

Life after Conflict in Burundi

SOCIO-ECONOMICS AND TRAUMA HEALING

THE AFSC BURUNDI PROGRAM

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths who are committed to social justice, peace, and humanitarian service. Its work is based on the principles of the Religious Society of Friends, the belief in the worth of every person, and faith in the power of love to overcome violence and injustice.

AFSC works in 52 locations worldwide. In Burundi, AFSC works through the Burundian civil society and faith-based organizations to reach out to communities for peace building in three integrated approaches: economic reintegration,

social cohesion, and trauma healing. AFSC helps young people enhance their skills and exposes them to self-employment opportunities in their communities.

The Burundi Program also aims to create an open environment where key community members, leaders, and decision-makers can meet to discuss and develop strategies to address critical issues concerning peace and development.

AFSC's vision for Burundi is to see all Burundians healed and reconciled, being able to meet their basic needs, uphold their human dignity and make a meaningful contribution to lasting peace and sustainable community development.



United community members dancing together after conflict in Burundi



A self-employed young person



Actors and decision-makers meeting in order to address issues on conflict prevention



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Returnees, ex-combatants, internally displaced persons, and host communities living together



Community members during the trauma healing session



Community members during the savings and loans session

ABOUT THE FILM *LIFE AFTER CONFLICT IN BURUNDI*

After the signing of a peace agreement between the government and the last rebel group, a big question remained. How can a country whose social fabric had been ripped apart, where economic potential was low, where mistrust and fear became entrenched aspects of the culture, engineer a process to move forward? Most members of the communities neither could afford nor have access to their basic needs. Many witnessed the deaths of their family members and the memories lingered around them even when they pretended that it was all over.

This was a daunting challenge for those in Burundi, and those in the international community who wanted to help their success. Conflict prevention and peace building could not succeed with a hungry children, men and women, lacking basic social services or lacking economic opportunities.

Life after Conflict in Burundi: Socio-economics and Trauma Healing is a documentary film that highlights how a community can be successfully rebuilt, socially and economically, after a conflict. The film shows a strong social cohesion between the people that were affected by the war and how they can come together and become a strong force in supporting one another. There is a strong bond between the returnees, ex-combatants, internally displaced persons and some members of the host communities, all of whom have decided to leave behind their differences to form a harmonious society.

Economic opportunities and strengthening social cohesion is not the whole solution in a post-conflict community. Events that characterized the conflict chronically recur and haunt community members daily. There is need for them to be healed from the trauma to regain hope, reconcile, and restore human dignity.

A strong community is built on trust, support for one another, and forgiveness. As the film demonstrates, these remain strong determining factors for national reconciliation, peace building, and community development.

Through the AFSC program, community associations are created and given the opportunity to understand the added value of pooling their resources through self-managed savings and lending projects. They are able to give small loans to one another from their joint savings with very low interest rates. Each association has a maximum of 25 people to permit an efficient management. As the film shows, these groups are the basis for building strong social cohesion, self-reliance, and a setting for trauma healing too.

The loans obtained from the associations are repaid gradually. Then, often, people take more to strengthen their income generating activities. Members see their activities grow and the group's efforts become diversified.

Mutual support remains a strong force for these community associations. Members usually convene weekly and make contributions alongside their usual savings and loans. These additional contributions serve as a mutual fund. Through this mutual fund, members are supported when calamities happen, like the loss of close relations and illnesses. These are not expected to be reimbursed.

To sustain the community associations' good results, members have decided to launch it for one year, and then restart it thereafter for a 12-month circle to last for as long as possible. Members have also decided to bring in their children to partake as full members so that these associations can last from generation to generation.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

- Government of Burundi through line ministries
- BIRATURABA
- Center of Leadership and Development of Ex-Combatants (CEDAC)
- Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC)
- Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services (THARS)
- Christian Union for Peace and Development (UCPD)
- Association of Women Returnees in Burundi (AFRABU)
- Evangelical Fraternity of Christ in Africa in Burundi (FECABU)
- The United Nations System
- Other international organizations working in similar domains