



American Friends
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Cord



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PRESS RELEASE

Peacebuilding programme in Burundi finalist in global 'World Justice Challenge'

'Building Bridges in Burundi' is a programme of the Consortium Red een Kind, Cord, AFSC and Mensen met een Missie, in which young people are central mitigating armed conflict and instability in Burundi. This programme has qualified as a finalist in the World Justice Challenge 2022. The results of the programme show that young people are able to bring positive change in a protracted and seemingly hopeless conflict.

A strong bridge

A strong bridge isn't built in a day. The same goes for bridging social differences and mistrust in a torn society like Burundi. Broken trust, lack of economic opportunities, transgenerational trauma and a justice system deeply affected by reprisals, corruption and civil war. This is the challenging context faced by young Burundians looking to build a livelihood, a future. Building Bridges in Burundi (BBB) has offered these young people a multidimensional approach to overcome these barriers. BBB is funded by 'Addressing Root Causes', a fund of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the aim of mitigating the root causes of conflict and instability in Burundi.

Conflicts span generations

Self-Help Groups were the starting point of BBB. Clement Nkubizi, Country Director Help a Child Burundi, says: "By bringing together youth from different backgrounds in Self-Help Groups, they discovered that they faced the same problems. As a result, prejudices faded or even disappeared. At the same time, they noticed that they were able to solve concrete problems together, such as lack of income. Thanks to these groups, young Burundians have started all kinds of activities, like beekeeping, barbershops, fish breeding ponds and sewing workshops.

The programme, which took place in six districts, has lowered the barriers to justice and reconciliation in several ways. This was done, among other things, by strengthening informal justice and reconciliation through village elders and churches. In addition, committees were set up and supervised to help strengthen good governance. Also mediators were trained who could assist people in resolving conflicts that sometimes span generations.

Increased confidence

The five-year programme ended in December 2021. In these five years, over 10,000 applications for legal support in conflicts have been received by the trained mediators. More than half of those cases have now been resolved. Other cases have been transferred to the formal legal system. External research shows that the confidence of the population in formal and informal forms of justice has increased in more than 90% of the cases. Also, 84% of the BBB participants indicated that violent conflict in their environment has decreased. Due to the socio-economic activities in the Self-Help Groups, the average income of young people has increased sixfold.

Choosing unity over division

The testimonials of young people show the impact of BBB on a personal level. One of the youth recalls: "Before BBB, I hated anyone of this other ethnicity, following the painful experiences of my family in the past. When I started to participate in the BBB programme, everything really changed in me. I have given myself the job of challenging my friends' convictions as they still see things as I saw them in the past."

Clement Nkubizi: "I well remember that I visited the village of Kayogoro, Makamba. It was shortly after the elections, which is always a very turbulent time in our country. The whole conflict then flares up again and, especially among young people, riots and armed fights easily break out. I got into a conversation with a local government officer. He said he was shocked by the fact that there was no unrest anymore among young people in the village. Under a large prominent tree, the young people were now working on their business together. Previously, they would visit each other here to stir unrest and riot. He could hardly believe that this situation could change so much. For me personally, this story, as well as the many other testimonies I've heard and seen, means that there is hope even in the most hopeless situation. Our country can recover if we choose unity over division."

World Justice Challenge

Out of 305 entries from 118 countries, the inspiring BBB programme has qualified as one of thirty finalists in the World Justice Challenge. A leading jury of lawyers, journalists, experts and politicians will select the five winning initiatives. The competition is part of the World Justice Forum, which will take place in The Hague from May 31 to June 2 June.

More information

Building Bridges in Burundi: www.helpachild.org/bbb

World Justice Challenge: [World Justice Challenge 2022 | World Justice Project](#)

World Justice Forum: [World Justice Forum 2022 | World Justice Project](#)

The Consortium

BBB is a unique collaboration of the following organizations: Help a Child (lead), American Friends Service Committee, Cord and Mensen met een Missie as well as nine local partners in Burundi.

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Arts and drama are part of the BBB programme to learn about peace and reconciliation.



Thanks to the BBB programme, relatives Antoinette and Mammert were reunited after a family feud lasting almost forty years.



Members of a youth Self-Help Group at work in the breeding pond they maintain together.



Clement Nkubizi, Country Director Help a Child Burundi.