

**Title: Socio-Economic Reintegration of Burundi Returnees and Internally Displaced Unaccompanied Children: The case of the Building Bridges in Burundi (BBB) Programme.**

*Principal Author: Clement Nkubizi, MA in Development Studies*

*Email: [clement.nkubizi@hacburundi.org](mailto:clement.nkubizi@hacburundi.org); Mail Address: No. 25, Avenue Bisoro, Kabondo Ouest, Bujumbura, Burundi;  
Tel: +257 76284160 (Mobile), +257 222 79 830 (office)  
Affiliation: Help a Child<sup>1</sup>, Bujumbura, Burundi.*

*Co-author: Michele Kaneza, MA in Development Studies*

*Affiliation: Help a Child<sup>2</sup>, Bujumbura, Burundi.*

**Abstract:**

**Background/Context:**

Burundi has been experiencing ethnic conflicts since its independence in 1962. This has created a massive exodus of its population who have been living as refugees in neighboring countries. They are over 78,000 children registered as internally displaced in major cities across the country. Since 2017, Help a Child with the support from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP) have been involved in the repatriation and reintegration of over 30,000 children. Many are unaccompanied and who are orphans due to either war, natural disaster such as flood and/or COVID-19.

**Programme/Intervention Objective:**

The BBB Programme objective for to provide socio-economic reintegration interventions to these unaccompanied children. The programme is nexus-oriented aiming at bridging humanitarian to development. The intervention package includes: 3 months food package, non-food items; multipurpose cash-based transfer; mental health screening, psychosocial support and family reunion as well as access to education. To ensure sustainable reintegration, the programme provides reinforce their resilience of head of houses (relatives) through income generating activities with more focus on agri-business.

**Strengths and challenges (include any outcomes/impact data):**

*Strengths:* Over 78% of unaccompanied children both returnees and internally displaced have been reunited with family members and or reintegrated in their communities of origins whilst 48% of them have access to education and have reintegrated successfully in mainstream education systems. 50% of children screened show signs of mental health and are provided with referral services.

*Challenges:* The 3 months Food and Non-food Items package is not enough supporting the sustainable reintegration of children thus only 75% of households are more stable and can provide for children. Access to land and conflicts over scarce

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.helpachild.org/explore-help-a-child/where-we-work/burundi/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.helpachild.org/explore-help-a-child/where-we-work/burundi/>

resources create cycles of irregular migration and affect social cohesion in a society that is still very fragile.

**Outcomes and Evaluation:**

The BBB Programme was among the 30 finalists of the World Justice Challenges 2022 and has been voted as one the best practice interventions in access to Socio-Economic Justice. Post reintegration evaluation shows that though the majority of children successfully reintegrate (75%), the rest either return to the countries of exile or in the internally displaced camps (25%).

**Next steps/Take aways:**

There is an urgent need to increase the humanitarian package from 3 months to 6 months; addressing land conflicts and integrating peacebuilding activities in the future interventions. Children need closure especially those who did not say proper goodbye to their parents who died with Covid-19.

Key-words: Humanitarian, Development, Nexus.