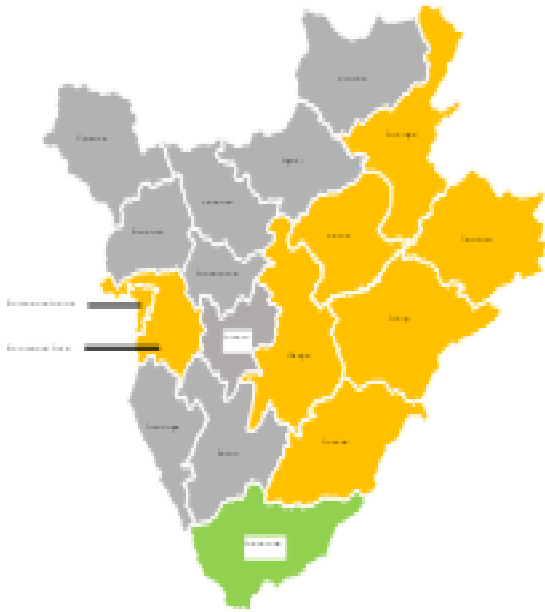




The IRC in Burundi: Child and Youth Protection and Development Program Overview



Globally, the IRC has developed niche expertise in child protection work through the design and use of unique models to address traditional humanitarian program areas such as alternative care, work with unaccompanied and separated children, mental health and psychosocial support, family strengthening and case management, youth protection and development. Unique to the IRC is the presence of a [research lab](#) within the organization, which helps to ensure our work is grounded in evidence and can be replicable in multiple contexts.



In Burundi, the IRC has been providing child and youth protection and development (CYPD) services to refugees and host communities since 2013. As part of the IRC's Great Lakes region – also comprising Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR) – the IRC in Burundi continues to focus on regional displacement and its

Context

Residential care centers (RCCs) were established throughout Burundi following the conflict in the mid-1990s and seen as a solution for orphaned children and children in families that considered themselves too poor to care for their child. Based on an assessment completed by IRC and GoB in February 2017, there are currently 89 RCCs in Burundi with approximately 3,559 boys and girls living in institutionalized care, including 962 children with disabilities. The age of the children in these institutions ranges from 5 years to 17 years, with the majority under 12 years of age. The existence of RCCs continues to serve as a pull factor perpetuating avoidable family separation and denying children a right to family-based care. Currently, thanks to a EU funded action named Umwana Mu Muryango (children at home), IRC is implementing an integrated approach in 4 provinces out of 18 by: a) working with the government to reinforce the legal and institutional framework, b) training the key actors on the harm of institutionalization, c) reunifying the children living in the RCCs with their families, d) strengthening the financial capacities and the parenting skills of the families to increase their knowledge and prevent future separation.

impact to leverage cross-border as well as deinstitutionalization opportunities to contribute to child protection. Since we began to work in Burundi, we have worked with over 10,252 boys and girls, 72,588 head of households including 1,050 community leaders and government actors as part of our ongoing action in deinstitutionalization, to bring children back to their family, reinforce the capacities of the caregivers to create and maintain a safe environment for children and to guarantee a better future.

Key Program Areas

Deinstitutionalization, and case management: To ensure children receive appropriate care in their families and address their specific protection needs, IRC's Child Protection Program proceeds to the deinstitutionalization process for those living in the RCC (Residential Care Centers), reunifies them with their families and offers child protection case management services. Case management is also available to particularly vulnerable children that are eligible for it. A specific budget line exists to support urgent cases in need with non-food items, food items and payment of vital services.

Alternative Care, Family Reunification: In close collaboration with local authorities and community-based child protection networks (DPDFS, CPC), the IRC supports the reunification of children separated from their caregivers, including children living in RCCs. To date, 384 children out of 500 that are targeted have been

reunified with their families. While waiting for their family reunification, children are placed in foster families who have been pre-selected, trained and are supported to ensure they are able to offer quality care to children in this difficult period of their life.

Positive Parenting: The IRC's *Families Make the Difference* program is an evidence-based approach that focuses on preventing and decreasing violence against children in the home and improving positive developmental outcomes for children in development contexts and conflict settings. We developed and successfully tested our [parenting interventions curriculum](#) in Burundi in collaboration with the Ministry of National Solidarity, Social Affairs, Human rights and Gender via its Children and Family Department.

In 2021, 2,477 parents attended positive parenting sessions and, an evaluation of our parenting curriculum revealed that 82% of all the parents who completed the 6-week program improved child wellbeing through parental care.

Safe Healing and Learning Spaces (SHLS): An SHLS is a secure and caring area where children and adolescents can heal from trauma, learn, and feel protected. Our SHLS toolkit includes math and reading lessons to build literacy as well as Social Emotional Learning (SEL). SEL interventions help children acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set, and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.



In Burundi, 2,156 children actively participated in various SEL, and recreational activities organized by the IRC.

Enhance alternative care planning at national level:

A national alternative care strategy has been developed by IRC in coordination with the GoB and other protection actors and validated by the MSNASDPHG by the end of 2021. After validation, a dissemination plan was developed to ensure that key messages are clearly communicated and cascaded to child protection actors at all levels to operationalize these guidelines. As part of the dissemination of the NCPP with the Guidelines on Alternative Care and to make these policies widely accessible, these documents were translated into Kirundi.

CYPD Program Areas:

- ✓ Case management for separated / non accompanied / institutionalized children
- ✓ Parenting skills to support positive parenting
- ✓ Social and Emotional Learning
- ✓ Safe Healing and Learning Spaces
- ✓ Community education, awareness, and engagement to enhance child protection
- ✓ Youth skills development, life skills, financial literacy, and economic empowerment
- ✓ Financial literacy and support to income generative activities for families of children registered in case management

Community Awareness and Advocacy: The community plays a key role in protecting vulnerable children. To strengthen their capacity to identify and respond to the needs of vulnerable children, the IRC conducts advocacy and awareness raising through several channels. These include using community structures, community and religious leaders, public announcement systems, house-to-house visits, and activities on international commemoration days

Skills Development and Financial Literacy: Youth in the refugee camps and vulnerable communities have very limited opportunities to pursue tertiary education. As a result, the IRC is investing in skills-based training and livelihoods support to build technical skills among youth. We support skills trainings in tailoring, soap making, livestock and crops farming. We also provide financial literacy through easy-to-use applications such as Learn to Earn and VSLA which provide insights into savings, budget management and development of business plans and supplement trainings on business development and management.

Currently, 84 adolescents and youth participated in and completed our various skills training programs. 80 youths who have graduated from our skills training courses have received financial and technical support to set up their income generative activities

While VSLAs are a proven and effective approach for economic strengthening among poor households, this approach may not be inclusive of the most marginalized, poor, or discriminated families where the risk of



separation is greatest. These families, identified by CPCs and CDPC assistants/social workers and IRC's staffs during case management to receive an unconditional cash transfer with regular monitoring visits. Using this approach in previous actions, most families successfully channeled this money to improve livelihood outcomes and improve their ability to care for children.

In addition to the activities above, some families also receive conditional cash transfer to finance the business plan they have developed during the training session on making cents



CYPD Priorities for the next period (2022 - 2024):



- Safety at home through positive parenting to prevent and respond to violence against children.
- Continue with deinstitutionalization in other provinces.
- Reinforce families' financial capacities to better care for their children.
- Enhance youth programming by working closely with youth-led organizations for child protection outcomes.
- Contribute to the reduction of the number of children in the streets.
- Increase the number of children in possession of their birth certificate.
- Be a lead actor of the launch and implementation of CPIMS+ in the country.
- Improve access to and quality of education on primary school level

Most recent Case Management Achievements

- ✓ Reunified 385 children from the RCC with their families
- ✓ Screen, select, and train 360 foster parents on caring for children
- ✓ Placed over 5 children in foster care families.
- ✓ Introduced coaching and supervision in case
- ✓ Management to enable case management supervisors to provide more support to case workers and ensure case management is provided at global standards.
- ✓ Trained 90 Social Workers from the government on case management and case management supervision
- ✓ Technical and material support to 779 779 CPCs



Strategic Partner:
Government of Burundi

Funded by:



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