



## Against all odds: tapping into the faith domain to engender peace within national security forces

Case Study 12, February 2016

By Zephirin Ndikumana, Peace and Protection Manager, WV Burundi

**M**AHORO—meaning peace in Kirundi and an acronym for Mobilising Actor-groups for Harmony and Reconciliation Outcomes—is a project with three objectives: (1) to strengthen capacity of church leaders for a united authoritative voice on peace; (2) to strengthen youth resilience to violence and their constructive participation in peacebuilding and development; and (3) to mainstream peacebuilding and conflict-sensitivity in on-going WV Burundi (WVB) operations. This project has enabled WVB to contribute to on-going peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts in the country.

Prior to the 2015 general elections, political actors were plagued with widespread acrimony expressed in media and political rallies, indicating growing rifts. Both politicians and the civil society leadership continued to display mutual intolerance. People living in Bujumbura were engulfed with fear. Some suburbs were involved in demonstrations and security forces were involved in containing the violence. The situation rapidly became tense, conflict reached manifest stage and rumours were widespread. WVB, in response, stepped up its peacebuilding efforts, mobilised its church partners to take action and targeted critical actors.

In order to effectively impact key actor groups, WVB partnered with *La Maison Lueur d'Espoir*—a local faith-based organisation—to facilitate several reflection workshops. These workshops focused on promoting non-violent approaches to conflict resolution and reinforced values such as tolerance and forgiveness.

Participants were called upon to embrace their role of being God's ambassadors in seeking peace and pursuing it. They were urged to understand that God purposely placed them in those positions to further His Kingdom.

A workshop was organised for 60 senior civil servants in the Ministry of Home Affairs and faith leaders with responsibilities in the public sector. Another targeted 60 senior magistrates and judges from the Ministry of Justice. A workshop for 78 Senior Officers of Defence and Security was also conducted. As a result, an information sharing network coordinated by the Military Christian Fellowship of Burundi (*Communauté des Militaires Chrétiens au Burundi*—CMCB) was formed. Further to that, the head of ISCAM — a school of Senior Military Officers located in the capital — requested WVB through the CMCB to assist in coordinating stabilising efforts on campus after five students left the school because they felt insecure. WVB mobilised its partners who successfully conducted a reflection workshop. Students were encouraged to maintain calm and stay on campus.

WVB continued to engage the National Defense Forces' leadership. A decision to extend peacebuilding reflection workshops to the five military regions of Burundi was made. 300 Senior Military Officers were reached. Another achievement has been the formulation of resolutions currently guiding positive behaviours of members of the Security and Defense Forces. **\*\*\*For more information and/or comments contact: [zephirin\\_ndikumana@wvi.org](mailto:zephirin_ndikumana@wvi.org) or [vat\\_kamatsiko@wvi.org](mailto:vat_kamatsiko@wvi.org)\*\*\***