

# TRANSCEND AFRICA NETWORK

## Peace by African's Peaceful Means: Obstacles and Resources to Peace

Rapport of the project initiated in the Great Lakes region of Africa

Uganda-Burundi-D.R.Congo

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# Table of Contents

1. **Active peace and non-violence education**
  - **Uganda School Project: Implementing a curriculum of peace education in the Great-Lakes.**
    - a. Profile St. Kizito kindergarten and Primary school
    - b. Procedures of the 3 days peace courses with the class
  
2. **Baraza: Promoting a culture of Non-killing in the Great-lakes region**
  - 2.1. Beneficiary
  - 2.2. Objective
  - 2.3. Strategy
  - 2.4. Forum of Discussion
  - 2.5. The vote
  
3. **Financial report**
  
4. **The leaning and building elements in this project**

The Transcend Africa Great-lakes project was launched in Trondheim/Norway in February 2004 with the goal of strengthening the civil society in the Great-lakes using peaceful means of conflicts transformation by establishing a partnership between peace builders, researcher, practitioners on the field, and in the Diaspora. It has led gradually to the forming of an informal network including potential leaders/healers working with conflict Transformation both on the grass-root and leadership level in Kinshasa/North-Kivu/South-Kivu (D.R.Congo), in Kigali (Rwanda), Kampala (Uganda) and Bujumbura (Burundi). We want to achieve and edify a relevant a network of reconciliation and forgiveness (Involving men and women) in the region based on consultation, exchange, mutual empowerment, and development projects. It will outline possible research and training on non-violent approaches for a positive Transformation of the Great-Lakes Conflict.



It was then decided to effectuate a field trip in the region to map up and be updated on the current political, human rights, peace and conflict development in the Great-Lakes region especially in Uganda, Burundi, and D.R.Congo. As The coordinator of the TRANSCEND AFRICA NETWORK, I went on the field in the region assisted by other members of the network in the region from the 5<sup>th</sup> of January to the 10<sup>th</sup> of February. The activities in the region have facilitated to define a framework to prepare the future establishment of a network of reconciliation, forgiveness, peace research and action in the Africa. It will outline a relevant approach of research based on

Galtung's Transcend Method in resolving the sub-Saharan conflicts and in dealing with post-conflict issues such as Reconstruction, Reconciliation, and Resolution.

The focus of the project was especially to investigate new approaches in dealing with the endemic conflicts in region. The practical work has involved peace Education with Children at primary level, Refugees, and civil activists. The seminars and workshop were supported by other organization such as Amnesty international Uganda, or Radio Maria (A catholic radio broadcasting in all Uganda) etc.



Rais Neza Boneza in consultation with human rights activists from Rwanda and D.R.Congo, 6<sup>th</sup> January 06

This report is an overview of the activities in the region under the supervision of TRANSCEND AFRICA NETWORK and the support of its members. Beside this rapport, the following papers have been produce:

- Awakening the Healer into modern conflicts: African Traditional Mechanisms of Conflicts Transformation. In process...
- Afro-Hiltlerism : Historic of Cultural Humiliation in the Great-Lakes (Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies project) in process....
- Sudanese Internal Displaced People: Challenge for the future administration
- TRANSCEND Africa Network report on refugees: Plight of the Refugees and IDP's in Uganda
- War and HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Great- Lakes region of Africa
- Africa in face of the development of the others
- Ghettoization or Globalization of the African Literature
- Revisiting International Migration and Development
- Human rights rapport : Rwanda

The Great Lakes conflicts have several roots, closely intertwined. There is an endless duality in the leadership of region that has resulted in continuously instability, poverty, HIV endemic crisis for result is continued poverty for millions men, women and children. To elucidate a single defined cause of the crisis sound complex but the most important fact is that many African countries lack a broadly shared vision of their future that effectively melds the demands of globalization with local values. Although considering the large scale of violence in Africa, peace-buildings activities as well as political or other peace initiatives have not given strong focus on the empowerment of the local people themselves in recalling peace and non-violence practices that could be found in African sub-societies. I summarized my work in the region in the following principal ideals:

- Vision: Empowering, Youth, and Women to realize their potential to develop healthy relationships for peace and enabling democratic building. To facilitate and strengthen the empowerment of youth and women through non-violent means of conflict transformation, peace education/training, capacity building research, analysis and networking in order to participate in building positive peace, sustainable development and respect for human rights”.
- Goals: Engage youth and women in peace building processes through, facilitation, support, accompaniment, empowering and equipping them with skills necessary for sustainable self development and dialogue thereby creating an enabling environment for a positive peace, equity and development for all.
- Long terms objectives:
  - ❖ To increase awareness of the importance of intercultural dialogue and education for the development of a “culture of peace” in the region;
  - ❖ To support local initiatives of peace building in setting activities aiming to the development of the society by encouraging fair democratic practices;
  - ❖ To provide practitioners in the fields of peace education and intercultural education with materials and trainings relevant to their work.

# 1. Active peace and non-violence education



Raïis N. Boneza Transcend Africa co-ordinator with St. Kizito school children in Kampala

In nations where major infrastructures and families have been destroyed by war and violence; peace and non violence should be the key concepts to rely on. However, the challenge is to implement non-violence values in the midst of a lost generation of abandoned, children. If they are saved and cared for, they will care about peace and non violence in the future. The TRANSCEND AFRICA NETWORK has started to support two school projects in the Eastern Congo and Kampala (Uganda).

## - **Uganda School Project: Implementing a curriculum of peace education in the Great-Lakes.**

### *a. Profile St. Kizito kindergarten and Primary school*

St Kizito's Nursery and Primary School Kansanga was founded in 1967 as a nursery school under the initiative of the Kasanga catholic sub-parish. It was specifically to address the literacy problem at that time.

It served in the capacity of a nursery School comprising of Children between 3-6 years until 1988 when it expanded to a full primary school. I.e. Class up to primary seven.

It is being operated privately under the patronage of Kansanga Catholic Parish. The school is non profit and a day mixed with an intention of giving a chance to the under-privileged children in the area to attain basic education. The fee charged per children is not adequate but they can not afford higher fees. Even the low fees charged many fail to fully pay them.

### *b. Procedures of the 3 days peace courses at St. Kizito kindergarten and primary school*

The Uganda School project initiated by the TRANSCEND AFRICA NETWORK was an experiment to see the feasibility to include in the current educational curriculum, a peace course for children already at elementary school (Kindergarten and Primary) level. I had 3 days course with children from 8 to 17 year old. From poetry, to painting with the simple theme: Peace and Love in Uganda.

This project would make St. Kizito school one of the first schools in Kampala with a specific curriculum on peace studies for young children. The participation of TRANSCEND AFRICA NETWORK members is most welcome for its success. The school is looking for teachers on a volunteering basis who can run a peace project course with the children. In August 2006 a

meeting will be held in Kampala with other interested responsible of schools to discuss the mechanism that can be used to extend the St. Kizito Peace project to other schools in the capital and long term in the region.

#### *The Course:*

For the peace course with the children, I was inspired by the African tradition values embodied in Dr. Maulana Karenga's KWANZA. In the 60s, Dr. Maulana Karenga, wanted to unify the U.S. Black national movement by returning to traditional African values. He began a holiday named Kwanza (Harvest), to celebrate 7 values and principles of Kwanza, each represented by a candle and given a day of reflection. This holiday has become increasingly celebrated within African-American households, as well as, acknowledged by other groups within the U.S. today. It was important to find an easy African fashion that can be understood by children and being retained as a way for their everyday life in their family community. The kwanza principles were accurate to realise the peace and non-violence activities at school and make the kids understand the core principle of Ubuntu: "I am because we are"; **to learn to be a human being.**



#### **Kwanza's 7 principles taught to children:**



Children were nurtured with love. They lived by appreciating the presence of everyone in the class and further in their community. Children learnt to avoid activities that would jeopardize the **Umoja** (Unity) of the family. One's bad acts can always and negatively affect the harmony of the family. This is how they build a culture of awareness of peace and interconnectivity. This type of awareness will be then translated into family norms and systems that are just and peaceful. Instead of me and you there is us, and we do not want violence to harm us no matter what is our family name. The children have learned that if

there must be unity among them it will imply collective work and responsibility- **Ujiima**-; the authority exercised collectively and collaboratively is likely to avoid egoism and promote positive relationship. Their understood that dialogue should be part of their culture when interacting between them and the adults, they had then to have **Nia and Imani** (Purpose and Faith). But to realize a culture of dialogue with purpose and faith, they should first recognise that they are a **Jamaa** (Family). And to create a family and to make it united as a piece of art it requires **Kuumba** (Creativity).

At the end of the 3 days course the Network shared school kits covering the next semester to the total of 32 children who have participated. The 32 children are part of a framework and follow up in a long term perspective. The TRANSCEND AFRICA NETWORK has planned to provide to the children school kits and peace materials in exchange of the peace projects that will be assigned to them in a long term for a period of 3 years. Members interested to be part of this project should contact Transcend Africa.



## 2. Baraza: Promoting a culture of Non-killing in The Great-lakes region



Nonviolence group work in Burundi

Baraza is a Swahili word meaning “gathering”, or “round table.” Baraza in the traditional society was used to settle differences and discuss community issues. People in conflict were brought there to arrange and resolve their problems. In the eastern region of Africa, former antagonists were asked to bring with them gifts for each other. Accepting to go to Baraza meant that we were going to solve the problem and restore the harmony in the relation between our clan, family and community. Baraza was

employed in the case of apartheid under the name of the Commission of Truth and Reconciliation. The Baraza is a privileged occasion for physical, psychosocial, intellectual interrelation in the community.

The Baraza was initiated to debate all sorts of problems of conflicts among people, tribes and nations, problems of Human Rights in general and gender issues especially pertaining to education, and exclusion of the women in community decision-making. From the 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2006, we organized a Baraza in Bujumbura (Burundi), gathering Congolese, Burundian, Rwandan with the aim to discuss the possibility of a non-killing culture in the region. The participants were from different institutions and different religious denominations. The foundation Chirezi, an association operating in the area, collaborated to facilitate the 3 days seminars.

The seminar was held in Cibitoke, 6 km from Bujumbura. Why the choice of this location? It was chosen by the participants because that part of the city was more affected by the war and much massacre occurred there in 1993.

Currently, **Cibitoke** is characterised by a growing number of Orphans and widows following the attacks of the area by rebels several times. The attacks of 1999 and 2000 affected extensively the local population who found themselves between the government and the rebels’ cross-fire.

Cibitoke was then symbolic as a place to hold the Baraza in order to send a clear message to all the parties involved in the conflict and inviting them to refrain from spreading of the breath of hatred and embark into new values of life.

Since its independence from Belgium in 1962, the Republic of Burundi has experienced an estimated lost of 1 to 2 million men and women. During the period 1993 to 2003 more than 400.000 lives were lost in a violent conflict opposing the armed forces and insurgent groups. Former Hutu rebels led the



Peace and Nonviolence Certificates given after 3 days of seminar in Burundi

current president Pierre Nkurunziza was swept into power in summer 2005 in the second democratic election of the country after the 1993 assassination of the first elected and Hutu president Melchior Ndadaye. Although, most of Burundi seems at peace today, the FNL (National Front of Liberation), another rebel movement has not yet accepted to cease fire and violence. The extremist Hutu rebel group FNL led by Agathon Rwaswa feel not been represented enough and are opposed to peace. A truth and reconciliation commission, modelled to the South African one is being setup in the country.

Through initiatives such as Baraza, TRANSCEND AFRICA NETWORK challenge is to bring people together, to reconcile, reconstruct, resolve their differences creatively using the Transcend Method that empower them with non-violence practices through local or traditional peace resources. And in the spirit of the poets of Negritude, we could achieve a conscious African Unity that could bring us to the “*Meeting of Giving and Receiving*” (Late Senegalese President and Poet, Leopold De Sedar Senghor’s dream) between civilizations.

### ***2.1. Beneficiaries***

The participants were from 10 religious denominations, different beliefs and various representatives of the civil society. In total 36 participants during the 3 days Seminar.

### ***2.2. Objectives***

The seminar’s aim was to :

1. Create an awareness of the necessity of implementing a non-killing and non-violence culture in the region
2. Help Educators and activists to use peaceful means of conflict transformation to build of a non-killing society in Burundi and at large in the region.

### ***2.3 Strategy***

When preparing the seminar I had in mind the following strategy to enable the participants reach the objectives:

1. Developing a peace and non-violence curriculum to be taught at school already at the elementary level. To break the cycle of structural violence.
2. The governments emphasizing on peace initiative and settle a comity of peace on the regional level representing the different nations.
3. Churches should start promoting non-killing ideas

### ***2.4. Forum of Discussion***

#### **1. Is Burundi a society of violence?**

The participants admitted there is a decrease of the killings in Burundi. All the groups acknowledged that killings were more significant in 1972 when the Hutu were chased by the Tutsi and after of the murder of President Ndadaye the first Hutu democratically elected president which led to a civil war from 1993-2003



**2. What is most used to kill?**

- Machine Guns
- Machetes,
- Language
- Poison

**3. Why do people kill in Burundi**

- Power
- Jealousy
- Money
- To defend the ethnical group

**4. Who perpetrates the killing?**

- Soldiers and rebels, especially men
- Police, in majority men
- Politicians, in majority men
- Militia groups
- Gangs groups

**5. Where do people learn to kill?**

People learn to kill mostly :

- In the family
- Army and schools
- Cinema and internet

### ***2.5. The vote and Group discussion***

60 % of the participants voted and believed that it possible to have a non-killing culture in Burundi and 40% acknowledge the impossibility to have a non-killing culture in Burundi. But both side agreed that there are elements of cultural peace in the society and the region.

#### **Where to find elements that can promote a non-killing in the region?**

It is true that people have killed each other in Burundi for many years and killings still going on at a low scale. Is there hope of a total non-killing society in Burundi? Are there some elements in the society supporting the hope for a non-killing Burundi? The above is the question that was asked to the participants. I demonstrated that there are elements showing that a peace culture and non-killing society is possible in the region. Those signs can be found:

#### **Spirituals:**

A non-killing theory is present in all major religion.

Christianity: “You shall not kill” Exodus 20:13 (Bible) or the Hebrew Jewish saying:  
"Love your friend as you love your self.

#### **Elements in the culture**

We can also find signs of non-killing in songs, poems, art and writings. Africa is rich in cultural signs of peace and non-violence. Participants were asked to explore their cultures in order to give songs, poems, art of non-killing contained in their culture. The participants acknowledge that Africans have always lived by daily acknowledging that human beings have a common origin. They also lived by maintaining spider web of relationships with other human beings, their ancestors and other creatures. For example they always regarded any

forest as Chemist, this called for respect for the integrity of creation. No one exploited the resources of the earth for personal gratification. All lived in unity for the sake of a common good. By maintaining the harmony of the spider web of relationships and interconnectivity was the basis for the promotion of peace.

### **Historical and political elements**

Some political leaders and great human being in the history of mankind have shown that violence can be avoided in search of solutions to the problems of this world. Mandela in south Africa, Desmond Tutu, Ghandi, Dr. Luther King Jr. etc..

### **Questions and Discussion**



Third day of training : questions and answers around

**The participants were divided in 6 groups of discussion to answer to the following questions:**

**1. Are there associations promoting peace and non-killing in Burundi?**

The participants gave some associations:

- Ligue Iteka
- Radio Isanganiro
- OPAREC

**2. Are there individuals who promoted peace and non-killing in Burundi?**

All the groups gave the following names:

- Prince Louis Rwagasore ( hero of the independence)
- President Melchior Ndadaye, first elected president (assassinated)
- Mgr Joachin Ruguna, bishop of Gitega (assassinated)
- Cardinal representative of Vatican in Burundi (assassinated)

**3. Are there political movements promoting peace and non-killing in Burundi?**

No name of political movements was given.

**4. Are there violent aspects to be taken out of public life in Burundi?**

Some aspects were given:

- Death penalty

### **Working group:**

Five problems have to be solved so far:

1. **Violence and weapons:** Is it possible for Burundi to campaign for disarmament?
2. **Corruption and poverty:** Can Burundi lead in fighting misery?
3. **Human Rights violation:** Is there any thing to do to respect human rights in Burundi?
4. **Environment:** Can we stand for the protection of environment?

The changes must implicate all the layer of the society. From up to down, from leaders to ordinary people, from Pastors to ordinary church members. Are we ready for this?

1. Can we stop the killings in Burundi? Answer: yes we can
2. What do we have to do? We need to support strategies and ideas that promote peace and non-violence.
3. What does indicate today within the society and events that a culture of peace is possible in Burundi
  - Burundian have elected democratically a new president
  - People are talking to each other now,
  - More and more mixed marriage are celebrated
  - New project of development and reconstruction are planned
  - Seminars on Peace and conflict transformation such this.
  - Not every Burundian is a killer, a soldier or a rebel
  - Numbers of Cultural activities promoting peace.
4. What can we do to have non-violence as a motto for future leaders?
  - We need to train our people especially youth
  - The church needs to stand and preach youth
  - Programmes and strategies need to be drawn from a non-killing and non-violence perspective
5. What is the consequence of violence in Burundi?
  - Poverty
  - Underdevelopment
  - Human Rights violation
6. What institutions are needed in Burundi to achieve a culture of peace?
  - A ministry of culture and peace in Burundi
  - New curriculum of peace education in schools
  - Peace training in the army and the police
7. What obstacles are needed to cross?
  - Leaders are not prepared to change (conservatism, nationalism, traditionalist)
  - Corruption
  - Disunity
  - Politicians hold on power (egoism, nepotism)
  - Army, police and security services are not prepared and trained
  - Schools, teachers, youth, students are not prepared and trained
8. Can a policy of non-violence in Burundi inspire others in the region?
  - 50 % said yes: Because peace needs to start from somewhere in the region and Burundi can be that place.
  - 40 % said non: Each countries has its specific problems
  - 10 % said abstention: We agree that peace is needed in the region.

The seminar closed on the 15<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a candle lighting ceremony where commitment to non-violence was made and statement from participants to work and promote a culture of peace in their every day activities.

### **3. Financial report**

TRANSCEND AFRICA is a non-profit organization mostly concentrating its work on research basis. The first trip in the Great-lakes was its first practice on the field. Considering its status as Network, TRANSCEND AFRICA does not have any annual capital or budget for its activities. Every activity until now is run on a free-will basis. The Great-Lakes project has received funding from private sources and members of the Network.

The main capital of the wall project was; 5990 USD; I have received it as follows

- 4090 US (30.000 Norwegian Kroner) by the Fritt Ord
- 500 US from Transcend member
- 700 US from Transcend Norge
- 700 US from Transcend Member

#### Expenses

1. Plane tickets: Trondheim – Kampala: 1500 USD; Kampala – Bujumbura: 700 USD
2. Accommodations: 500 USD
3. Fuel within Uganda: 450 USD
4. Transport of materials and participants for 4 days in Burundi = 1000 US dollars
5. Food for participants (36) for 4 days + coffee = 600 US
6. Book materials and publications, printing = 300 US dollars
7. Certificates for the seminar participants in Burundi = 50 US dollars
8. School kit for 32 children (copy books, pencils, pen, chalk) = 350 US dollars
9. Honorarium for assistant: 500 USD

### **4. The learning and building elements in this project**

I would like to report here some significant lessons I have acquired from the people during the trip in the region. Such work is a basis for a dialogue and reconciliation in the region. First of all it is very important not to be focused on an immediate solution or result, but to concentrate more efforts on the process that will lead to common goals accepted by each party. This process should be participative and progressive. I call that a healing process.

This work should be seen as a mechanism of bringing the healer out of the participants, leaders, and children, I met. In societies where everything must be rebuilt; I believe we should recall traditional values as a remedy to heal nowadays African problems. The healing process helps the people to awake their consciousness, empathy, dignity in compassion of the dignity of the others-

all necessary ingredients to deal with peaceful means of conflicts transformation. I hope for the future to collaborate with any groups, NGOs, personality who believe and are interested in supporting the follow up of this project.

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*I am thankful to Peter Olowo who assisted me in my research and my stay in the region.*