

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT
& ENTREPRENEURSHIP
TEAM



Netherlands Enterprise Agency

Ecosystem Mapping Burundi



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Preface

Orange Corners is an initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands that provides young entrepreneurs across Africa, Asia and the Middle East with training, mentorship, network, funding and facilities to start and grow their businesses. We support innovative solutions to local challenges, that contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We partner with various stakeholders to support and strengthen local entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Orange Corners supports young entrepreneurs with growing their businesses through our incubation and acceleration programmes. Furthermore, we also run several programmes that are focused on strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem, involving education, policy-making and skills building. Lastly, Orange Corners supports entrepreneurs financially through the Orange Corners Innovation Fund (OCIF).

Orange Corners is managed by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency at the request of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Team works closely together with the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and local partners in each programme country.

This in-depth ecosystem mapping report serves as the basis for the start of an Orange Corners hub in Burundi. We thank all actors for their lively participation during interviews, focal group discussions, round tables, and events.

Executive summary

To operationalise one of the key priorities of the Embassy Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) in Bujumbura, Burundi, namely the development of private sector through promoting local youth and female entrepreneurship, Orange Corners will expand to Burundi in 2024. To successfully launch the Orange Corners program in Burundi, an in-depth ecosystem mapping was conducted in April 2023, to analyse the challenges entrepreneurs face while setting-up and growing their businesses, as well as to discover which support already exists for entrepreneurs, and where there is a gap.

Burundi is a small, landlocked country in East Africa, with a population of approximately 12 million people. Burundi has been labelled the poorest country in the world and nearly three quarters of its population lives below the international poverty line. There are limited formal job opportunities, and many young people resort to entrepreneurship and self-employment out of economic necessity. Entrepreneurship is seen as a viable solution to unemployment and underemployment in the region. Despite numerous donor and government-funded initiatives, few emerging businesses manage to thrive. Entrepreneurs in Burundi face a number of challenges.

First, the current economic crises have caused serious supply chain challenges, making it difficult for many entrepreneurs to access critical raw materials, or organize the logistics. Second, heavy tax burdens make it difficult for entrepreneurs to earn revenue and to reinvest this revenue into their businesses. Recent policy efforts to promote entrepreneurship have only partly been implemented and there remain serious barriers to growth. Third, although there are various MFIs handing out small loans to starting entrepreneurs, more significant capital is difficult to access, and unsuccessful loan utilisation due to lack of skills has resulted in increasing debt of Burundian entrepreneurs. Fourth, the quality of current entrepreneurial support in the region varies significantly.

Many entrepreneurial support organisations (ESOs) implement their activities without coordination with other programs in the region, which has led to many similar initiatives focused on pre-incubation of ideation-stage entrepreneurs in short-programs (e.g., 5-day trainings, or 3-week trainings), without substantial aftercare. Additionally, there are no proper acceleration programs in Burundi that help existing micro and small enterprises to grow. In general, the quality of ideas in existing entrepreneurial support programs is low, i.e., these ideas are often either replications of proven business concepts or do not align with customers needs. A donor system focusing on the number of trained participants rather than actual impact, keeps this system in place.

There are significant differences per region. Almost all import and export goes through Bujumbura, the largest city and business centre of the country. The entrepreneurial ecosystem is slightly more developed here, leading to a bigger variety in offered products and services. In other larger cities such as Gitega and Ngozi, most entrepreneurial activity is centred around agriculture and food-processing. Therefore, we advise that the focus of Orange Corners program in the region should start in Bujumbura, as this hosts the most facilities which can contribute to the probability of success for entrepreneurs. Expansions to other regions are possible, after the successful launch during the first years. Additionally, the program should focus on acceleration of existing small business that are post-revenue, to fill the gap of quality support for growing entrepreneurs and to contribute to creating more jobs for youth thus contributing to a considerable decrease in youth unemployment in Burundi. Lastly, Orange Corners Burundi should adopt a sector-agnostic approach while aiming to have at least 50% of its entrepreneurs involved in agri-food processing. Recognising that the entrepreneurial potential of Burundi's youth extends beyond the agricultural sector, which employs a significant portion of the population, OC can stimulate innovative businesses across various domains.

Part 1 – Introduction and overview

1.1 Background

One of the key priorities in the Multi-Annual Country Strategy (MACS) (2023-2026) of The Dutch Embassy in Bujumbura, Burundi, prioritises fostering local youth and female entrepreneurship with the aim to contribute to enabling environment for meaningful participation of young Burundians and women in economic development. To address this, Orange Corners will expand to Burundi in 2024 with a focus on three components: incubation/acceleration, ecosystem strengthening, and an innovation fund. An extensive entrepreneurial ecosystem mapping was conducted in April 2023 by Milou Derks and Geert Boode, focusing on seven key domains.

These domains are:

- Entrepreneurial opportunities and support systems
- Inclusive private sector growth
- Access to finance
- Enabling policy environment
- Quality entrepreneurship education and innovation
- Solutions to local challenges (integrated within the other domains of change)
- Gender equity

1.2 Goals and methodology

The findings are documented in this report, serving as a guide for implementing Orange Corners Burundi. The report outlines goals, and methodology, and presents observations of the entrepreneurial landscape. Goals include providing an overview of Burundi's entrepreneurial ecosystem for young entrepreneurs, identifying challenges and opportunities, seeking implementation and private sector partners, and conducting a thorough methodology involving a literature review, two weeks of fieldwork, and subsequent data processing.

The literature review highlighted challenges in accessing information about Burundi, especially in French, and the scarcity of online resources. The fieldwork involved interviews, events, and discussions with stakeholders, documented in an interview guide report. Data processing followed an iterative approach involving drafting, discussions, and refinements by team members, resulting in the final report.

Part 2 – Ecosystem mapping

2.1 Local context

Burundi, a densely populated landlocked country in East Africa, faces significant challenges as the poorest nation globally.¹ With 187th out of 191 countries on the Human Development Index, around 75% of its population lives below the international poverty line.² Burundi's history, impacts its current socio-political structures and economic landscape.

2.1.1 State-building and political situation

The economy heavily relies on agriculture, facing productivity challenges, limited market integration, and vulnerability to environmental shocks.

2.1.2 Economy and Private Sector Development

The service sector, particularly in Bujumbura, contributes substantially to GDP, yet largely consists of low-productivity activities. Burundi's economy might experience sectoral shifts based on recent IMF predictions, but the formal sector struggles to absorb the increasing workforce, pushing many into the informal sector.

2.1.3 Agricultural sector

Agriculture, employing 80-95% of the population, struggles with market mistrust, climate vulnerability, and poor post-harvest practices. Women play a significant role but face unequal power dynamics. Access to finance is limited, and land rights and registration pose challenges, especially for young women.

2.1.4 Society and socio-cultural dynamics

Social dynamics in Burundi reflect a patriarchal society with efforts for gender equality. Religion influences cultural norms, and access to quality education remains a challenge. Entrepreneurship faces hurdles due to risk aversion, strong community ties prioritising subsistence, and limited institutional support. However, recent initiatives suggest a gradual shift in attitudes toward entrepreneurship, signalling the potential for growth in this sector.

Indexes: Burundi

Index	Year	Score	Comments
Human Development Index	2021	0,426	This score puts Burundi in the <i>Low human development</i> category, positioning it at 187 out of 191 countries and territories
Global Peace index	2022	2.47	Burundi is ranked 131 out of 163 countries and territories in this regard
Global Corruption Index	2022	72.66	This score puts Burundi in the <i>Very High Risk</i> category, ranked 184 out of 196 countries and territories
Fragile State Index	2022	95.4	Burundi ranks 19 of 179 countries and territories (1 is most fragile)

¹ World Bank

² “Burundi,” Human Development Reports, September 8, 2022, <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/BDI>.

Index of Economic Freedom	2023	41.9	Burundi's economic freedom score makes it the 170 th freest, below the world average. Burundi scores very low on property rights and corruption is really high, which undermines the rule of law.
Gender Inequality Index	2021	0.935	Compared to 2020, when Burundi scored 0,938, this is a decrease of 0,003%
Global Innovation Index	2022	130	Burundi scores 130 out of 132 economies featured in this index
Venture Capital & Private Equity Country Attractiveness Index	2021	12.1	With this score, Burundi is 124 out of 125 countries
WEF Gender Gap Report	2022	0.777 (0=imparity, 1=parity)	Burundi ranks 24 out of 146 countries

2.2 Key themes

This section delves into key themes shaping the entrepreneurial landscape in Burundi, drawing from fieldwork to highlight trends and perspectives without exhaustive detail on any specific topic.

2.2.1 Entrepreneurship and innovation

General environment/trends for entrepreneurship and innovation

Burundi demonstrates a push towards nurturing a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem, evident through government initiatives like PAEEJ (a national incubator) that has trained over 50,000 entrepreneurs. The program focuses on business planning to secure loans but lacks in fostering financial literacy and other basic business skills. Entrepreneurs often prefer running multiple small businesses to evade excessive taxation and spread risks across sectors, emphasising image over product quality at times.

Work aspirations of youth

Urban youth are turning away from traditional agriculture towards processing industries, crafting high-value products. They express interest in burgeoning sectors like arts, fashion, creative industries, and digital solutions. Conversely, rural youth seek alternative business ventures beyond traditional farming, such as sandal crafting, waste management or recycling metal.

Perception of entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial perceptions differ across socioeconomic strata. Necessity-driven entrepreneurship, common among lower-income groups, focuses on quick wins for supplementary income. Middle- to high-income groups, historically viewing entrepreneurship as a fallback, are slowly shifting toward opportunity-driven ventures seeking expansion. While entrepreneurship within the agricultural upstream value chain is well-regarded, downstream endeavours are seen as riskier.

Local environment and support

The risk-averse mentality among Burundian youth is influenced by cultural, historical, and educational factors. Strong community ties, patriarchal norms, conservative education, Christian culture, historical conflicts, and lack of support for innovation hinder risk-taking and innovation. This cautious mindset extends to financial institutions and investors, limiting opportunities for growth and participation in support programs.

Scope of supporting facilities/services

Entrepreneurial Support Organizations (ESOs) exist in urban centres but often focus on financial literacy and basic business planning, neglecting comprehensive entrepreneurial guidance. Donor-driven initiatives foster short-term skill training, primarily targeting agriculture. However, support for emerging fields, social entrepreneurship, and green initiatives is on the rise, yet often overlooked as respected career paths.

Interest in social entrepreneurship digital innovation and emerging opportunities

Burundi sees a burgeoning presence in digital innovation, social entrepreneurship, and green initiatives. Social entrepreneurship aims to employ marginalised groups, aligning with the country's commitment to inclusive economic development. Green initiatives, while not primary, emerge from efforts aiming for broader social and economic sustainability. Burundian youth's adaptability presents an opportunity for businesses to respond to market dynamics, particularly in agriculture, food processing, and the service industry.

2.2.2 Inclusive Private Sector Growth

Labour market

Burundi's labour market is dominated by a few major companies, leaving most businesses as micro or small ventures due to limited market demand caused by widespread poverty. Women in business face social scrutiny, and over 90% of the workforce is engaged in subsistence farming. Graduates struggle to find field-related jobs, leading to necessity-driven entrepreneurship or family business involvement. Hiring skilled employees is a challenge, and accommodating the influx of university graduates poses a difficulty for the private sector.

Ease of setting up a private enterprise

Setting up businesses in Burundi is straightforward, but a high 18% tax affects financial sustainability. The business landscape presents hurdles with complex certification, import/export intricacies, and reliance on personal networks. Challenges like corruption, resource scarcity, transportation costs, legal uncertainties, power shortages, and limited land access impact entrepreneurs.

Recruitment practices in businesses

Hiring practices rely on personal connections, while emerging recruitment companies offer training in business ethics for youth to navigate the labour market.

Summary overview

- 1. Supply chain challenges:** Access to raw materials that are imported is a challenge due to low availability of foreign currency and transport costs. This in turn puts many businesses in jeopardy. There are many other types of supply chain challenges. In general entrepreneurs lack an understanding of their supply chain.
- 2. Corruption and harassment:** Success in business often hinges on one's connections and navigating bureaucracy, while corruption, intimidation, and favouritism are pervasive, impacting entrepreneurs and, particularly, women entrepreneurs. Those in positions of authority may disrupt business operations if their demands go unmet.
- 3. Land shortages:** The shortage of available land in Burundi poses significant challenges for businesses, particularly for entrepreneurs who often resort to renting land. This uncertainty in land tenure can result in abrupt displacements or increased rents, affecting business stability and expansion prospects.

2.2.3 Enabling policy environment (and programmes)

Relevant laws supporting business structures

Obtaining certification is time-consuming and expensive, not internationally recognised, leading to extra export costs. The existing specific start-up legislation is not always known by both entrepreneurs and civil servants, leading to barriers for optimal use. In addition high tax rates, and dissemination issues with government programs impact entrepreneurs.

Policy context

Initiatives like PANEJ aim to revitalise the private sector and promote youth entrepreneurship, yet challenges persist. The gender policy lacks tangible actions reflecting gender equity, necessitating a more comprehensive approach. Youth structures need improvement in translating policies into practical actions for effective youth empowerment.

The labour market in Burundi is characterised by a small private sector dominated by a handful of prominent companies, including Brarudi, Savoror, and major banks and telecom providers. In contrast, there are relatively few medium-sized businesses, with the majority of enterprises falling into the category of micro and small businesses. Many of these businesses are self-employed ventures or employ just a handful of workers, often on a seasonal basis. The market for products and services is limited, primarily due to the pervasive poverty in the country, leading to low market demand and fierce competition among suppliers, since there are only a few (middle- and high-income) who can pay for your products or services. Gender dynamics also play a significant role in the labour market, with women in business frequently facing social scrutiny. While specific gender employment ratios are unknown, it is likely that women's participation in the workforce, either as employees or entrepreneurs, remains limited. Moreover, over 90% of the labour force in Burundi is engaged in agriculture, with the majority involved in farming, either on their land or as seasonal labourers. However, subsistence farming is prevalent due to the small average land plots, which typically range from 0.1 to 1 hectare.

For university and TVET graduates in Burundi, securing a job within their field of expertise can be a formidable challenge. Consequently, many find themselves in roles unrelated to their qualifications or are compelled to start businesses out of economic necessity, a phenomenon commonly referred to as necessity-driven entrepreneurship. In this context, family businesses

often emerge as the primary option, where personal relations and familial responsibilities often carry more weight than skills or ambition. Another challenge in the Burundian labour market is the difficulty in finding employees who possess essential skill sets like business ethics, basic logic, computer literacy, and basic mathematics. Additionally, some businesses reported a lack of curiosity and a willingness to learn among potential employees. Finally, the private sector faces extreme difficulty absorbing the large influx of youth graduating from universities, exacerbated by the rapid population growth, which places a strain on the market's capacity to accommodate employment seekers.

Summary overview

1. **Hindering policy:** Burundi lacks favourable regulations in two key areas: (i) the various type of taxes (e.g. income tax, market tax, transport tax) make it difficult for starting businesses to make a profit, let alone reinvest their profit, which is essential to grow, (ii) certification processes are difficult and ripe with corruption and intimidation, making it difficult to get a product certified, let alone export it.
2. **Association with politics:** Entrepreneurs may choose not to apply due to concerns that the programs have political affiliations, often intertwined with specific ethnic groups, leading them to disqualify themselves pre-emptively.

2.2.4 Access to quality entrepreneurship education

Entrepreneurship/Business Educational Providers and Participation

Burundi faces challenges in providing quality entrepreneurship education. Most universities lack formal entrepreneurship programs, primarily accessible to middle/high-income families. The University of Bujumbura offers a mandatory entrepreneurship course but struggles due to a lack of qualified instructors. Practical training opportunities are limited, and there's minimal collaboration between educational institutions and the private sector. Incubators vary in quality, often prioritising quantity over successful entrepreneur outcomes.

TVET Providers and Participation

Around 120 TVET schools in Burundi mainly offer courses in traditional vocations, facing challenges like limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of skilled trainers. TVET suffers from negative perceptions as many view it as a last resort, affecting its popularity among parents and students. Limited industry involvement, internship scarcity, and a disconnect between educational programs and industry needs impact graduates' readiness for employment.

Digital Skill Development

Digital skill development mostly occurs through self-learning rather than formal education. Few organisations contribute to enhancing digital literacy, yet the government has shown hesitancy in encouraging digital initiatives due to concerns about data management and privacy. However, technology has positively impacted various sectors, facilitating access to information and empowering self-training, particularly in agriculture.

Perception of Quality of Entrepreneurship and Vocational Education

The education system in Burundi is perceived as inadequate, emphasising knowledge acquisition over skill development. Fresh graduates lack the essential skills and practical experience demanded by employers. The gap between educational institutions and the private sector hinders employability and reflects systemic flaws in the education-to-employment transition.

Note: There are no specific programs focused solely on improving entrepreneurship education, but numerous programs aim to enhance education in universities and TVET in general, facilitated by donors and NGOs.

Summary overview

1. **Accreditation:** There are very few accredited entrepreneurship courses provided in universities, and even fewer extracurricular activities and student activities aimed at entrepreneurship or interaction with the private sector.
2. **Mismatch:** Mismatch between the quality of education and prevailing skills and the qualifications required by the labour market.

2.2.5 Access to finance

Scope of financing options for youth

Entrepreneurs in Burundi have access to a range of financing options, each with its own set of advantages and challenges:

- **Grant financing via donor programs and competitions:** Entrepreneurs can tap into grant funding provided by donor programs and start-up competitions focused on entrepreneurship. These grants can provide essential initial capital without the burden of repayment.
- **Debt financing:** Debt financing is available primarily through microfinance institutions (MFIs) and BIJE (Burundi Institute for Economic Development). These options offer soft loans and microloans at varying interest rates, ranging from 7% to 15%, which can be accessible to entrepreneurs seeking smaller amounts of capital.
- **Equity financing:** Equity financing, such as angel investors and venture capital networks, is limited in Burundi. It relies heavily on personal networks and often operates under the radar due to the absence of formalised venture capital or business angel networks.
- **Regular bank loans:** Traditional bank loans are available but often come with high-interest rates exceeding 12%. Banks typically prefer proven business concepts and require swift payback, making them risk-averse. Collateral is usually demanded to mitigate risks. Burundi lacks a credit system and guarantee funds. Many individuals do not have a credit track record, making it challenging for banks to assess creditworthiness and sector risks. Collateral is often required to cover potential losses.
- **Government and donor-driven financial services:** Access to finance is primarily driven by government and donor initiatives. Urban areas generally have better access compared to rural regions. Private financial services, such as those offered by CRDBank and Malaika, are available to entrepreneurs.
- **Informal financing:** Informal financing occurs through village savings funds, where community members contribute small amounts of money monthly. However, this

method has limitations, including a preference for quick returns and a focus on low-risk agri-food initiatives due to risk aversion.

- **Family and friends financing:** While family and friends financing does exist, it is often accessible only to the elite or well-connected individuals in one of the world's poorest countries. It remains an option for those with personal connections and resources.

Barriers for youth and women

Access to finance poses a significant obstacle for women entrepreneurs in Burundi. Women face difficulties in obtaining loans from financial institutions, often requiring collateral and a male co-signer due to inheritance laws favouring men. This bias highlights the necessity for tailored financial products for women entrepreneurs. Banks' refusal to accept purchase orders as collateral also hinders women's business growth opportunities. These barriers perpetuate gender disparities in entrepreneurship. Youth encounter similar challenges, lacking access to land and property, and are often not considered seriously without male elder support.

Summary overview

1. **Existing formal financial products** are not well adapted to the needs of starting entrepreneurs and involve collateral difficult to access for women and youth.
2. **Lack of venture capitals** and business angels in Burundi, and limited potential for these.
3. **Self-financing:** The majority of the business and start-ups rely on self-financing methods through their own personal savings and/or support from their families and friends, which can limit scaling and expansion.
4. **Loan utilisation:** Many entrepreneurs have received some financial literacy training, but mainly aimed at writing a financial plan. Entrepreneurs do not always have the skills to utilize loans effectively or to understand the depth burden of the loan they agree upon.

2.2.6 Business associations and networks

In Burundi, business networks for young entrepreneurs are limited. Few incubators exist, lacking strong alumni networks, hindering lasting connections. Women Investment Group (WIN) stands out, fostering networking and plans to invest in female-led start-ups. Other networks like COPROSEBU and FFPB exist but youth participation remains uncertain. Various chambers like CTJEBU, AFAB, AIB, and CFCIB facilitate networking and support. More initiatives tailored for young entrepreneurs are needed.

International programmes like YALI, Mandela Fellowship, Hubert Humphrey, and Youlead offer business and entrepreneurship tracks. Their alumni networks promote collaboration. Youlead support economic discussions and policy development, involving young entrepreneurs in shaping Burundi's and the region's economy.

2.2.7 Trends in gender and economic inclusion

Dominant gender dynamics in job market

Burundi's job market is heavily influenced by conservative Christian and patriarchal norms. Women aged 15 to 25 are traditionally expected to prioritise marriage and family, with household responsibilities mainly on them. Shifts in these norms are seen in urban areas, but rural and low-income communities still adhere to traditional roles.

Female entrepreneurs challenging these roles face resistance, prejudice, and sexual harassment. They encounter credibility issues and suffer harassment in financial dealings, meetings, and partnerships. Sexual harassment pervades, from inappropriate comments to demands for sexual favours in business contexts, mirroring broader societal issues of sexual violence and gender inequality.

Female economic empowerment

Burundi's societal norms contribute to women's financial dependence on men, challenging financial autonomy when they earn more. Men's unease at their wives earning more may lead to controlling behaviours. Cultural expectations place the burden of providing solely on men, making women's economic independence challenging.

While efforts exist for gender balance in donor programs, significant advancements in the entrepreneurial ecosystem are needed to ensure women's equal opportunities for success. Public programs often struggle to maintain gender balance.

Summary overview

1. **Women economic empowerment** is hindered due to cultural and social norms and gaps in the supporting ecosystem.
2. **Harassment:** Women face significant harassment and intimidation when starting a business and are faced with many prejudices limiting their probability of success further. Women often face gender-based (sexual) violence as well.

2.3 Stakeholder and initiatives map

This section presents a non-exhaustive **overview of key stakeholders and their initiatives** that were visited during the ecosystem mapping Burundi.

Type	Programmes
Entrepreneurial Support Organisations	MDE, 3Hi, BBIN, Aforger, Umuco Business Accelerator, Cufore, Cemas, Creop-jeunes, JSBM, BujaHub, Infinity Group, Innova Group, Cedeca, Impact Hub, Mvura foundation, Kaz'o'zah
International NGOs	Spark, SNV, GIZ, AUXFIN
Donors and Multilateral organizations	EU, World Bank, Belgium Embassy, Mastercard, UNDP
Large Private Companies	Brarudi, Rugofarm, Modern Dairy Burundi, Roca Golf Hotel
Public programmes to stimulate entrepreneurship	PAEEJ, BIJE, ADB
Micro, small and medium companies	During the mapping we conducted focus groups with in total 20+ entrepreneurs and we visited the place of business of 10 small and medium enterprises.

Part 3 – Recommendations and conclusions

3.1 Recommendations for OC incubation/acceleration component (OCIAC)

OCIAC in Burundi should prioritise supporting entrepreneurs who have already introduced marketable products or services, employing 1-5 people (post-revenue). This focus is crucial as existing incubation programmes mostly cater to early-stage entrepreneurs, leaving a gap in providing support beyond the initial phase. Initially centring efforts on Bujumbura acknowledges its conducive business environment, while later expanding to other urban areas is planned. OCIAC should be sector-agnostic but aims for at least 50% involvement in agri-food processing, recognising agriculture's importance. Diversifying sectors is essential due to the existing emphasis on agriculture in other programmes, promoting a varied entrepreneurial landscape.

Important topics to keep in mind during design and execution of OCIAC

- Low self-confidence among Burundian youth requires attention throughout OCIAC. Selection procedures could involve a bootcamp for aspiring entrepreneurs, ensuring knowledge and experience even for those not selected. Specific sessions addressing self-confidence are recommended.
- OCIAC should implement strategies to support women entrepreneurs, including sessions on self-confidence, guidance on family planning and SRHR, and assigning a confidant to assist when facing harassment. Educating male entrepreneurs on supporting gender equality is advised.
- Establishing an active alumni community within OCIAC is crucial for ongoing learning and collaboration. Transparent selection procedures involving a diverse committee are recommended to avoid biases.
- OCIAC's annual subsidy could be divided into smaller amounts with regular reporting to ensure financial transparency and accountability. A study tour for the implementing partner to another OC country could enhance effectiveness in executing OCIAC in Burundi.

3.2 Recommendation for Orange Corners ecosystem strengthening activities

Opportunities exist to strengthen Burundi's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Initiatives like Knowledge-2-Knowledge programmes at universities and TVETs, training of trainers for ESOs, student design challenges, and policy advocacy are suggested. Aligning donor programmes on entrepreneurship is essential, focusing initially on training of trainers and policy advocacy.

3.3 Recommendation for Orange Corners Innovation Fund (OCIF)

Burundi faces an access-to-finance gap for entrepreneurs, especially women and those outside the agricultural sector. [OCIF's](#) Track I offers grants for all participants and Track II provides grant/loan mix financing for promising businesses. Caution is advised to mitigate risk of intimidation, and misuse of funds.

Important considerations:

- Ensuring selection committees are diverse to avoid biases.
- Involvement of OCHQ in the selection process.
- Confidence-building and training for grant/loan utilisation.