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The sustainability of refugee return: Insights from Burundi

Sonja Fransen, IFMS 2018



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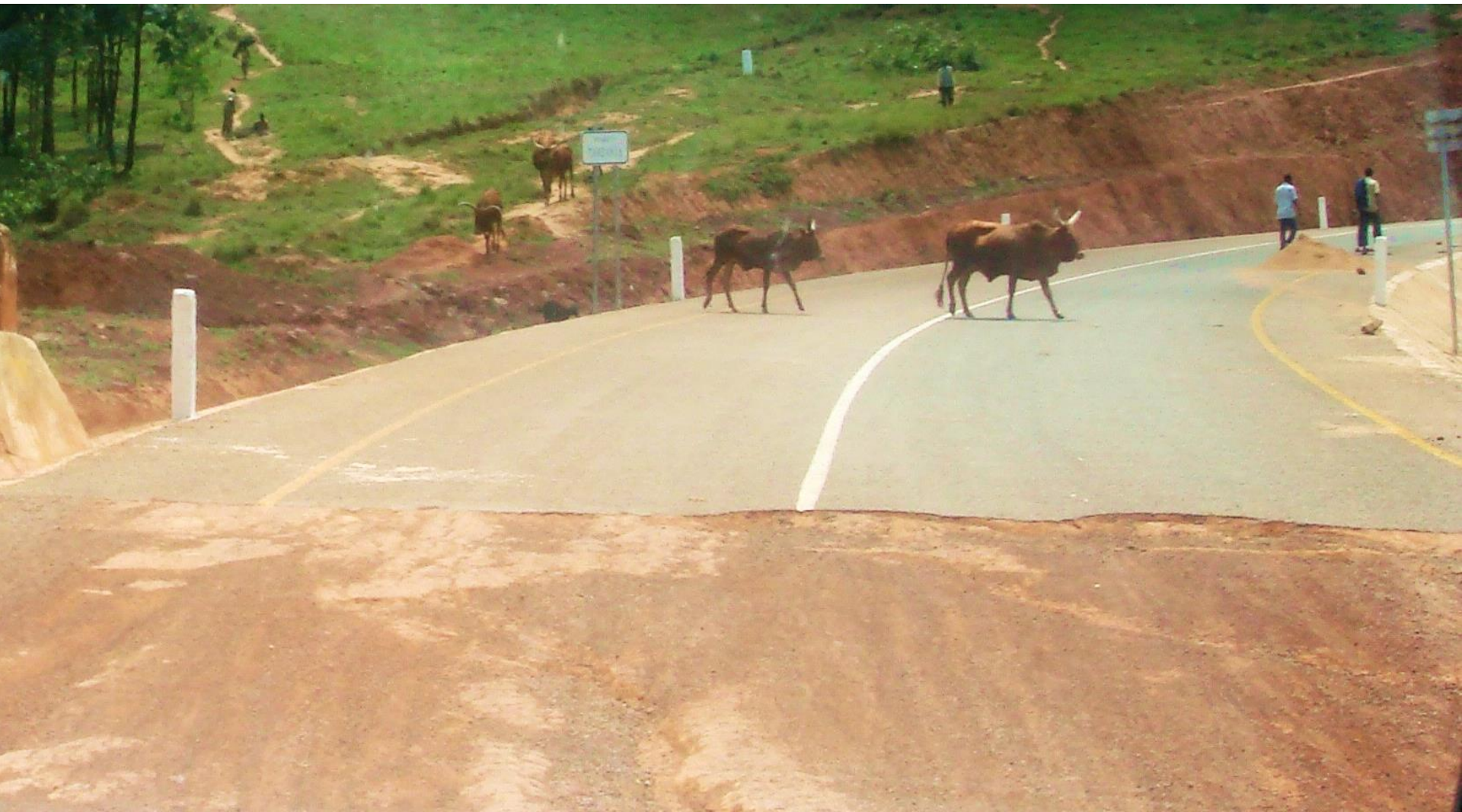


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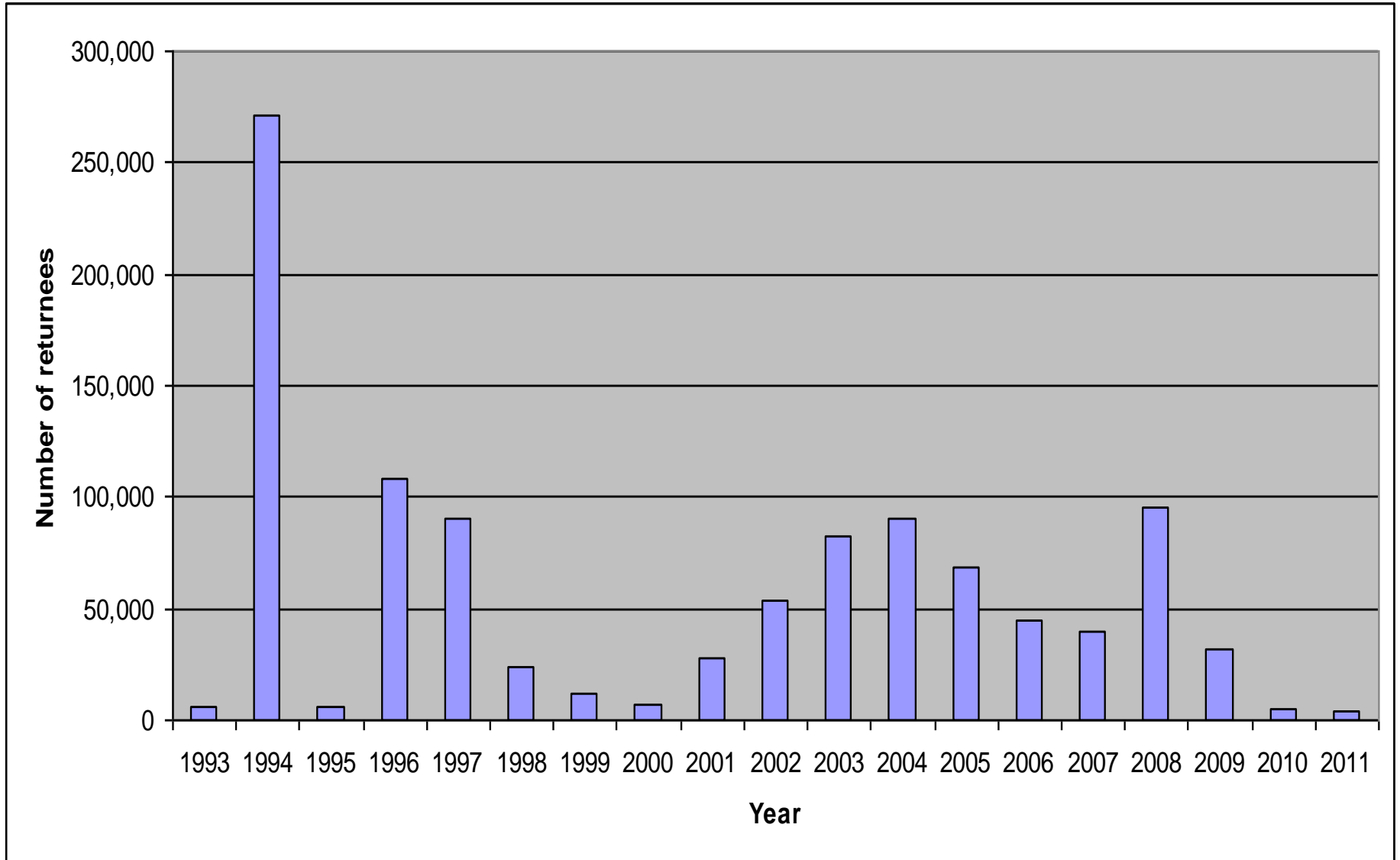
- What is the long-term sustainability of return migration?
- How can we measure this?



- Waves of civil conflict
- 1993 – 2000 civil war: 300,000 casualties and 1 million displaced
- 600,000 returnees in a ten-year period since early 2000s
- Many second-generation returnees
- Context of poverty, population pressure, land scarcity and damaged social ties



Return to Burundi: 1993 – 2011 (UNHCR, 2011)



Aims of this paper

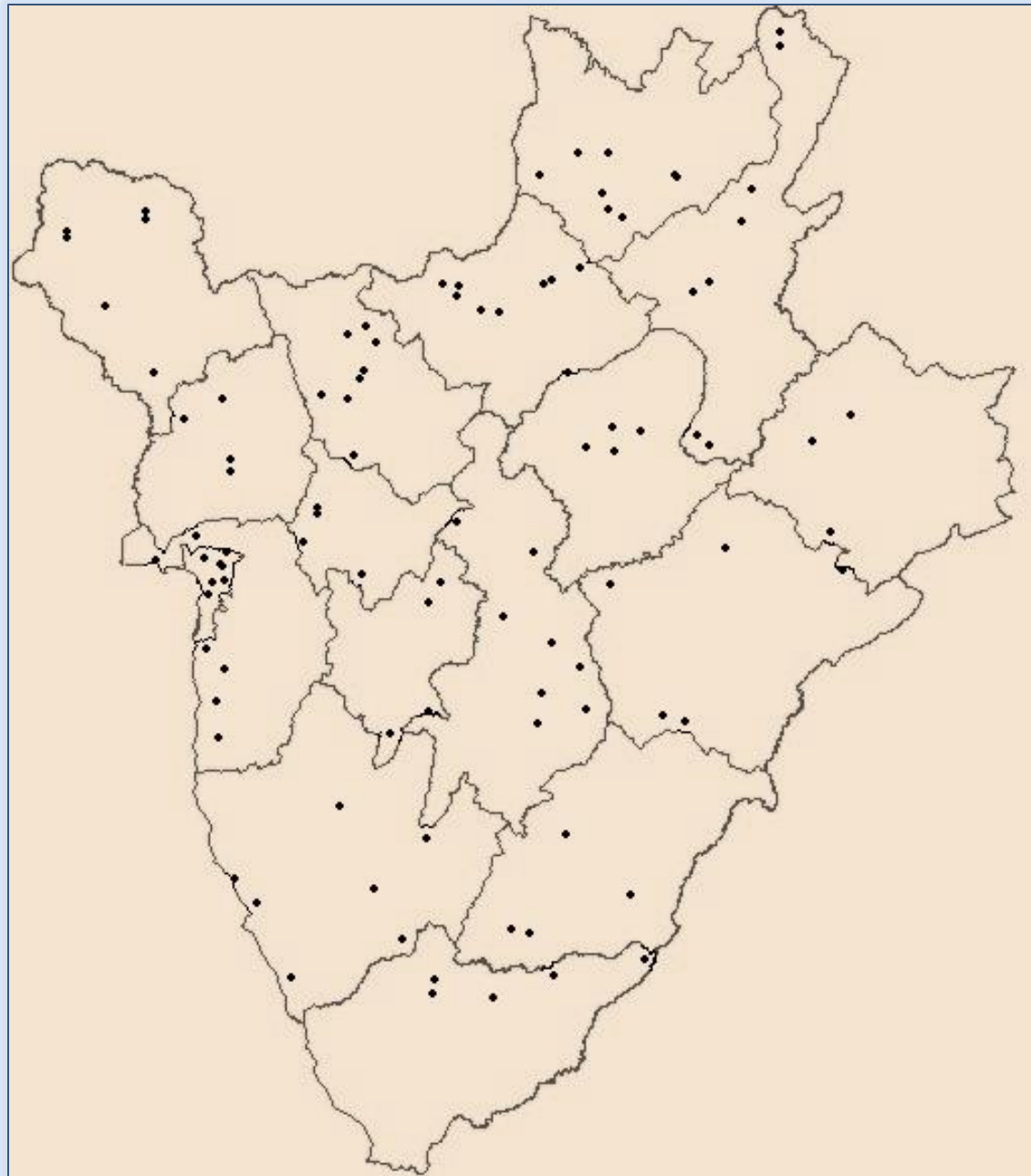
- A study into the wider economic sustainability of international refugee return in Burundi
- Different levels of analysis and using a multidimensional approach
 - Measured at the household and community level simultaneously
 - Objective and subjective indicators

Data (2011 & 2015)

- Nationally representative household and community panel data
- 1,500 households, 7,986 household members, in 100 communities

(funder: Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs)



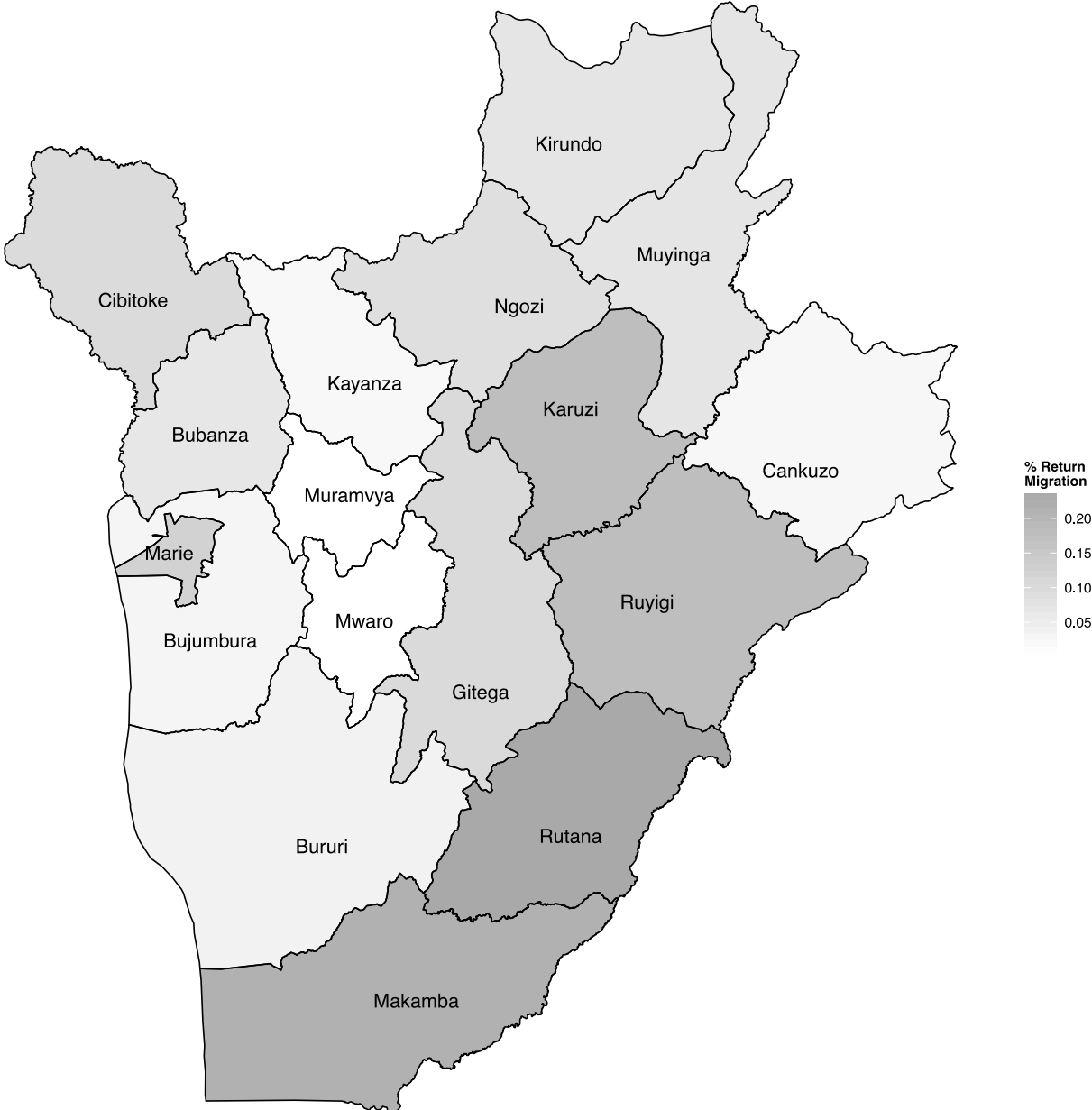


Data (2011)

- 447 (5.99%) were first-generation returnees
- 188 (2.52%) were second-generation returnees
- More than 90% returned to their origin communities



Return migration in Burundi (2011)



Results: Comparing households

Variable	First-generation return households (n = 244)		Second- generation return households (n = 75)		Non-return households (n = 1148)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Land ownership (1 = yes)	0.77	0.42	0.68	0.47	0.84	0.37
Living conditions (index)	-0.06	1.83	-0.40	0.94	0.02	1.97
Food security ¹	2.68	1.77	2.63	1.71	2.82	1.76
Subjective wealth	2.42	0.91	2.24	0.85	2.44	0.90
Subjective change in wealth	2.64	1.03	2.58	1.00	2.64	0.98

Results: Effects on communities

- Communities with higher proportions of returnees had lower food security
- Communities with more second-generation returnees had lower living conditions and scored lower on subjective wealth and changes in subjective wealth over the past years

Main findings

- At both the household and community level, the sustainability of return in Burundi can be questioned.
 - Households: lower land ownership, food security, and subjective wealth
 - Communities: higher food insecurity, lower living conditions, lower subjective wealth
 - Reintegration of second-generation returnees is especially challenging
- > Most households are in very vulnerable positions

Conclusion

- Support for taking a wider view on measuring sustainability of return
 - Focus on households and communities
 - Objective and subjective views
 - Focus on different groups
- Returnees are not a homogeneous group > tailored policies
- Need for policies that simultaneously address humanitarian needs and economic and social development
- Community based support

Thank you

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Further reading:

Fransen, S. (2015). The socio-economic sustainability of refugee return: Insights from Burundi.

Population, Space and Place, 2015

Fransen, S. and Kuschminder, K. (2012). *Back to the land: the long-term challenges of Return and reintegration in Burundi*. New Issues in Refugee Research, No. 242.