

Civil Peace Service in Rwanda

Building peace in Rwandan and the Great Lakes region by empowering people to live together in constructive harmony

The challenge

The Civil Peace Service (ZFD) is a joint initiative of German peace and development organisations, including one governmental and eight non-governmental agencies. Under this structure, each organisation is responsible for developing and running its own programmes and projects, recruiting and preparing peace advisors, and supporting them in the field, where they work closely with local partner organisations.

Since 2001, the Civil Peace Service has contributed to peace building efforts in the Great Lakes region of Eastern Africa by supporting the Rwandan reconciliation process and improving conditions for developing a culture of peace. Its goal is to contribute to positive peace and peaceful conflict resolution, while working towards preventing renewed violence by helping people to deal with the past in a constructive way. The work of the Civil Peace Service in Rwanda is jointly carried out by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the German Association for Development Cooperation (AGEH).

Our approach

ZFD's partners in Rwanda are mainly civil society organisations which work in the areas of peace education, conflict transformation, the empowerment of youth and vulnerable people, and conflict-sensitive journalism.

A key task of the programme is to further develop our partner organisations' capacities with regard to methods of civil conflict resolution and violence prevention.

Both national and international experts focus on reconciliation and conflict transformation through:

- Serving as consultants on peace and reconciliation processes,
- Trauma work,
- Human Rights sensitisation,
- Providing orientation for youth and fostering critical thinking,
- Dealing with the past, commemoration, and memory,
- Conflict-sensitive journalism

Project name	Civil Peace Service (ZFD)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Rwanda
Lead executing agency	GIZ, AGEH
Duration	2001-2014; prolongation requested

In the broader context of inter-regional peace-building activities, the ZFD supports the formation of structures for cooperation and dialogue amongst various actors, with a strong focus on youth.

The benefits

Promotion of conflict-sensitive journalism in Rwanda and the Great Lakes region

Due to the deeply rooted and complex history of conflicts in the Great Lakes region, violence and its consequences are still visible and have a significant impact on the socio-political situation in Rwanda. Every week, Ejo Youth Echo (EYE) airs national radio shows relating to conflict-sensitive topics which aim at increasing tolerance for diverse opinions and encouraging critical thinking. In addition, EYE's team organises workshops for young journalists from Burundi, Rwanda and the DRC, which have led to a joint monthly regional radio show which is aired in all three countries and shows relevant topics from each country's perspective.

Promotion of civil conflict resolution methods

In addition to the problems arising from the aftermath of the genocide, such as the reinforcement of hostile stereotypes, many other sources of conflict exist, e.g. the unstable political situation in neighbouring countries and land disputes, as well as conflicts between young people arising from different ideologies. Focussing particularly on youth from both Rwanda and the wider region, and in cooperation with Never Again Rwanda (NAR), ZFD develops and consolidates methods of civil conflict resolution, while promoting dialogue and developing critical thinking skills amongst young people.



Photos: EYE Journalists at work



Photos: Youth in peace building processes
20 years after the genocide in Rwanda

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Development and consolidation of civil conflict resolution methods through local and interregional activities

The consequences of and tensions arising from the genocide remain pervasive in Rwanda; perpetrators and survivors face each other in their daily lives, domestic violence is high, and there is a strong correlation between the return of refugees and land conflicts. Large numbers of traumatised people and a lack of knowledge and access to methods of civil conflict resolution in all districts present problems for reconciliation and peaceful cohabitation. The ZFD works with the survivors' organisation IBUKA in three districts (Huye, Gisagara and Nyaruguru), training "Animateurs Psychosociaux" (APS) to support communities in civil conflict resolution and trauma counselling. ZFD has included a refugee component to its work.

Cross-border conflict prevention and dialogue promotion

Rebel activity in the eastern DRC creates an unstable political situation which still leads to violence and conflict in the Rubavu region. This makes people from both sides frightened of crossing the border between the DRC and Rwanda. Together with Vision Jeunesse Nouvelle (VJN), ZFD organises and conducts activities such as CINEDUC and "Tujenge Amani" and invites teachers, local political authorities as well as youth organisations to participate in cultural projects (i.e. forum theatre, music & sport) designed to reduce prejudice amongst young people by challenging negative perceptions of other groups. The project aims to build mutual understanding and trust between different groups so that a peaceful coexistence is possible.

Impact

Through the cross border peace-building programme "Tujenge Amani", around 200 participants from Rwanda and the DRC and 25 trainers have taken part in art, film and sports projects to reduce prejudice and negative perceptions of other groups. The programme helped approximately 1,400 people to work on reducing negative stereotypes about each other, and learn how to cooperate better with each other.

Ninety volunteers have been trained in trauma counselling and conflict transformation. They have provided psychosocial and mediation services to over 2.000 people per year.

Two commemoration conferences, each hosting 200 participants, and two mobile exhibition tours which have reached around 6,000 people, were conducted and have facilitated an intergenerational dialogue to exchange experiences of violence and genocide, supporting an integrative understanding of commemorating and reconciliation.

Many key actors have been trained in methods of conflict transformation and Human Rights Awareness. More than 350 people discuss these issues on a weekly basis in alphabetisation centres.

Approximately 300 students and 40 teachers have used their skills in "CINEDUC" and "Public Speaking" methods during teaching sessions and local, regional and national competitions organised by ZFD partner organisations.

Over 700,000 listeners in the Great Lakes Region follow EYE's radio transmissions. Youth are being appreciated as responsible actors in developing future perspectives for making peace impacts sustainable.

A number of young journalists from Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC are now trained in conflict-sensitive, fair and impartial journalism that enhances the quality of the programmes they produce, and fosters peaceful relations by reducing stereotypes.

Synergies and trust between actors have been created by exchanging information and knowledge in a transparent way. Projects in the Great Lakes Region are increasingly planned and implemented jointly through cooperation between organisations.

Published by Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
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As at November 2014