

**Country:** *Burundi*

**Name:** *Theatre & Reconciliation*

**Artistic Medium:** *Theater & Story-telling*

**Contact:**

Sylvestre Barancira, Coordinateur de Mission Burundi

RCN Justice et Democratie, 22 av Ngendandumwe, BP 1340 Bujumbura

Email : [rcn-burunid-coordo@cbinf.com](mailto:rcn-burunid-coordo@cbinf.com)

Frédérique Lecomte, author and director

Le Château de Barbe Bleue

lecomte.frederique@reconciliation.be

[www.reconciliation.be](http://www.reconciliation.be)

58, avenue Princesse Elisabeth

1030 Bruxelles

Belgique

**Objective:** *Replace the faces of guerillas and violence with memories of justice and solidarity. It promotes the discussion of immemorial values and attitudes. Contribute to the reconstruction of the individual, the group and the community through story telling and theater.*

### **Theater**

A volunteer RCN group produced two theater pieces “Si Ayo Guhora” (“We cannot be quiet”) and “Habuze Iki” (“This that has lacked”). This takes place at schools and outside; children centers and parents as well as grandparents are invited to come along. The theater groups are made up of Burundi actors. The first representations were between September 2002 and December 2004, the second representations as well as discussion groups were between May 2003 and December 2006.



*Si Ayo Guhora, Burundi, 2002*



*Habuze Iki, Burundi, 2005*

The pieces are written by Frederique Lecomte from the association Le Château de Barbe Bleue. Théâtre et Réconciliation, based in Belgium. Her specificity is to create professional performances with non-professional actors originated from vulnerable communities. Its methodology is to take participants' personal experience as the basis for creating the performances. As a consequence, they include the narratives of several groups of the population, including prisoners, refugees, fighters and inhabitants of the hill country who have participated in theatre improvisation workshops.



*Workshop at the jail of Gitega, Burundi, 2003*



*Spectators talking with a comedian, Burundi, 2002*

These plays question the spectator on their responsibility in the violence. They represent the complex culture of Burundi and highlight the positive values of the culture through poems and music.

Spectators cannot go through this alone, so extensive workshops were set up for the spectators after the show.

The actors came from the three ethnic groups – Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. To increase the target group, there is a plan to televise the plays as well as put them on the radio. Some of the shows attract up to 800 viewers. The representations are very popular in Burundi because there are practically no shows for children in the area and they sometimes ask for more than one story to be played. Theater keeps the children focuses because of the music and the colors and costumes. In May 2006, the representations were followed by a second representation, this time at the initiative of students of the theater group in the framework of RCN. By helping the students dissect the plays after they are done helps them to understand the psychology of the persons in the play. The goal of this work is to encourage a more pluralistic view of Burundian culture as well as reflect some of the opinions and ideas of participants and viewers to decision making politicians.

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## Story telling

RCN created this reinforcement program to publish and enact 10 stories of experiences. Trauma associated with the war separated communities and families and this was addressed in the story books as well as the thematic depiction of the story in a play.

A compilation of 10 stories in Kirundi were finished in February 2006. Three of these stories were recorded in a studio in the traditional way: one storyteller per story. Two comedians of the “Si Ayo Guhora” troupe were asked to do the recordings. The team asked for musicians to play music at the same time as the recordings. The stories received significant airtime on radio stations such as RPA and will be transcribed onto cassette and CD in order to distribute them in educational environments.

The illustrations were made by a Colombian woman because she could bring a cultural and artistic sensitivity to the pictures and make them universal. She mixed figurative and symbolic art together in order to facilitate exchanges later on.

At the end of 2006, two new stories will be published and recorded. Exchange frameworks have had some gaps in them because they seem to look for answers that are either “good or bad” responses and did not give enough room for the children to give their own assessment. The radio broadcastings will continue with RPA, Isanganiro and Renaissance showing their commitment to it. RCN also met with the director of the Educational Offices to discuss introducing the anthology of the stories to the national education system because it would reinforce values such as human values and rights, peace and democracy at a young age.

The next step is to represent these stories above as a theatrical expression.

