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Burundi Launches First-ever Election Violence Monitoring System

Bujumbura, Burundi—Amatora Mu Mahoro (Elections in Peace), Burundi's first-ever nationwide election violence prevention system, launches today in the capital, Bujumbura. The system identifies areas susceptible to electoral violence as well as successful peace initiatives around the country. It aims to support appropriate responses and promote the peaceful holding of Burundi's 2010 elections, the first since all rebel movements laid down their arms and officially ended Burundi's long civil war.

Starting today, Amatora Mu Mahoro will run through the end of September when the last of the five elections scheduled for this year (communal, presidential, national assembly, senate and local) will take place. The program is a joint effort of over a dozen Burundian and international organizations.

"Amatora Mu Mahoro is designed to respond to threats throughout the electoral process in order to prevent, mitigate and resolve election-related conflict. This project will address any potential violence comprehensively and swiftly. The objective is to ensure that the elections to be held in Burundi are successfully implemented with a minimum of conflict. In addition to monitoring election violence and levels of community tension, this system is strengthening civil society capacity to promote peace and prevent violence in their communities," says Samia Mahgoub, Country Director of IFES-Burundi at the launch of the program.

The Amatora Mu Mahoro system draws on the International Foundation for Electoral Systems' (IFES) ongoing EVER Project (Elections Violence Education and Resolution) which has seen successful results in monitoring and preventing election violence in over a dozen countries since 2003. The system also introduces the Ushahidi web platform in Burundi. Ushahidi was developed by Kenyans in response to the electoral violence that shook the country in 2007/2008, and allows the rapid sharing of information on peace and violence incidents, via SMS.

Amatora Mu Mahoro draws on a rigorous research methodology that reports verified occurrences of peace activities and election-violence incidents gathered from over 450 monitors in all of Burundi's 129 communes. By offering comprehensive, reliable data for violence mitigation efforts, the program seeks to consolidate Burundi's achievements in peace-building in the last decade.

Burundi has been the focus of significant attention in recent years given its success in completing the post-conflict peace process, holding peaceful elections in 2005 and bolstering democratic progress in the midst of the troubled African Great Lakes region.



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To follow the findings of the system or to subscribe to alerts, visit Amatora Mu Mahoro at www.burundi.ushahidi.com

Note for the editor:

Amatoro Mu Mahoro is a project established by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the Civil Society Coalition for Election Monitoring (Coalition de la Société Civile pour le Monitoring Électorale, COSOME), the Quaker Peace Network-Burundi (QPN), the Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace (Commission Episcopale Justice et Paix, CEJP) and Oxfam Novib, with the support of USAID. The system was developed in collaboration with Accord, American Friends Service Committee, La Benevolencija, Human Rights Watch, International Alert and Search for Common Ground. It is supported by Burundi's National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), which is responsible for organizing the 2010 elections.

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The International Foundation for Electoral Systems is an independent, non-governmental organization providing professional support to electoral democracy. Through field work, applied research and advocacy, we strive to promote citizen participation, transparency, and accountability in political life and civil society.