by Besta*

However, the Rutumo (Rumonge) incubation center had attracted a Burundian living in Canada and who owned a fish export business named Genesis. The entrepreneur was interested in working in the incubation center and after discussions with SPARK, had started working with the four cooperatives in the center. SPARK trained him on how to develop his business further, but no contract had been signed as the center was not fully operational.



*Figure 5: packing bags for Ndagala in Rumonge that Genesis uses to export*



**To provide services for potential agro-entrepreneurs (especially for women and youth) and existing agro-enterprises to enable them to innovate, add value and increase their level production**

In order to enable agro-entrepreneurs to innovate, add value and increase their level production, tailor made training on incubation was key. These training were deemed vital by the beneficiaries and the outcomes were as follows;

*Table 4: Outcomes on result area 2*

outcome	Target	End of project evaluation
Number of entrepreneurs that have participated in the incubation program	300	1,187
Number of entrepreneurs that have emerged from the outreach program	200	963
Number of entrepreneurs that have emerged from the intensive incubation program	305	1,037
Number of entrepreneurs that have emerged from processing program	255	416

Through the training and new technologies, the programme inspired innovation in agro entrepreneurship. The incubation centre in Cibitoke provided cooperatives with high quality processors which converted Cassava into grade I flour. A women group in Cibitoke was using the flour for cake baking, drying the leaves and storing them for later use and using the cassava peels to grow mushrooms. This innovation introduced new products for the group to sell and consume within their households. At the time of the evaluation, the group had built a processing zone that included a cleaning bay, drying facilities, stone built ovens and a storage facility.



*Figure 6: Cassava baking oven and the preparation bay*

The programme also influence the display of merchandise for the entrepreneurs through marketing training and construction of fruit and vegetable stalls. The stalls which were strategically placed near roads ensured their product were visible to their customers and kept away from direct sunshine through constructed shades.



*Figure 7: Fruit and vegetable stall constructed by ABIN in Bubanza*



Post-harvest loss is one of the most rampant challenges facing farmers and agri-entrepreneurs. ABIN helped entrepreneurs construct evaporative coolers/charcoal coolers in Bubanza. These helped the entrepreneurs reduce their losses and also increase their revenue by renting them out to other producers and sellers. The storage kept the produce fresh for longer and that meant the entrepreneurs could store them during peak season and sell them when the market was favourable, thus increasing their income. Notable, the entrepreneurs were committed to the construction of the coolers and contributed 20% of the construction fee as a women-led federation.

*“This cooling system helps us to keep our produces for long and actually release them when the market is favorable to us. Whereas before we would rush to sell because fruits risks being perished.” – FGD, Bubanza*



*Figure 8: Charcoal coolers constructed by ABIN in Bubanza*

Prior to the programme, fishermen and fish entrepreneurs in Rumonge sold their fish in raw form straight from the lake. This meant they could only sell them within a limited time and within the nearby markets to avoid losses due to lack of proper storage and preservation facilities. In turn, their products ended up fetching poor prices and other going to waste. ABIN introduced fish smoking through training and construction of smoking ovens for the entrepreneurs. This meant entrepreneurs could smoke and

store their fish for weeks and sell them at better prices, and they could also transport them to other markets and sell larger volumes at better prices. Although the cold rooms were not yet functional and the transportation truck was not yet available to the entrepreneurs, their operationalization was posed to solve challenges of storing and transporting of fresh fish.



Figure 9: Figure: Drying bays and incubation centre at Rutumo

### **Effectiveness of local partners in implementing programme's activities**

Initially, ABIN targeted to work with local partners known as BBIN in the implementation of the programme. However the partnership fell through in 2017 due to poor working relations. BBIN's poor delivery of assigned roles, demand for more budget and failure to attend key programme meetings led to the fall out<sup>12</sup>. BBIN's roles included, partnering with Spark to develop the incubators, being the central coordinator are operational including in-house expertise, and established network of external services and a strategy for value chain and entrepreneurship development for the provinces. Other BBIN roles included training, mentoring, organizing workshops and organizing match making meetings for entrepreneurs. Spark was able to handle these roles, aided by the partners such as CNTA and Burundi Fruits inter-professional organization. These partners trained beneficiaries and provided mentorship through their extensive experience. The partners were mainly invited for coaching and mentorship which they implemented perfectly as per the project staff.

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<sup>12</sup> ABIN Midterm evaluation report

“With ABIN through our juice company we help those who go to the center to be trained, we share experience in terms of standards and quality, and we mentor them.” – KII, - Burundi Fruits inter-professional organization

“We have worked with ABIN in training entrepreneurs on cassava transformation and we saw them present cassava products in exhibitions and realized they were applying the training.” – KII, - CNTA

“Would invite some organization like CNTA or Burundi Fruits inter-professional organization for training and other coaching sessions which they had experience in and carried out very well.” – Mini Group, Project Staff

**The achievement of other outputs was as shown below:**

*Table 5: Outcomes on result area 3*

Indicator Description	Target	Indicator Result
<b>Monitoring Protocol</b>		
National and international partners are part of the ABIN	2	1
Innovations have been studied and introduced	5	10
Participants in SHIKA have developed a business plan, of which at least 50% is bankable	-	<b>This indicator is no longer used</b>
Women role-models of women entrepreneurs	9	0
Participants attend roundtables organized by <u>each</u> incubation centres	60	13
Participants (from centres) attend national conference	150	20
Number of business plans developed by participants in SHIKA	-	40
Number of roundtables organized by incubation centres	4	1
<b>Logical Framework</b>		
Number of entrepreneurs supported in the formalization of their associations into cooperatives	230	1030
Number of leasing contracts for the processing/treatment/conditioning lines of the Incubation centres	10	5



signed with rural entrepreneurs		
Number of storage and/or transport's contracts signed between the incubation centres and the rural entrepreneurs	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>

Source: Programme Narrative report

## Major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of objectives

ABIN faced different influencing factors as follows:

### Factors for achievement of objectives

1. the embassy of the kingdom of the Netherlands

The donor enabled achievement of ABIN's objectives through crucial extension of timelines due to political challenges.

### 2. SPARKs Experience

Having successfully implemented ABC which reached 6.158<sup>13</sup> beneficiaries, SPARK brought their experience and expertise into the programme which led to the success of ABIN.

### 3. Successful partnerships with local governments

ABIN had created a synergy with the local governments within the three provinces. The governors were introduced to the programme in the inception stages and remained key partners as they viewed ABIN as key in solving the challenges of poverty and food security in the provinces.

*"We have been working with ABIN and they invite us to participate in everything they are doing and we support them in any way we can. ABIN complements government's target of addressing poverty and food insecurity" - KII, Local government- Cibitoke*

*"We work with ABIN very well. We provided them with the land to build the incubators. We also lobbied for the electricity and ABIN got the transformer. We are still pushing for electricity connection." – KII, Local government, Rumonge.*

<sup>13</sup> [ABC Final Evaluation 2018](#)

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#### **4. Experienced and knowledgeable trainers**

ABIN partners with CNTA and Burundi Fruits inter-professional organization for training and mentorship. Trainers in ABIN were termed as knowledgeable and experienced in training by the beneficiaries.

*“The trainers were very effective, for example, those who taught us about taxation, those trainers knew what they were talking about for sure. Now, we know how to file our taxes ourselves and we are in order when it comes to the Burundi revenue authority.” – FGD, Bubanza*

#### **5. The commitment of beneficiaries**

The beneficiaries were willing to participate in the programme and came together to form cooperatives and federations. They developed bankable business plans and contributed to the 60% of the amount required to implement their business plans. The beneficiaries believed their shops would continue even after the programme but also needed more financial training.

*“Our shops will continue because they are built on a land that the government has allocated to us. We have more than 10 shops all of them are set up plots of lands that have been allocated to us. Even this system of cooperatives will continue but we need more training on financial management.” – FGD, Beneficiaries*

### **Factors for non-achievement of objectives**

#### **1. Negative political environment**

The 2015 political conflict in the country forced the programme activities to halt. In over six months, the activities of the programme were halted due to projected risk of staff and beneficiaries. In 2018, programme activities also stopped for about 3 months after the government ordered a fresh registration of all NGOs in the country.

Political tension between Rwanda and Burundi also negatively affected implementation. The tension led to closure of the border and thus the Rwanda market was closed for agri-entrepreneurs processing in the Cibitoke incubation centre.

#### **2. Bureaucratic procedures in certification of processors**

After training, agri entrepreneurs started producing from the Cibitoke incubation center but needed certification from the BBN in order to sell their produce in the market. However, this certification was a

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main challenge for most of the cooperatives as the procedure was long and hindered by corruption. This meant agri entrepreneurs could only sell within the village markets only.

### **3. Failed partnership with BBIN**

The failed relationship between ABIN and BBIN who were the local partners at the start of the programme impacted the objectives negatively. Outputs such as; capacity building workshops and/or trainings provided to established incubators by BBIN, development of training programs and tools and successful matchmaking meetings made by BBIN for entrepreneurs could not be achieved<sup>14</sup>. However, ABIN developed other partners such as CNTA for training purposes.

### **4. Poverty and poor access to credit**

One of the key challenges for the target beneficiaries was poverty. In Burundi, more than **65 percent** of the population lives in **poverty**<sup>15</sup>. This meant some of the target beneficiaries could not afford to contribute the 60% required to implement their business plans. However, the programme introduced a policy of paying the 60% either in kind or cash. A clarification that the 40% was a grant and not a loan was also encouraging to cooperatives. This led to up to 22 cooperatives contributing the required amounts. Poor access to credit also negatively affected entrepreneurs as they could not access capital for their businesses.

### **5. High employee turnover**

During the programme period, ABIN experienced multiple changes in staff and this led to minor delays in implementation of activities as time was taken to find suitable replacements. The remuneration packages offered to staff were not attractive and also led to loss of staff to other organizations.

## **Efficiency**

### **Cost-efficiency**

The programme activities were cost efficient and according to the management, 95% of the budget had been utilized within the years. The remaining was due to implementation challenges but was set to be utilized for programme activities in the 3 month extension. The main costs for setting up of the

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<sup>14</sup> 2018 ABIN Narrative report

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.wfp.org/countries/burundi>



incubators as the equipment were expensive. Noteworthy, ABIN sourced for the best available machinery as indicated in the search for the Cassava processing machinery where they opted against buying from IITA which was providing a machine that was expensive and of low quality. The management decided to buy a cheaper and durable machine from a local supplier<sup>16</sup>. This was value for money as well as providing business for a local entrepreneur in the process.

The incubators that were built by the programme were functional and had already started making revenue which was saved for future use. However, ABIN staff had to convince the entrepreneurs and the community members to pay a small fee whenever they used the centres.

*“From 2018, we had to be flexible, rural people have really small capital so when you charge them a lot of money for using the center then they would never use it. So, we had to talk to them for them to pay something small and after consulting them. They accepted and they have been contributing for them to use the center.” – KII, ABIN, Staff*

ABIN leveraged on its partnership with the local government to reduce programme costs. Unexpected costs such as purchase of the electricity transformer at Rutumo incubation centre were also catered for within the budget. Initially, the local government had agreed to cater for supply of electricity but later backed out, opting for an advocacy role in process. This relationship helped the programme to acquire the transformer at an affordable price, given the electricity company had initially quoted a very high price due to the perception that ABIN was being implemented by an international NGO. The local government also paid compensation fees to community members whose land was used to install electricity poles.

*“The local government paid the compensation where we had to put electricity poles when trying to bring the electricity in the area. They worked also in advocacy so that REGIDESO (National electricity company) can bring a transformer and now the incubation center is about to get connected.” – KII, ABIN Staff*

Despite the activities of the programme being value for money, the purchase of the refrigeration truck was untimely. This is because it was seldom used since its purchase due to beneficiaries deeming it expensive to hire. However, the programme staff were in contact with potential customer who could use the truck for transportation. The production in Rumonge was also about to begin and the staff had sensitized the entrepreneurs on the use of the truck and encouraged them to save money that will enable them to hire the truck.

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<sup>16</sup> Midterm Evaluation Report

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## Programme timeliness

The programme's timeliness was negatively affected by several factors. The 2015 conflicts forced the programme activities to halt for about six months due to volatility of the situation in the country. This is because the programme was wary of the staff and beneficiaries' safety. The youth at this period were vulnerable and could be influenced to participate in the conflicts. The local governments thus applauded ABIN for providing an employment avenue for the youth who would have otherwise engaged in conflicts and other unsavoury activities.

*"ABIN has played a huge role, because when you put young people together and they can create micro credit and lend money to each other, they have something better than just people who are idle. The reality is that most of the time those young people who are used by wrong people are actually very idle and have nothing else to do. For us here our young people are busy and that has increased security in our area." – Local government, Cibitoke.*

The programme also experienced delays in the inception period as the pursuit for suitable management took almost nine months. Low allocation of salaries/remuneration which meant that the programme could not attract high calibre of staff because of low salary offered. The same has still distressed the programme, leading to high staff turnovers. The time taken to identify the sites for construction of the incubators also took longer than expected.

The challenges in working with BBIN as partners were highlighted by the midterm review and the partnership broke down in 2017. Despite these challenges on the timelines, the management engaged other partners such as CNTA and Burundi Fruits inter-professional organization to train and mentor the beneficiaries. CNTA (The National centre for food technologies) worked under the ministry of environment and were in charge of managing post-harvest, conserve of harvest and transfer of such technologies to people in rural areas. Their expertise in transformation and processing of harvest made them suitable partners for ABIN.

Burundi Fruits inter-professional organization on the other hand boasted immense experience in the processing and marketing of fruits. Through their juice company, they helped trained beneficiaries by sharing experience in terms of standards and quality as well as the legal procedures needed for registration.

The government's decision to shut down all NGOs in 2018 caused a three month delay as SPARK applied for fresh registration as an NGO in Burundi. This led to a lot of delays in implementation, especially in the operationalization of the incubators.

Acquisition of processing certificates from BBN was also considered a challenge as the long bureaucratic procedures lasted months to years. This meant trained entrepreneurs could not market their products in the prime markets and thus underutilization of their skills and the incubation centres.

*“You must pay 400,000 to 500,000 BIF and after that payment to get your certificate it can even take a year and by the time you get your certification it has already expired. It is a very hard road to take and that’s why we have the center in Cibitoke and years later the entrepreneurs have not started to sell on the market.” – KII, Burundi Fruits inter-professional organization and the vice-president for Burundi industrial association*

One of the key issues that has led to delays in the operationalization of the Rutumo incubation center is the time taken to acquire electricity in the center. The process was hampered by exorbitant charges to ABIN for transformer and installation. At the time of the evaluation, despite the transformer being installed, the center was yet to be connected.

Despite challenges ABIN took advantage of the timeline extensions by the donor to implement the rest of the programme activities to the satisfaction of the beneficiaries. The no cost extensions were used in operationalization of the incubators. The three month extension at the end of the programme was set to be used to ensure the Rutumo incubation centre was operational.

*“We are very satisfied because they have given knowledge that is helping us to propel ourselves to better lives. Also, we are so satisfied because they are helping us to build in unit of transformation of fruits a first one in this whole province.” - FGD, Bubanza#*

*“The extension period was mainly used to ensure the incubation centers were operational, we hired supervisors and now they are operating. We are working to ensure the incubation at Rumonge gets electricity connection for full operations by the end of this three month extension.” – Mini group, Staff.*

## Impact

The impact of ABIN was gauged by examining the extent to which the programme had contributed to food security in the Bubanza Cibitoke and Rumonge provinces, to what extent the programme created employment opportunities in the Bubanza Cibitoke and Rumonge provinces and any unintended (positive and/or negative) impact in the Bubanza and Cibitoke provinces induced by the programme.

## Social cohesion

Socio-political instability in Burundi's history has hindered efforts to improve the lives of its citizens<sup>17</sup>. Ethnicity is an important element behind the country's political and social fragility. ABIN brought together individuals from different ethnic backgrounds to work together in cooperatives, VSLAs and in the project. According to stakeholders, ABIN initiated unity in the community and reduced negative ethnicity.

*"Another change that ABIN is that the issue of negative ethnicity ceased in our area. ABIN brought all of us together regardless of our ethnic background, our political parties' affiliation, gender issues and any other thing that was separating us and now we are operating as one person united." – FGD, Bubanza*

*"In a cooperative, we have different people from different ethnic groups, religion, political parties even both gender with only one objective of making their lives better. So, in short, these cooperatives have indeed made Cibitoke a more peaceful province."- Government, Cibitoke*

According to government representatives, ABIN's engagement of youth created unity and peace in the community. The engagement of youth in the programme was viewed as a way of engaging idle youth would have otherwise been influenced to participate in conflicts. Engagement of ex-combatants who were susceptible to continuing with violence activities also promoted peace in the community.

*"ABIN has played a huge role, because when you put young people together and they can create micro credit and lend money to each other, they have something better than just people who are idle. The reality is that most of the time those young people who are used by wrong people are actually very and have nothing else to do. For us here our young people are busy and that has increased security in our area."– Government, Cibitoke*

ABIN through cooperatives and VSLAs enable women to interact with others and share ideas of development while also empowering them to contribute to household needs and have a voice in the household. According to multiple stakeholders, through ABIN, women of different ethnic and political backgrounds could come together and implement a plan, which they could not achieve individually. The level of cooperation at the community level was evidenced by the unification of cooperatives to form federations which could achieve more than a single cooperative. A federation of cooperatives in Bubanza had developed a business plan, submitted it World Bank and won funds to construction a processing unit.

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<sup>17</sup> ADDRESSING FRAGILITY AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES TO REDUCE POVERTY AND BOOST SUSTAINABLE GROWTH, SYSTEMETIC DIAGONISTIC IN BURUNDI, 2018, WORLD BANK

*“Women we could not afford to give any contribution in terms of how our own homes are run we would be in our corners but know we have come together, we can develop our plan, implement our plan which helps us to develop ourselves and also contribute to the development of our homes.” – Women FGD, Bubanza*

### **Addressing food insecurity**

ABIN contributed to food security in the provinces by helping transform harvests into better products for storage and consumption. This diversified the beneficiaries’ access to food. Prior to the programme, during the peak harvest seasons, community members were under pressure to sell their produce swiftly to avoid wastage and in turn ending up fetching low prices as the markets were already flooded with the produces. With the incubation centre in Cibitoke, community members learnt how to process, store and sell their produce. Cassava is one of the staple food in Burundi. ABIN helped beneficiaries to process cassava into flour which provide options in consumption. It was used to prepare ‘Bugali’, which is a common household delicacy in Burundi and the beneficiaries were also using it to bake cakes for consumption and sale. Cassava leaves are also popular vegetables and the beneficiaries were also taught how to process and store them for future consumption.

*“No other NGO has done in Cibitoke what Spark have done, you see they have really invested money because you see, even for us who work with the government importing an equipment of 40,000 Euros is not an easy thing but them they have imported and set them up. They have latest equipment that does not rust and that increase the quality of what they produce. Farmers now can transform food into form that can last longer...transformed products also attract a higher price like 50% increase in price” – KII, CNTA*

Fruit processing also diversified food choices for the community. Juice from different fruits with different nutrients provided healthy diets for the community and for sale. Before ABIN, Honey produced was also consumed raw without processing which was unhygienic and exposed the community members to health hazards such as a bacteria known as *Clostridium botulinum*<sup>18</sup>. With the processing equipment installed by ABIN, the community was able to access processed honey that was suitable for consumption.

*“We are very satisfied because they have given knowledge that is helping us to propel ourselves to better lives. Also, we are so satisfied because they are helping us to build in unit of transformation of fruits a first one in this whole province....nowadays, our children are eating well, they have added fruits to their diet.” – FGD, Bubanza.*

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/raw-honey-vs-regular>

*“Honey is one of the key produces here but farmers used to harvest and sell it with contaminations. Now they can process and consume and sell pure honey. It is so good that some groups are even exporting.” – KII, Local government, Cibitoke*

Due to the convenience of Lake Tanganyika, fish products are key sources of food in Burundi. However, to avoid depletion of fish, fishing regulations were imposed to only fish 3 weeks a month which meant households had to look for other sources of food in at least one week in a month. ABIN introduced smoking as a way of preserving fish for better markets and later consumption. The programme trained the beneficiaries and built smoking ovens and storage facilities in Rumonge. This meant food was available even when fishing was not ongoing. Smoked fish was also readily consumable and in a condition to be transported to other provinces within Burundi and thus availed for consumption. At the time of the evaluation, most of the beneficiaries in Rutumo were smoking Ndagala, which is a favourite delicacy in Burundi.

Generally, ABIN was applauded by different stakeholders for contributing to food security within the three provinces and beyond. During the end term evaluation, when asked to rate the impact of ABIN on food security within their households on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 was not effective at all, 2 was somewhat ineffective, 3 was neither effective nor ineffective, 4 was effective and 5 is very effective), 57% of the beneficiaries rated ABIN’s efforts as effective (4), 13% rated ABIN as very effective, 23% were neutral and only 7% felt ABIN was somewhat ineffective as shown below.

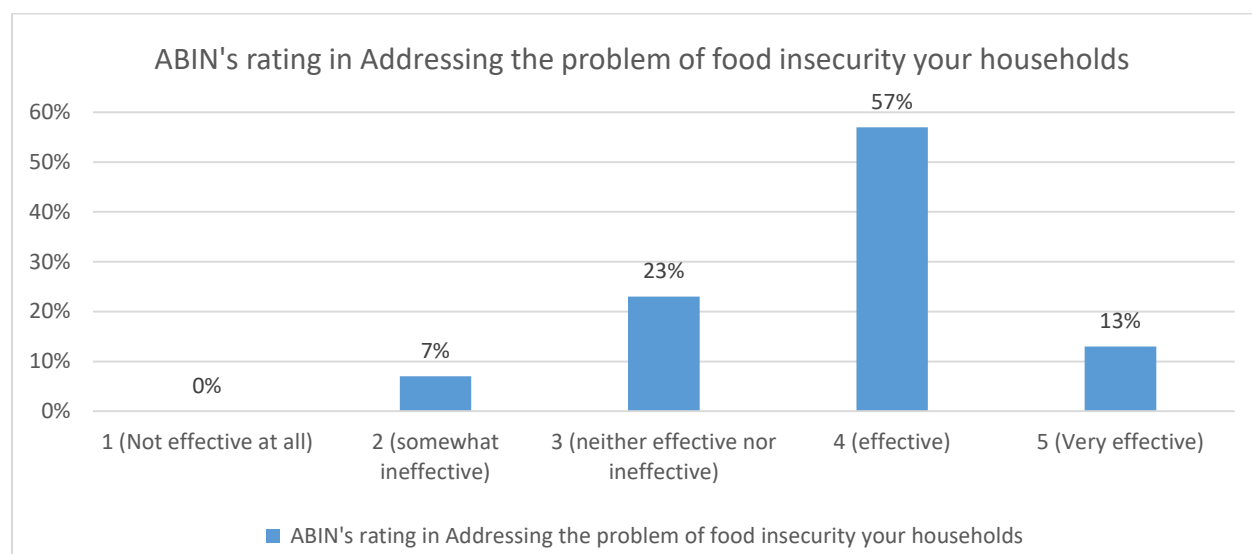


Figure 10: ABIN’s rating in addressing food security challenges (Source: ABIN end term evaluation, 2019)

The finding above was supported by other stakeholders as follows:

*“In the fight against food insecurity you must promote agriculture and that is exactly what ABIN is doing.” – Local government, Cibitoke*

*“Yes indeed this project has really changed our lives and this has reduced the issues of food security because nowadays if I don’t have something I can go to the VSLA and borrow to buy whatever I need in terms of food and my whole family can be able to eat a varied menu on that day.” – Women FGD, Rumonge*

*“One impact we were using traditional methods in our honey production for example, if I look at how we would harvest, filter, store it and compare it to what we are doing now, really, I can say that there is a huge impact.” – Youth FGD, Cibitoke*

### **Creation of employment in the three provinces**

The programme was seen to have created employment both directly and indirectly by stakeholders. Direct employment was created when the entrepreneurs who had been trained started operations, processing and selling of their produce. Indirect employment occurred as the trained entrepreneurs employed more people in running their business. One of the cooperatives was processing honey in the Cibitoke incubation centre and exporting it all the way to Oman. After training, a women’s group in Cibitoke was processing cassava products and baking of cakes and selling them as their main source of income.

*“ABIN played a role because when they put these young people into cooperatives where they can save and lend money to each other this ignite creation of activities that which in turn will generate revenue. They actually encouraged to create more employment to other youth.” – Local government, Cibitoke.*

Entrepreneurs have also diversified into other and more profitable ventures as shown by the case study below.

#### **MAKING CHARCOAL BRIQUETTES FROM WASTE**

##### **Salomon NDIZEYE for Mugambi cooperative**

“I joined the ABIN programme about two years ago where we were taught business skills, cooperative development and fruit processing. We formed a cooperative of 14 people and with the help of ABIN we developed a business plan for making charcoal briquettes. This was producing charcoal out of waste from homes, streets, from agricultures residues and any other kind of waste. When we get the waste, we first

remove stones, metals and plastics and the rest is put in a kiln for burning. What we get after that is something close to ashes. It is that ash that we put in the machine with some other waste that acts as glue to make sure the ash does not dismantle.

At the beginning, we had only hired 3 only people and now we have 12 people with just one machine and target to hire 60 people by the end the year. We hope that we can be able to acquire 5 machines and that will enable us to employ more than 60 people. What I cans say is ABIN has really helped us. Before ABIN, I wouldn't be doing what I am doing today, at the beginning, we were producing something very small to supply very few customers but now look we have capacity of producing 100 of kilograms of charcoal. During our time with ABIN, we were taken to exhibitions where we connected with many clients and that really encouraged us. It has also helped us grow as a cooperative as we are now able to manage affairs of the cooperative very well. We also realized that we needed an accountant to help us understand our profits and spending.

ABIN has also led to increase in our incomes. At the beginning we were making 80 Kgs/day and we sold 300BIF/Kg and that means that we made only 24,000BIF/day (\$13 per day<sup>19</sup>) and then we realized that all the money was going back to pay the people who were working on the machines but now we make minimum of 400kgs/day and since there are few manual labor, we make more money in the cooperative. Now you see that with 400 Kgs we can easily 120,000 BIF/day (\$65 per day). In our households, prior to joining the program we had challenges with paying school fees for our children, food and other members are even investing in land. I would like to thank ABIN and Spark for everything they have done us, our families and others. I hope they will continue helping others just like me.”

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/convert/?Amount=1&From=USD&To=BIF>





*Figure 11: Salomon Ndizeye, displays charcoal briquettes produced by his cooperative*

In Bubanza, women were producing fruit juice and others earned their income from fruit stalls that were built with the help of ABIN. At the time of the evaluation, women in Bubanza were in the process of building their own processing facility, which was partially (40%) funded by ABIN.



*Figure 12: Processing facility being built in Bubanza for women cooperatives*



The women group in Bubanza highlighted the success of the programme as shown below:

**Bubanza Women Cooperatives secures more funding for processing equipment from World Bank**

“ABIN trained us on fruit juice processing, built stalls for us and helped us form cooperatives and later a federation. These cooperatives have changed our lives. When ABIN came, many husbands did not understand what their wives were doing and many even tried to stop them but now the change that we have observed is that even men are coming together and are starting their own cooperatives to save and lend money to each other. Also before ABIN, as women we totally relied on our husbands. When it was time to buy books for our children to go to school, we would wait on our husband to bring all the money but now even us we can afford to buy note books for our children and meet other needs in the household.

The business training has helped us as a cooperative to develop business plans and submit to potential donors. Our business plan was to build a processing center and now it is about to come true. We have started the construction of the transformation/processing center here in Bubanza after we contributed 60% and Spark granted us the 40%.

In order to get the equipment, we developed another business plan just as ABIN had taught us and when we submitted it to World Bank, we were pre-selected. This led to a visit by the World Bank officers, who saw our vision and now the World Bank is going to support us by buying processing and transformation equipment. The equipment will be bought by World Bank at a cost 55 million Burundian francs (approx. \$ 30,000) and the federation is contributing 11 million Burundian francs (approx. \$6,000) out of the total cost. Thus the grant is about 44 million Burundian francs (approx. \$ 24,000). We anticipate to be making a lot of money from the processing centre to cater for the needs of our households.

So as you can see, ABIN has really helped us to come together and achieve something we did not think was possible.”

In Rumonge, the sale of fish products was deemed as the main source of income for the households. After training and construction of the incubation centre at Rutumo, beneficiaries were purchasing fish from fishermen, smoking it and selling it in the markets. A Burundian living in Canada also approached ABIN and developed an export business of smoked Ndagala to Canada. The company known as Genesis

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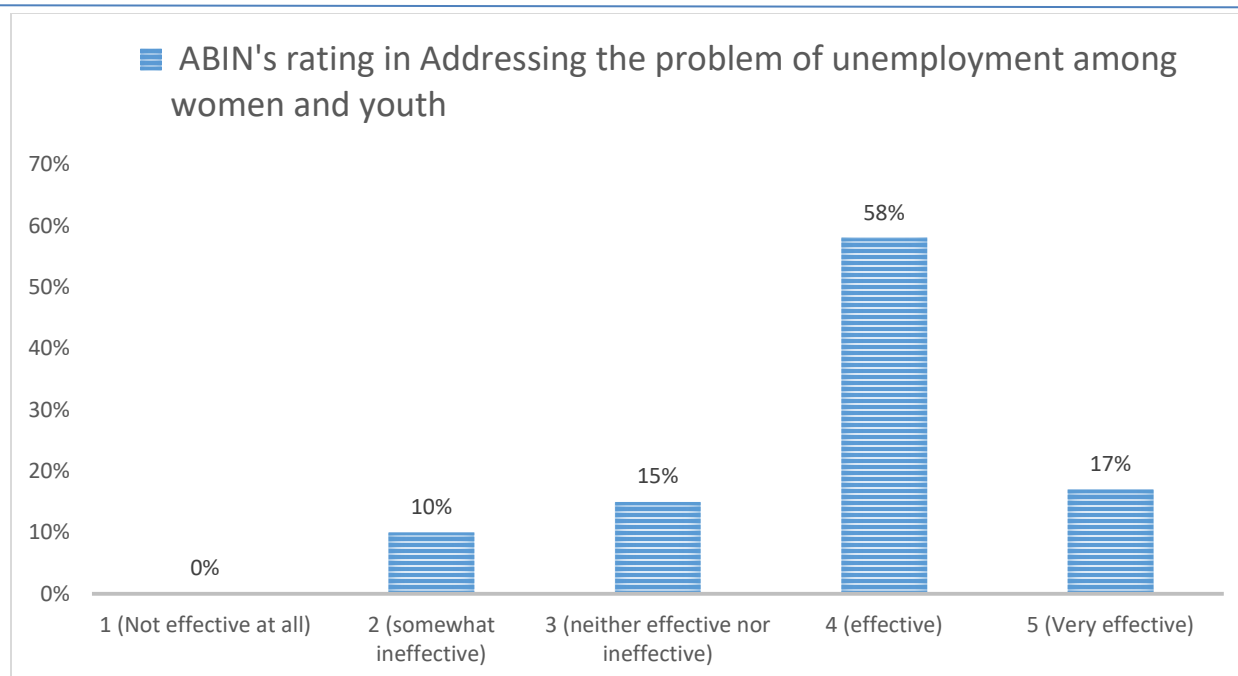
Fish Company was using the incubation centre for drying, smoking and packaging of fish before export. During this process, the company hires up to 20 people per week in Rumonge.

*“In Rumonge the biggest impact is job creation. The Genesis Company has already hired few women and youth like 20 in number and these change the situation in homes in of these people.” – Mini Group, Staff.*

ABIN’s support and formation of VSLAS created access to finance for the beneficiaries who started new business ventures, boosted and diversified their existing businesses. In Rumonge, the VSLA formed under ABIN was helping their members in diversifying their income avenues and several members had diverged into rearing of pigs which increased their income.

*“For employment, the reality is that before this project, women could not access capital for them to do anything significant but as you have heard today, we have 1.5 million Burundian francs and we want to implement a business and that is thanks to SPARK.” – Women VSLA FGD - Rumonge*

During the end term evaluation, beneficiaries were asked to rate ABIN in terms of job creation for youth and women on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was not effective at all, 2 was somewhat ineffective, 3 was neither effective nor ineffective, 4 was effective and 5 is very effective. Overall, 58% of beneficiaries rated ABIN as effective, 17% as very effective, 15% neither effective nor ineffective and only 10% rated it as somewhat ineffective. This is as shown below;



*Figure 13: ABIN's rating by the beneficiaries in addressing unemployment among women and youth (source: end term evaluation survey)*

Majority of the beneficiaries felt that ABIN had created employment for youth and women as shown above. This views were echoed by other stakeholders as follows:

*"This project is of great importance because now we have associations as well as employment for women and fisherman as well as other people. It has helped forgotten people in the community i.e. the women. Now the women are in the business of making the fish weather dried or otherwise for sale. That money helps them to do everything they can to resolve problems within their families as well as be part of an association which can grow them even further. Some of these women used to be in prostitution but once they joined the association, they earn more money and don't engage in such activities."* - KII, local government, Rumonge.

*"A lot of employment has emerged from this project, for example, when we go for the fish from Congo we require a lot of manual work and therefore we carry many young men to be able to carry the fish that we have bought and to transport it back. So we create work even among ourselves. The women also go to buy the fish as well as smoke the fish and even sell it to the various markets."* – FGD, Rumonge

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## Unintended impacts

As a result of the programme, households have better relationships as the men supported women after seeing the benefits of VSLAs and have also started joining. Improved income has also led to better lifestyles with households being able to send their children back to school, afford better clothing and access better medical services.

The negative impact of the programme was the interference in the affairs of the cooperatives by other stakeholders. The success of the cooperatives under ABIN had attracted negative aspects as some community members wanted to join the cooperatives forcefully and without contributing any fees. They wanted to share in the profits without even contributing to the production processes. Their claim was mainly based on the incubators been on government's land.

*"I am being forced to give part ownership of my business for free just because the some people think I'm making a lot of money. They do not want to contribute anything and have even threatened to have my shop closed."* – Beneficiary, Cibitoke.

## Sustainability

The evaluation analysed the sustainability of the programme based on the likelihood of agribusinesses supported by ABIN continuing after the programme concludes, the continued operation of incubators after the programme and the likelihood of business networks formed continuing to work after the programme.

### Sustainability of agribusinesses formed under ABIN

Based on the views of different stakeholders and the views of the consultant, most of the agribusinesses supported were likely to continue after the programme ended. Fruit and vegetable businesses in Bubanza were likely to continue as the VSLAs were strong in supporting the members and the members were keen to continue with the businesses. Application of the skills gained was also a key indicator of continuation and all the beneficiaries interviewed (100%) were committed to continuing practice of what they had learnt.

*"Yes, our shops will continue after the programme. We have more than 10 shops and all of them are set up in plots of lands that have been allocated to us by the government. We also believe in the success of the cooperative and this will enable us to access funds to expand and continue our businesses."* – FGD, Bubanza

However, businesses that were dependent on the incubators to operate were at the risk of collapsing if the incubators were to stop or be operated by others parties. Most beneficiaries in this category doubted if they could be allowed to use the incubators after the programme and were also wary of increased charges that would derail their young businesses. The lack of processing and marketing certification from BBN creates a doubt in their operations as they will lack access to markets.

*“There is a very big issue of certification, since many cooperatives have not reached the level of starting to sell, it seems like there is no problem but the time they start selling they will require certification and without the help of ABIN in acquiring those certifications it can really be hard.” – FGD, Youth, Cibitoke*

### **Sustainability of the agribusiness incubators**

At the time of the evaluation, the incubators were not sustainable. The incubators were being run by supervisors employed by Spark under ABIN. The supervisors were effective in management as the incubators were in operation and making some revenue. However, the incubators at that time could not run without Spark. Most of the stakeholders also agreed the incubators were not sustainable except the government stakeholders. The exit strategy for the incubators was vague as the private investor who were meant to take over the centres had not been established and the existing cooperatives were in no condition to take over operations. The exit strategy also failed in communicating to the beneficiaries on what was to happen after the programme, and this left many beneficiaries uninformed and afraid. However, the programme had engaged a lawyer who was working with them to see their options in the exit strategy. The incubator in Rumonge was also not fully functional for it to be even considered sustainable.

*“We thought that the cooperative could constitute a network so that they can use this equipment but I don’t think they are ready as they lack managerial skills and capital to run such centres.” –Mini Group, Staff*

*“For Rumonge, we are sure this center will be sustainable in the future because there no other center like that one in the region. The center can be handed over to an entrepreneur but a committee made up of local government, federation of fishermen and SPARK if they will still be there.” - Mini Group, Staff*

Another key challenge to the incubators’ sustainability is the fact they were built on land that belonged to other stakeholders such as the government and a Catholic Church organization.

*“We are very scared of what is going to happen. You see, the land where the incubator is, we know that it is rented and now we are not sure of what will happen when the project comes to an end. Will we be able to*

*access that land even? We are not sure who will manage it, what if whoever takes it over chase us away?” – FGD, -Youth, Cibitoke*

*“There is an issue of the land where the said equipment are installed. The land does not belong to the cooperatives but rather to other institutions. We are planning to create synergy in a private-public partnership for the sake of what to do going forward.” - Mini Group, Staff*

### **Sustainability of business networks created by the project**

The existing network of entrepreneurs, farmers, financial institutions and investors was weak and likely to collapse after the programme. The only strong linkage was between farmers and entrepreneurs as they needed raw materials for processing while farmers need the income. Agri-entrepreneurs would then sale the produce to the local markets or directly to consumers. The bigger markets for the produce available but was access was hindered by agri-entrepreneurs lack of certification from BBN. The link to financial institution was poor and as the financial institution were afraid of offering credit to farmers due to high risk associated with agriculture. The management tried to establish links between entrepreneurs in Bujumbura and Genesis Company where they would sell the latter’s products but the credit nature of the businesses operated by the entrepreneurs forced the link to collapse.

*“Even if it is a strong network, we can see the foundation being set up even though there is reluctance for the financing companies. In Rumonge we have linked the fishermen with the Genesis Company and we have linked our cooperatives to some shops here in Bujumbura where they can sell their fishes. The only challenges these cooperatives face though is that the shops buy at credit and our members need money in cash.” - Mini Group, Staff*

### **Factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability**

The key factors that have influenced achievement of sustainability of the programme include;

- Commitment of beneficiaries to continue applying the knowledge acquired in the programme
- VSLA’s financial support for businesses
- VSLA’s strong institutional capacity

Factors that influenced non-achievement of sustainability included;

- Vague exit strategy that has left most of the stakeholder especially the beneficiaries confused on the way forward

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- Incubators built on land that does not belong to the beneficiaries. This has raised issues on who will take over the incubators and if they will allow the beneficiaries to continue using them
  - Poor institutional capacity of cooperatives. The cooperatives are not well prepared both financially and in management capacity to take over operations of the incubators
  - Unstable linkages in the business networks as finance institutions are still not committed to financing the cooperatives due to risks associated with agribusinesses.
  - Lack of certification from BBN hindered cooperatives from accessing bigger markets after processing in the incubators



## LESSONS LEARNED, BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Lessons learned and best practices

The evaluation captured best practices and lessons learned in support of agribusiness incubators, agribusinesses, establishing value chain networks and the opportunities in promoting agribusiness, agribusiness incubators and value chain networks.

#### **Formation and supporting agribusiness incubators in Burundi**

The lesson learnt from the incubators is that they are key components in developing agribusinesses but need a strong management system that balances the operations and needs of the beneficiaries in order to be sustainable. The incubators also needed to be developed in private land or land owned by the eventual partners that will operate them.

Another lesson from the incubators was that they needed high quality machinery and technical expertise in operating them. Thus, transferring the expertise to entrepreneurs is also key to survival of the incubators.

In the value chains, the agri-entrepreneurs and the incubators had the capacity to produce more but access to the bigger markets and to sell large volumes required certification of processors from BBN. In order for the cooperatives to be certified, they needed to apply and provide evidence of the 6Ms of Production (man, machine, material, method, Mother Nature and measurement). The management of the processor is also vetted and his capacity to produce. Thus, the cooperatives needed more training on cooperative and processing management.

Additionally, access to market and financial service were hindrances to value chain development. Access to market needed to be developed through certification while a stronger financial partner needed to be identified or a revolving fund established to offer loans to agribusinesses as the VSLAs were doing, but on a larger scale.

The Fruit and vegetable businesses in Bubanza were successful and sustainable because of strong institutional capacities of cooperatives, the federation and VSLAs which offered a financial support to the agri-entrepreneurs.

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Successful cooperatives were however vulnerable to external influence that could deteriorate their operations. Thus, it is vital to train cooperative members on cooperative management and ensure they have existing bylaws that guide membership and operations.

ABIN's engagement of youth in the programme helped in creating stability. The evaluation learnt that the youth were jobless and idle and thus vulnerable to incitement to cause political instability in the area. It is thus paramount to have a youth employment component in all programming as it will contribute to the stability of fragile communities.

### **Best practices in supporting agribusinesses and the opportunities to promote the creation and development of agribusinesses in Burundi**

Research and innovation enables agribusinesses to exploit new ideas, improve its processes, and bring new and improved products and services to market, increase its efficiency and, most importantly, improve its profitability. The key best practices in ABIN included research and introduction of new technologies for honey, food & fruit processing as well as innovations such as the charcoal cooler and fish smoking ovens.

Other best practices in ABIN were capacity building and offering technical advice to entrepreneurs which changes and strengthens their mentality which expand their capacity to operate and expand efficient businesses.

One of the key learnings from ABIN is that Incorporating VSLAs to agribusinesses provides an access to finance component that boosts the businesses capital and increases their sustainability. Additionally, scouting and identification of strong and reliable markets is vital for agribusinesses. Without identifying markets for the end produce, products may lack market and end up in losses for the business.

The key opportunities lie in scaling up the programme by developing other incubators within Burundi, offering technical advice to agribusinesses and developing business in other value chains such as rice, sweet potatoes and bananas. However, in order to improve the institutional capacity of the incubators during the scale up, they should include a private public partnerships (PPP), development of a committee that oversees the operation of the incubators and construction of the incubators in own or communities' land. Formation and training of cooperatives is also an opportunity that can prepare them enough to run the incubators.

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## **Best practices and opportunities in establishing value chain networks**

Conducting value chain analysis prior to a programme helps in identification of gaps and foreseeable challenges whose solutions can be devised prior to developing the network.

Strong value chain networks are vital to developing agribusinesses. Networks that include farmers, processors, technical advisers, markets and financial institutions are key for the success of agribusinesses.

In the context of Burundi, finding alternatives to financial institutions such as VSLAS in a value chain network helps agribusinesses in access to finance. This is due to the reluctance of financial institutions to offer finances to new businesses due to perceived high risk of loan default.

Key opportunities in developing networks that include research and learning institutions. Most learning institutions in Burundi lack the proper equipment for training and learning. Incorporating them would provide learning opportunities. Incorporating value chain analysis research for future value chain networks will help in identifying solutions to challenges before they even begin.

## **Recommendations**

A second phase of ABIN programme is highly recommended with emphasis on the sustainability of the incubators, certification of agribusinesses, and development of key value chain networks. The equipment and resources of ABIN should be handed over to the next phase or to another programme that is supported by the EKN. This will ensure continuity of the programme so that people can continue learning and being trained without losing the infrastructure. The next phase and future programming should;

- Engage the national governments by lobbying through the embassy and local leaders. This will improve the relevance of the programme at a national stage and will reduce the bureaucratic procedures that challenged agri-entrepreneurs in the ABIN programme
- Scout and vet local partners and staff for implementation. This will improve the efficiency of programming
- Develop attractive remuneration for staff to attract the best staff and avoid high staff turnovers

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- Develop a reliable exit plan from the onset of the programme. This plan will be communicated with the beneficiaries during the programme inception to avoid confusion at the end of the programme.
  - Capacity building of cooperatives and VSLAs on management and basic accounting. This improves their operations and will be able to file their transaction which will improve their chances of access to credit.
  - Develop a stable value chain networks by conducting thorough value chain analysis, identifying the challenges and developing interventions for the challenges.
  - Develop a strong monitoring system that can be linked to the UMVA (Universal Methods of Value Access on the internet) system. This will improve real time monitoring of outcomes for programmes.

## Annex 1: Key informants

### List of Key Informants

- Programme manager
- Rutumo incubation Center Supervisor
- Cibitoke incubation Center Supervisor
- Governor of Rumonge province
- Senior counsel to the Governor of Cibitoke
- Head of cooperatives in Cibitoke
- President of the Fishermen Federation
- CNTA head of research
- Deputy Head of Mission/Head of cooperation at EKN - Bujumbura
- IPFB representative/Vice chairperson of the manufacturers association
- Spark Consultant

## Annex 2: Fieldwork schedule



Itinerary of field  
Visits.docx

## Annex 3: Terms of Reference



ABIN\_Final  
Programme Evaluation

## Annex 4: Data collection tools



ABIN Donor KII  
discussion guide.doc



ABIN KII  
government institut



ABIN KII Staff and  
local partners discus



Beneficiaries  
discussion guide.doc



Beneficiary short  
questionnaire.docx