

“Peace – Development – Human Rights” Weltfriedensdienst e.V. in countries of the South.

WFD is engaged in 17 countries of the South. WFD projects pick up local initiatives, support them materially and with qualified personnel. This close cooperation with local partner organizations allows a productive exchange of skills and experiences between the North and the South, a major goal of WFD's work.

The triad of “**Peace – Development – Human Rights**” characterizes the program. Reconciliation in South Africa (*SINANI*) and Burundi (*Mi-Parec*) takes up traditional methods of conflict resolution and adapts them to the current situation. With the successful result that former enemies and groups with opposing interests commit themselves jointly to the improvement of their living conditions.

This is where WFD's development projects come in. However, economic success and absence of war are no reason to be satisfied, as long as human rights are violated – such as the right of Argentina's indigenous population to own land, the right of Guinean girls to physical integrity or the right to grow old in dignity. WFD is committed to the protection of people and their rights in the South as well as in the North.

Projects of the WFD are regularly evaluated by external specialists.

Civil Peace Service

Since 1999, the German Federal Government has been funding the **Civil Peace Service (ZFD)**, a new instrument of securing peace and preventing conflicts. Specially trained peace workers become active in conflict regions on the request of the respective partner organization in order to contribute to reconciliation and to set up peace promoting structures with local partners.

Weltfriedensdienst is one of the implementing agencies of Civil Peace Service. In 2008, its peace workers promoted peaceful conflict management in 10 projects with imminent or already escalating conflicts on the municipal level; they also worked on trauma coping and reconciliation after armed conflicts. This way, a peaceful coexistence is reachable again.

Reconciliation in Burundi

Since 2005 WFD is supporting the Burundian non-governmental organization *Mi-Parec (Ministry for Peace and Reconciliation Under the Cross)* in the context of a Civil Peace Service project. Its objective is to reconcile victims and offenders from civil war times and to mediate in current potentially violent conflicts. With its 8 million inhabitants on 27,834 km² (the German Federal State of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania: 23,180 km² / 1.7 million inhabitants), Burundi is one of the smallest and most densely populated countries of Africa. Today it faces the challenge of peacefully reintegrating a large number of refugees and former fighters. The expellees that return reclaim their farming and which by now is used by others. This causes conflicts

over land. Often people meet again that have committed terrible things to each other. On their long way to reconciliation these people need support.

Mi-Parec, the local partner of WFD, creates space and occasions for mediation and reconciliation. For this purpose, local peace committees are trained further and their work is supervised. *Mi-Parec* also carries out sportive and cultural events and promotes initiatives such as shared fields or the construction of orphanages in which former victims and offenders work together, learn to talk to each other and are finally able to tell each other “the truth” – an event that can involve several extended families and is guided by *Mi-Parec's* workers with special sensitivity. In 2008 *Mi-Parec* cooperated with 270 peace committees from village to regional level and carried out 19 cultural days (*Journées Culturelles*).





WFD supports *Mi-Parec*'s effort to establish the peace committees, to carry out the joint projects and to train disseminators in the field of civil conflict management. This way, 30 additional mediators and disseminators were trained in 2008 who are now working by *Mi-Parec*'s side.

The project entered its second phase in January 2008 and is approved for a period until June 2011. Two of its cooperation partners represent WFD in Gitega, where *Mi-Parec* is based, among them is an advisor for methods of civil conflict management and one for trauma therapy. In 2009 a further cooperation partner will take up work with a local colleague in the capital of Bujumbura. They are supposed to keep the peace committees informed about significant national developments such as return plans, and on the other hand advocate the ordinary people's concerns in the media, with politicians and the capital's institutions. For instance, many people fear that an insensitive legal access to coping with the past may undermine local success in justice and reconciliation efforts. Many laws discriminate women and create an additional potential for conflict.

Mi-Parec's work focuses on 12 municipalities in the east and South of Burundi. In the meantime, there are functioning peace committees in many places that have become first contact points for all kinds of conflicts. The judicial system is hopelessly overstrained due to the lack of personnel, and many Burundians cannot afford the money for public legal proceedings. Traditional justices of peace, honorable members of a village community, also called "Bashingantahe", increasingly demand fees for their arbitration service. Consequently, the peace committees and their free service assume a highly important

role. The vast majority of cases bears on conflicts over land. Local co-workers actually see the risk of fueling new conflicts with the public judicial system and with the Bashingantahe. Therefore an attempt is being made successfully to include both of these protagonists in the work of the peace committee. Parallel structures are avoided.

Constructive conflict management is based on successful communication between conflict parties. Therefore, 28 seminars on the basic concept and the methods of civil conflict management were carried out. The claims of re-





turnees, residents and state protagonists were discussed at four round-tables for the problem of land tenure; in a joint effort, exemplary solutions are sought for. The interest in the work of the peace committees is so great that the project is reaching its financial and logistic limits.

In 2008, three cultural and sport events, so-called “Journées Socio-Culturelles”, were carried out to promote dialogue and mutual rapprochement. Over 1,000 people took part. Inspired by the project two youth clubs organized similar events on their own.

Apart from its success, the project also faces conflicts of objectives. The desire to make everyday relationships normal encourages superficial processes of reconciliation. Public examples of radical reconciliation put other affected people under pressure, and the purity of intention considered to be a condition for reconciliation bears the danger of re-traumatization, if the terrible incidents are prematurely conjured up. Given the severity of traumatization of many people in Burundi, the relation between reconciliation and trauma therapy must be sounded out anew in every single case.





The conflict in Burundi

Since its independence in **1960** there are recurrent struggles for power that increasingly materialize along the distinction between the Hutu and Tutsi.

From the 1970s onwards this distinction led to several phases of civil war.

Between 1993 and 2001 about 250,000 to 350,000 people are killed; 1.4 million are driven off, the majority of them Hutu.

2000: Peace treaty of Arusha.

2001: Inauguration of a transitional government based on ethnic quotas. reelections in the year 2010.

Currently still about 470,000 expellees, 350,000 of which are refugees in Tanzania. Political situation still unstable.

Figures of WFD in Burundi

Project type: project of Civil Peace Service for mediation and reconciliation of conflicting groups.

Time frame: 2005 to June 2011

Placed personnel: 2 cooperation partners 2008

Funding: 100% by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ): 249,060 € in 2008, 325,520 € in 2009

Methods of the Peace Committees

- Integrated approach of traditional mediation methods and European influenced approaches of mediation
- Inclusion of traditional protagonists and of the village communities
- Not focused on immediate results: principle of voluntariness, open outcome
- Option of several negotiation rounds if needed, the Peace Committees keep track of the process of the conflict if possible

Objectives and challenges

- In 2010 presidential elections are coming up in Burundi, this will also be an issue in the project's work
- in spite of an increasing demand and expansion, the quality of the services offered must be kept
- the difficult relation between reconciliation and trauma therapy must be clarified.

