Case Study Series No. 4

Interfaith Peacebuilding from Below in Burundi: Building Everyday Peace in the Lower Strata

Map of Burundi Showing four provinces: Bujumbura Mairie, Bujumbura Rural, Muyinga and Rumonge

Credits: World Atlas

Interfaith Peacebuilding from Below in Burundi: Building Everyday Peace in the Lower Strata. Case Study Series No. 4.

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Communities Richer in Diversity (CRID)

The four-year Communities Richer in Diversity project (CRID) aims at leveraging the influence of faith leaders and institutions to promote cultural diversity and respect for equal dignity in six African countries, namely, Burundi, Egypt, Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda, and Tanzania. It was initiated by a consortium of faith-based organisations and networks, including Faith to Action Network (F2A), Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA), African Council of Religious Leaders-Religion for Peace (ACRL-RfP), and All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) with financial support from the European Union (EU). The project started in April 2018, and by 31 January 2022, 12-country partners had reached at least 25,000 young men and women with interfaith and intercultural interventions. Such interventions enhanced the understanding, tolerance, and respect for cultural and religious diversity among the project participants and beneficiaries in the six countries. The activities can be categorised into four broad areas: edutainment and performance arts, peer education and capacity enhancement, community peacebuilding, and shaping of public discourse.

Conseil Inter-Confessionnel du Burundi (CICB)

A group of faith leaders, comprising Catholics, Methodists, Anglicans, Evangelical Church of Burundi, Muslims, and Lutherans, founded *Conseil Inter-Confessionnel du Burundi* (CICB) in June 2008 as an interfaith organisation. They granted CICB the mandate to work on peacebuilding issues because the country had just emerged from a protracted 12-year civil war. While the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) financed the initial peacebuilding activities, CICB received additional financial support from different international organisations. These include the UNDP, UNICEF, and Christian Aid, to implement grassroots activities such as the reintegration of returnees, resolution of land disputes between returnees and the host communities, and child protection. The organisation also contributed to national interventions such as the truth and reconciliation commission, governance, and elections. Among the specific activities that the organisation implemented were arbitration and mediation of land disputes between returnees who fled ethnic massacres in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s and those who took over their lands. The organisation also undertook grassroots reconciliation in the communes and collines. Therefore, the CICB chose to advance its peacebuilding interventions through CRID funding in four provinces, Bujumbura City, Bujumbura Rural, Rumonge, and Muyinga, from November 2018 to December 2019.

Acronyms

APA	Arusha Peace Agreement
CICB	Conseil Inter-Confessionnel du Burundi
CNDD	Conseil Nationale Pour la Défense de la Démocratie
CNL	Congrès National pour la Liberté
CRID	Communities Richer in Diversity
FDD	Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FLDB	Force de Libération de la Démocratie au Burundi
FNDB	Force de la Défense Nationale du Burundi
FNL	Forces Nationale de Liberation
FOREBU	Forces Républicaines du Burundi
FRODEBU	Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICIB	International Commission of Inquiry for Burundi
IRCB	Inter-Religious Council of Burundi
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
MALIBU-FPS	Mouvement Alliés pour la Libération du Burundi- le Front Patriotique du Salut (FPS)
MPC	Mouvement Patriote Chrétien
MRP	Mouvement de la Résistance Populaire
MSD	Mouvement pour la Solidarité et la Démocratie
PALIPEHUTU	Parti pour la Libération du Peuple Hutu
PNB	Police Nationale du Burundi
RED-Tabara	Résistance pour un État de Droit-Tabara
SNR	Service Nationale de Renseignement
TTD	Track Two Diplomacy
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UPR	Union des Patriotes pour la Révolution
UPRONA	Union pour le Progrès Nationale

Abstract

This case study uses the bottom-up peacebuilding approach and the concept of everyday peace to assess the impact of interfaith peacebuilding activities in Burundi, which the Conseil Inter-Confessionnel du Burundi (CICB) implemented in Bujumbura Mairie, Bujumbura Rural, Muyinga, and Rumonge provinces. The study assesses the impact by exploring two themes: the transformation of group relations and conflict resolution at the communes and collines. From analyses of 22 CICB project documents and empirical evidence of 21 respondents, the study finds that CICB utilised a pathway for change that empowered grassroots faith leaders as the primary agents of change. CICB then deployed these agents to improve relations between ethnic and political ethnic groups by changing individual and group perceptions towards the 'Other' and resolving conflicts at the grassroots in the *communes* and *collines*. The study also finds that CICB combined aspects of peacebuilding, including dialogue forums, local peace committees, and reconciliation meetings with religious values, texts, narratives, vocabulary, and tools such as prayers to promote everyday peace in the grassroots. Underlying that thinking is the premise that attaining everyday peace in different micro-level locations can end the cycles of violence at the grassroots and serve as building blocks of peace formation at the national level.

Interfaith Peacebuilding from Below in Burundi: Building Everyday Peace in the Lower Strata

1. Introduction

The political-cum-security crisis, which engulfed Burundi from 2015 to 2018, led to many challenges that are still haunting the country. Following a persistent political crisis, the country almost returned to civil war in May 2015, after sections of the military attempted to overthrow the late President, Pierre Nkurunziza. The subsequent tit-for-tat killings revived mass anxiety and memories of the past because Burundi's recent history is scarred by political and ethnic[β] violence that led to mass massacres in 1965, 1972, 1988, and 1993.[1] According to Nshimirimana, developments "in Burundi after the 2010 elections" were characterised by "a shrinking democratic space, … violation of human rights, and the regime's unsparing efforts to establish a de facto one-party," leading to "unending conflicts over power and severe damages on peace."[2] Human Rights Watch echoes the same viewpoint noting that events leading to the political-security crisis included silencing of political opponents, muzzling of the judiciary, violations of human rights, and violent confrontations between the security forces and the opposition supporters.[3] As the International Crisis Group (ICG) reported, "daily confrontations occurred between the security forces/Imbonerakure and a coalition of political opposition/civil society organizations who enjoyed the moral support of the Catholic Church."[4]

The ICG comment raises two issues which this paper analyses. The first issue concerns the role of faith organisations in Burundi, which is officially a secular state. Whereas there is no reliable data on religion in Burundi because the last census was in 2008, world population review estimates Burundi's population to be 12,474,350 at January 2022, while the Pew Research Centre estimates religious distribution in 2020 as 91.0% Christians, 6.0% followers of traditional African spiritualities, 2.9% Muslims, and the remaining 0.1% believers of other faiths.[6] Within the Christian faith, 62% are Roman Catholics while 29% are protestants. Articles 22, 31, and 78 of the 2005 Burundi

β The way notions of ethnic, cultural, and 'tribal' identities are understood in Burundi and Rwanda is very different from the way they are understood in the other East and Central African countries such as Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and South Sudan. In Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, DRC, and South Sudan, the concepts 'tribal' identity and ethnic identity are synonymous and widely understood to mean language-based cultural identity. Burundi and Rwanda are different. In the sense of anthropological language-based cultural identity, Burundi has only one ethnic group, Barundi, that has the same culture and the same language, Kirundi. However, the same ethnic group is divided into four 'tribal' identities: Baganwa, Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa. Rene Lemarchand (1996) argues that the Baganwa, the former ruling group from the pre-colonial Kingdom up to 1966, was forcefully Tutsified by the military regimes of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Similarly, Rwanda has only one ethnic group, Banyarwanda, that has the same culture and the same language, Kinyarwanda, but the same ethnic group has been divided into three 'tribes': Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa.

Constitution stress the secular state by disallowing religious discrimination, recognising freedom of religion and thought, providing equal protection of all regardless of religious affiliation, and forbidding preaching of religious violence, exclusion, or hate.[7]

However, religion has been a central element of Burundian society, especially on education issues. While the provision of education is the responsibility of the national government, the World Bank reports that the "public education system is comprised of public schools, '*public sous convention*' (that is, religious institutions that are subsidized by the Government) and private schools (entirely privately funded)." [8] It further informs that of "the 2.9 million students, most are enrolled in public schools (65 percent), one third in grant-aided schools ("*public sous-convention*"), 4 percent in private schools and 1 percent in community schools." Additionally, Iyamuremye observes that faith leaders and organisations significantly contributed to the peace process in the 1990s and 2000s and, subsequently, led the post-conflict national Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and promoted justice and reconciliation at the grassroots.[9]

Therefore, the ICG's mention of faith institutions is significant because the crisis impacted heavily on the religious communities as some religious groups supported the opposition while others supported President Pierre Nkurunziza and his CNDD-FDD government. It is this bifurcation that prompted the Conseil Inter-Confessionnel du Burundi (CICB) – the Inter-Religious Council of Burundi (IRCB) in English) - to implement a program to address religious divisions, political violence, and ethnic radicalisation. Indeed, the late CICB Secretary-General, Hakizimana Isidore,[10] believed that the interventions would build resilience at the grassroots, empower religious leaders, strengthen the capacities of women and youth, and fortify support mechanisms for what peacebuilding literature calls 'everyday peace' in the lower levels.[11]

Participants in a group photo during CICB training session in Bujumbura Mairie

The second issue regards youth militias, which constitute young men and women aged between 18 and 35 years who form the youth wings of the political parties. The main ones are Imbonerakure (means 'those who see far') of the ruling party, *Conseil National Pour la Défense de la Démocratie – Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie* (CNDD-FDD) [National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy]; Imurikirakuri (means 'those who bring light') of the Mouvement pour la Solidarité et la Démocratie (MSD); Imparaniragihugu (means 'those who fight for the country) of the Forces Nationale de Liberation (FNL); and *Intakangwa* (means 'those who cannot be frightened') of the Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi (FRODEBU).[12] Human rights organisations accuse Imbonerakure of participating in security operations and blame the group for abusing human rights as it engaged in violent confrontations with others.[13] Specifically, they questioned the group's involvement in security operations because Article 245 of the 2005 Constitution creates three categories of "Corps of Défense and Security." These are: Force de Défense Nationale du Burundi (FDNB) [The National Défense Force], Police Nationale du Burundi (PNB) [the National Police], and the Service National de Renseignement (SNR) [National Intelligence Service}. Further, Article 244 outlaws the involvement of the formal security agencies in politics or "favouring in a partisan manner the interests of a political party."[14]

This paper assumes that the patrons of youth militias founded informal groups to circumvent the legal position and to avoid the scrutiny of the international human rights groups over violations of the bill of rights guaranteed by the 2005 Constitution.[15] Meanwhile, other studies have analysed social and historical reasons for the prevalence of youth militias in the country. Among these reasons are widespread poverty and limited economic opportunities for the youth and the structure of state-society relations in which economic opportunities are dependent on political patronage.[16] Nonetheless, the recruitment and deployment of youth militias reflected informalisation of state violence, which studies on political violence in Africa refers to as institutionalisation of disorder.[17] Such deliberate recruitment of youth militias and use of informal violence disrupted everyday peace between individuals and members of Hutu and Tutsi identities in the *communes* and *collines*.[18] More fundamentally, a report by the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, which the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) appointed in September 2016 to investigate human rights violations and abuses in Burundi since April 2015, intimated that *Imbonerakure* was involved in activities that could be classified as crimes against humanity under the Rome statute.[19] Because this climate of conflict affected all sectors of Burundi society, the CICB interventions sought to rebuild resilience, reduce recruitment of young people into informal groups, and to promote reconciliation and everyday peace at the grassroots.

In essence, therefore, the aim of this paper is to review the outcomes and impacts of the CICB's activities in four provinces, namely, Bujumbura Mairie, Bujumbura Rural, Muyinga, and Rumonge. Financed by the European Union (EU) as part of the Communities Richer

in Diversity (CRID) project, CICB implemented these activities from November 2018 to December 2019. The organisation employed cultural approaches and tools, including interfaith dialogues and collaborations, traditional drummers, sports, and public marches. Specifically, the paper evaluates the practice of grassroots peacebuilding, and identifies the main lessons CICB offers Burundi and other similar cases. Thus, the subsequent sections are organised as follows. The second part highlights the background issues which informed the CICB's choice of the project and its intervention methods, while the third section explains the concept of grassroots peacebuilding as an analytical framework and how such framework operates in contexts like Burundi. Whereas the fourth section explains the methodology that the study used to collect empirical data, the fifth part presents and discusses the empirical data as collected from the field. The last section concludes with empirical insights from CICB's interventions and offers a few recommendations.

2. Background

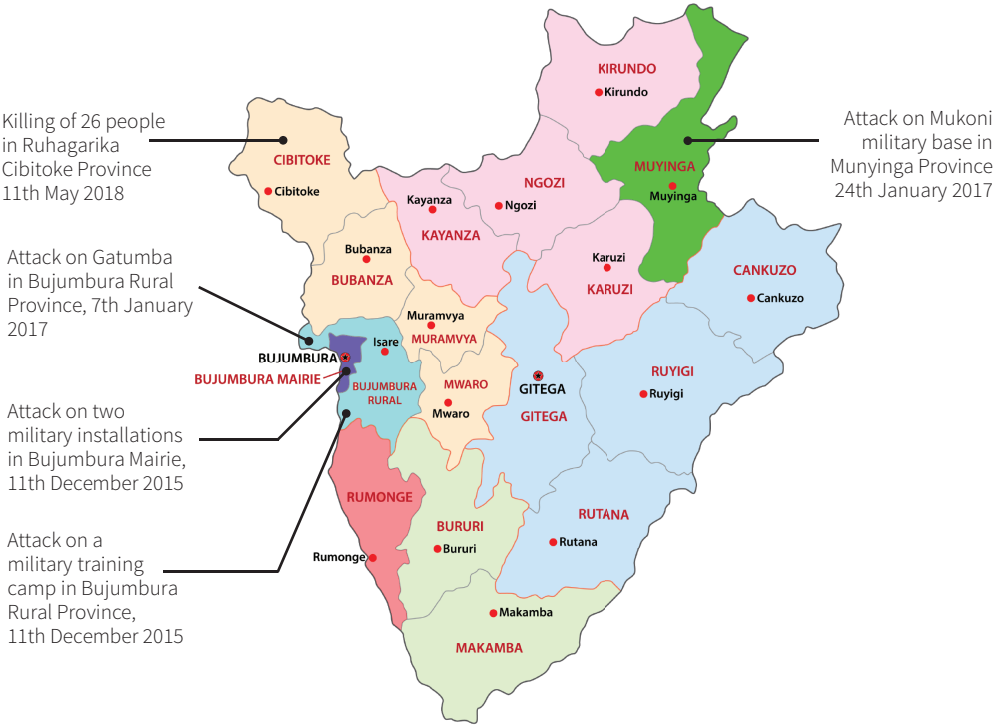
In April 2015, Burundi's ruling political party, CNDD-FDD, endorsed its leader and president of the country, Pierre Nkurunziza, as its candidate for the planned June 2015 presidential elections. The declaration followed three months of uncertainty and clashes between security forces and demonstrators in Bujumbura Mairie (City), who were opposed to Nkurunziza's candidacy. However, tensions had begun earlier in March 2014 when the National Assembly rejected by a single vote the government's attempt to amend sections of the 2005 Constitution.[20] Critics of the constitutional amendment argued that it would change the ethnic power arrangement stipulated in the 2000 Arusha Peace Agreement (APA) and allow President Nkurunziza to run for a 'third-term' as president.[21] Therefore, the CNDD-FDD endorsement of President Nkurunziza aggravated a simmering political and security crisis as Burundians opposed to his continuation protested in the streets.

Amnesty International reports that the confrontation between security forces and the demonstrators killed 58 people in April and May 2015.[22] On the surface, the conflict centred around clashing interpretations of Article 7(3) of the APA and Article 96 of the 2005 Constitution. Article 7 (3) of the APA states that the President of the Republic "shall be elected for a term of five years, renewable only once. No one may serve more than two presidential terms."[23] Concurring with the limited terms principle, Article 96 of the 2005 Constitution states that the "President of the Republic is elected by universal direct suffrage for a term of five years renewable one time."[24] Therefore, the legal issue was whether President Nkurunziza had served one or two terms. Supporters of the president emphasised Article 96 of the Constitution and claimed that the 2010 election was the

first one by universal suffrage because the 2005 election was indirect as members of the National Assembly and the Senate elected the president. In contrast, their opponents stressed Article 7(3) of the APA and insisted that President Nkurunziza had served two terms.

The Constitutional Court agreed with President Nkurunziza's interpretation on 5 May 2015.[25] However, the political situation deteriorated as the opponents escalated their street demonstrations, especially in Bujumbura Mairie, while the government alleged that the demonstrators had mounted an insurrection. A subsequently failed coup d'état on 13 May 2015[26] engendered a security crisis characterised by targeted assassinations, killing of civilians and security officers, grenade attacks in public places, human rights violations and abuses,[27] and displacement unseen in the country since the end of the previous civil war in 2005.[28] By May 2017, there were 420,689 Burundi refugees and asylum seekers in the neighbouring countries and 200,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs).[29] The UNHRC Report observes that the counter-coup security operations and killing of the opponents exposed the ethnic undercurrents of the conflict because they specifically targeted Tutsi-dominated neighbourhoods in Bujumbura Mairie. Indeed, the Report implies that pro-Nkurunziza security forces framed the coup as an attempt to restore the pre-2005 Tutsi dominance and suppression of the Hutu majority. Yet, one of the aims of the APA and the 2005 change was to obliterate ethnicity as the central frame of Burundi politics.

Meanwhile, as the government intensified arrests and killing of targeted defence and security officers, opposition leaders, and civil society activists accused of supporting the failed coup, there emerged armed opposition groups, which attacked military camps and government installations.[30] For example, on 11 December 2015, an unidentified armed group attacked two military installations in Bujumbura Mairie and a military training camp in Bujumbura Rural.[31] Other examples include an attack on Citiboke in Bujumbura Mairie on 21 January 2016, which both Résistance pour un Etat de Droit (RED-Tabara) and Forces Républicaines du Burundi (FOREBU) claimed, and attack on Gatumba in Bujumbura Rural by FNL on 7 January 2017.[32] Another case is the attack on Mukoni military base in Muyinga Province by Mouvements Alliés pour la Libération du Burundi- le Front Patriotique du Salut (MALIBU-FPS) on 24 January 2017. Additionally, Human Rights Watch reports that, on 11 May 2018, "unidentified assailants shot and hacked to death at least 26 people, including several children, in Ruhagarika village, Cibitoke Province, near the Congolese border."[33]



The return of such violence and widespread human rights violations by security agencies and informal youth militias revived memories of the past political extremism, mass displacement, and ethnic massacres.[34] Unlike the past conflicts, however, the post-2015 crisis had a new dimension because the new wave of political and ethnic extremism involved faith leaders. The new fault line lay between faith leaders who supported President Nkurunziza's third term and those who wanted him to quit. Both the mainstream and minority faith leaders took a stand on the issue, as some supported the President and the ruling party while others openly declared that the President had no right to run for the third time and should leave power. Reasons for this bifurcation varied from the protagonists' identification with different religious formations and denominations to historical and ethnic reasons. The discord created a climate of mistrust, suspicion, and intolerance and resulted in divisions among religious leaders, which, in turn, trickled down to the laity. As one observer commented, the speeches of some religious leaders, as they tried to mobilise their faithful to support their positions, revealed their extremes.[35] The line of religious division was new to Burundi.

The problem affected all the communes of the 18 provinces, but the situation was worse in Bujumbura Mairie and Bujumbura Rural, the northern provinces of Muyinga, Kirundo, Ngozi, Kayanza, Bubanza, and Cibitoke, and the southern province of Rumonge.

Incidentally, each of these regions has been the site of ethnic massacres in the past. For example, Human Rights Watch (HRW) documents one of the worst massacres in post-2000 Burundi, when FNL killed 152 Banyamulenge (Congolese Tutsi) and wounded 105 others at Gatumba refugee camp in Bujumbura Rural on 13 August 2004.[36] Similarly, the International Commission of Inquiry for Burundi (ICIB), which the UN Security Council (UNSC) appointed to investigate mass killings under Resolution 1012 of 28 August 1995,[37] noted that Bujumbura Rural, Bujumbura Mairie, Kirundo, Muyinga, and Ngozi experienced some of the worst ethnic massacres in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s.[38] Further, Lemarchand observes that the 1972 massacres started in Rumonge,[39] while Amnesty International documents a massacre which occurred in Muyinga in August 2006.[40]

Because the armed groups attacked military camps in Bujumbura Mairie, Bujumbura Rural, and Muyinga after the failed 2015 coup d'état, security forces and the Imbonerakure militants targeted those locations. Amnesty International and Refugee International claim that the security forces and the CNDD-FDD militants targeted the northern border provinces because they were strongholds of the opposition political parties and that is why political opponents found refuge there after the failure of the coup d'état.[41] Among the intimidation tactics which the imbonerakure employed were organised night patrols and demonstrations against those who did not support the CNDD-FDD and President Nkurunziza.[42]

In essence, there are profound background issues which informed the CICB's interventions. As an inter-religious organisation, CICB sought to contribute to the resolution of the religious, ethnic, and political divisions at the grassroots and build everyday peace between individuals and communities. This paper holds that the organisation derived its legitimacy and moral mandate from its inter-faith membership. Indeed, both the baseline survey and endline research found that 54.2% of Burundians trust religious leaders and institutions more than the other institutions. Thus, CICB aimed at reducing hostilities, de-escalating violence, building resilience, promoting dialogues, and encouraging tolerance, reconciliation, and everyday peace at the grassroots. CICB chose to pilot its interventions in four provinces, Bujumbura Mairie, Bujumbura Rural, Muyinga, and Rumonge because they were among those locations that were worst affected by post-2015 hostilities and violence. Due to the complexity of the problem, including lack of a national peace process, incomplete reconciliation after 2005, persistent memories of the past massacres, interweaving of violence and the construction of ethnic identities, and sedimented ethnic discourses, the organisation combined religious approach with peacebuilding from below framework.

3. Peacebuilding from Below (Bottom-Up Peacebuilding)

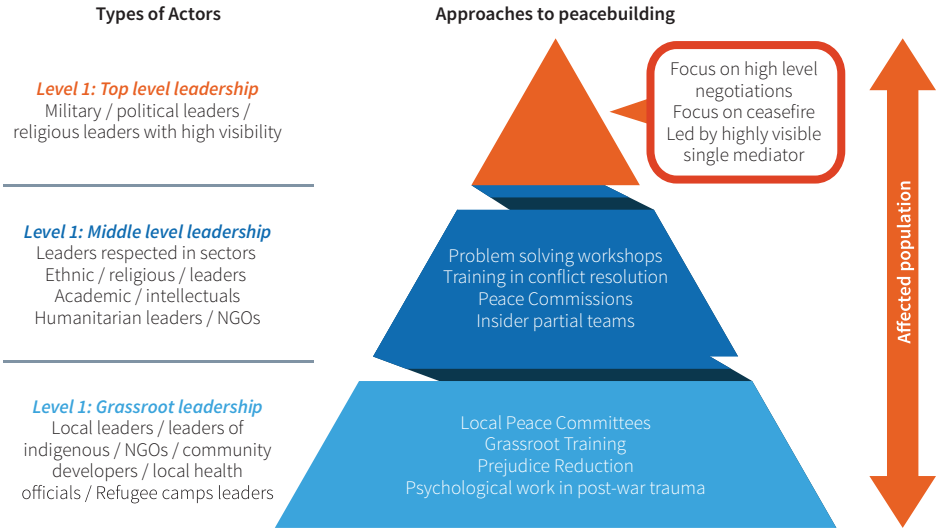
There are two broad approaches to post-conflict peacebuilding. The first approach, which is variously known as liberal peace, liberal peacebuilding, or top-bottom peacebuilding,[43] is conceptualised as an effort "to bring war-shattered states into conformity with the international system's prevailing standards of domestic governance."[43] According to Richmond, the main ideas that underpin liberal peacebuilding "democratisation, economic liberalisation, neoliberal development, human rights, and the rule of law" have influenced how "contemporary peacebuilding is both conceptualised and practised."[45] Literature further highlights that the notions of liberal peacebuilding arise from the dominance of the Western industrialised countries in the post-cold war global order and the liberal assumptions that underpin contemporary peacebuilding processes. Accordingly, the liberal viewpoint interprets peacebuilding as the transformation of "war-shattered polities into functioning liberal democracies, where the liberal democratic framework is seen not only as the gold standard of good governance, but also as the most secure foundation for sustainable peace." [46]

In essence, the liberal approach interweaves peacebuilding with liberal state-building because peacebuilding activities imply the re-organisation of politics and the reallocation of power, with the state and its institutions as the main actors. The approach privileges the global norms around principles of good governance, regards peacebuilding as state-centric, and emphasises the structural and institutional aspects. However, critics caution that the problem-solving approach of liberal peacebuilding "not only fails to deliver sustainable solutions, but also grossly generalises the perceived causes of conflicts, resulting in dogmatic, imposed solutions based on linear understandings of cause and effect."[47] As Ramsbotham et al asserts, "much of the development of thinking about peacebuilding came during the course of experience gained in supporting local groups trying to preserve or cultivate cultures of peace in areas of armed conflict in the 1990s."[48]

Critics of liberal peacebuilding articulate a second approach that is variously known as bottom-top peacebuilding, peacebuilding from below, grassroots peacebuilding, community peacebuilding, citizen-to-citizen peacebuilding, or Track II diplomacy.[49] The approach is built upon the notions that attaining sustainable peace after a protracted civil war, especially in deeply divided societies, requires the involvement of all levels of the society, from top to bottom. Ramsbotham et al write that the central idea is that "effective and sustainable peacemaking processes must be based not merely on the manipulation of peace agreements made by elites but, more importantly, on the empowering of communities torn apart by war to build peace from below…."[50] One of the earlier proponents of the bottom-top approach was Adam Curle, who insisted that

long-term peace can only be attained when survivors of armed conflicts are supported to espouse their diagnosis of, and advance their strategies, dealing with the effects of the violence they faced.[51] Another scholar, Joseph Montville, coined and popularised the term Track Two Diplomacy (TTD) in the late 1980s and early 1990s.[52] However, it was in the late 1990s and 2000s that academic studies on conflict transformation and bottom-up peacebuilding flourished.

Among the leading proponents of the conflict transformation school of thought is John Paul Lederach, who argues that long-term grassroots peacebuilding is not just necessary for sustainable peace, but is also the starting point when the elite leaders are stuck in intransigent conflicting stances.[53] He maintains that peacebuilders ought to understand who acts at what level and what peacebuilding actions ought to be implemented at each level to determine whether peace ought to be built from the top or the bottom.[54] He conceptualises peacebuilding as a pyramid with three levels of leadership. While conflict affects various categories of actors in the society differently, each level of leadership has a different position and authority in the overall peace process. "Unlike many actors at the higher levels of the pyramid," Lederach writes, "grassroots leaders witness first-hand the deep-rooted hatred and animosity on a daily basis."[55] Therefore, he insists that inclusion of all levels of leadership in the peace process would break the patterns of violence. Figure 1 shows Lederach's pyramid.



Lederach further argues that, while those involved in national peace negotiations may find it difficult to move towards peace agreements and post-agreement peace without public support, conflict entrepreneurs are likely to be insensitive to grassroots' opinions. Moreover, top-level negotiations may fail due to a lack of easily identified and accessible negotiating partners with sufficient control to guarantee that peace agreements would be implemented. In this thinking, then, bottom-up peacebuilding is a powerful approach because it focuses on empowering the grassroots leaders and ordinary citizens to end direct violence and to collaboratively transform their relationships, and build better ways of resolving conflicts and promoting reconciliation at the lower levels.[56]

An additional dimension to bottom-up peacebuilding is McGinty's notion of 'everyday peace'.[57] According to this thinking, each context determines everyday peace which involves decisions and observations that individuals and communities make as they navigate their lives in the local situations.[58] Further, McGinty and Firschow espouse that one of the indicators of everyday peace is tolerance and peaceful relations in the lower-level communities, and attaining everyday peace in different micro-level locations can contribute to ending the cycles of violence. Therefore, everyday peace "can be an important building block of peace formation especially as formal approaches to peacebuilding and statebuilding are often deficient."[59] Due to the complexity of the situation in Burundi, including divisions among faith leaders after 2015, the persistence of the narratives of the past killings, and stalled national reconciliation process, this paper holds that everyday peace approach is an appropriate way of understanding CICB's interventions in the four provinces. Thus, while CICB intended to attain everyday peace between neighbours and communities in the *communes* and *collines* regardless of the developments at the national level, it employed a faith perspective rather than a secularist paradigm.[60]

Peacebuilding literature recognise that faith actors play a significant role in peacebuilding at the grassroots. For example, Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana argue that faith actors employ "religious values, rituals, traditions, texts and narratives… to promote peace and coexistence, (and) advocate human rights and democracy."[61] Literature further records that faith actors explicitly employ spirituality and/or religious identity, religious texts, religious values and vocabulary, and utilise religious or spiritual rituals.[62] According to Dubois, religious peacebuilding uses the spiritual elements of culture and is community-oriented, relationship-centred, and participatory."[63] While faith actors use the same set of activities as secular actors, they employ religious tools such as spiritual guidance, prayers, meditation, imagination in envisioning new possibilities, and empathy.[64]

Moreover, reconciliation literature recognises the religious origin of concepts such as healing, forgiveness, and restorative justice.[65] For example, Peterson claims that all religions have language that describes ways of healing broken human relationships

and acceptance that enables humans to coexist peacefully. "Islam emphasises mercy, Buddhism espouses compassion, Judaism and Christianity underscore forgiveness."[66] Despite its religious roots, forgiveness is widely practised, especially by communities that are emerging from a protracted civil war. Indeed, reconciliation theory postulates that "forgiveness is the culmination of the healing process, which starts when the affected population confront their past."[67] Essential steps in the healing process include acceptance of the past, letting the past go, and the re-humanisation of the villains. Reconciliation literature further asserts that forgiveness has three elements: memory, empathy, and imagination.[68] Memory is critical in forgiveness, as it is only through remembering the past that people can "call up courage to forgive",[69] while empathy involves recognition of the common humanity between the victim and the villain to stop revenge. In essence, attaining everyday peace at the lower levels requires healing and forgiveness.

In summary, this paper uses bottom-up peacebuilding and the notion of everyday peace at the micro-level to assess CICB's interventions. Specifically, the paper examines the transformation of individual and group relations and the empowerment of change agents with basic conflict resolution skills as the foundational pillars of CICB's transformation pathway.

4. CICB's Transformation Pathway

CICB has been working on peacebuilding since its formation and has implemented programs on the reintegration of returnees, resolution of land disputes between returnees and the host communities, implementation of the national truth and reconciliation commission, and reconciliation in the communes. Three factors influenced the development of its transformation pathway when it joined Communities Richer in Diversity (CRID) in 2018. The first one is the widespread violence from April 2015 to mid-2017, as it was particularly concerned about the informal violence, emergence of armed insurrection, and tit-for-tat killings. On informal violence, for example, Article 284 of the UNHRC Commission of Inquiry Report informs that the "Commission received several testimonies on violations of the right to life by *Imbonerakure* in different provinces."[70] While *Imbonerakure* committed such abuses "outside of the control of State agents," they "illustrate the climate of violence and widespread impunity… *Imbonerakure* were not afraid to be held accountable for their acts."

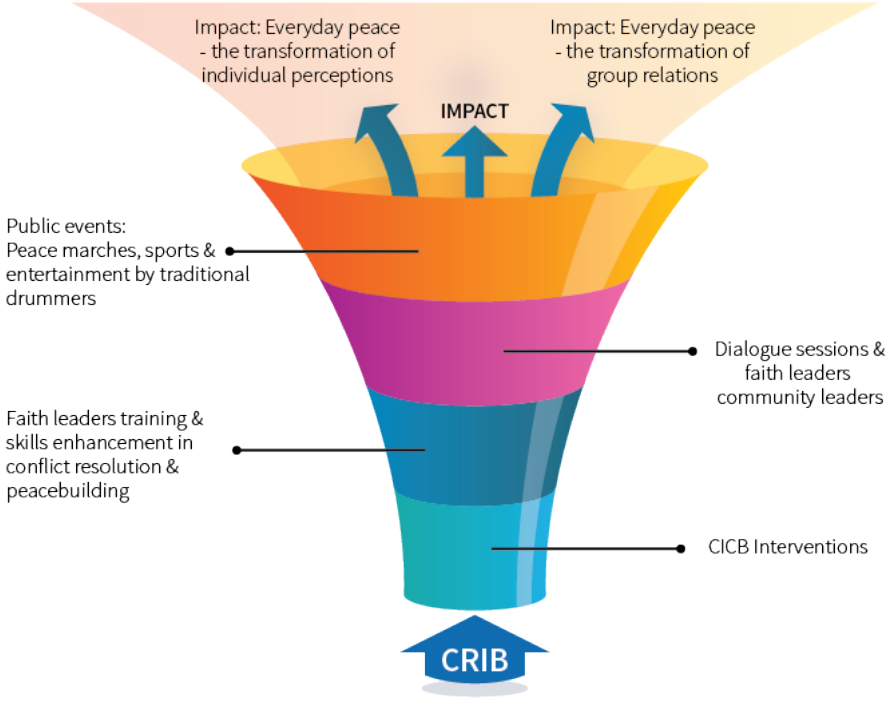
Therefore, faith leaders had a moral imperative to intervene and stop the recruitment of young men and women into militias and possibly prevent the country's slide into massacres of the past. Indeed, the baseline and end-line surveys found that most Burundians believed political violence was the biggest problem, whereas 35.9% of the Bujumbura Mairie respondents confirmed that they knew someone who had been a victim of political violence. As the baseline survey reports, "the relative pessimism observed in the capital Bujumbura is influenced by the freshness of the bloody events of 2015, where mobilization on ethnicity was observed among some politicians…"[71] Further, both the UNHRC Report and the baseline survey confirm that the police and the army particularly targeted Tutsi neighbourhoods. Therefore, there were real prospects of the country returning to the ethnic massacres of the past.

CICB public event in Muyinga Province

The second factor is the legacy of the 1990s civil war and the mass massacres of the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s. Studies on Burundi explain that memories and narratives of the past massacres still determine how Burundians interpret contemporary developments. The Arusha peace process addressed this issue by ending the civil war, recasting the national imagination, and redefining notions of identity and belonging. Consequently, the APA stipulated a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as the starting point. However, the post-2005 polity did not establish a TRC until 2014, and the commission had not collected evidence when the crises and armed insurrection erupted. Indeed, Articles 483 to 493 of the UNHRC Report illustrate how various actors used the paradigm of the past killings to interpret post-2014 events.[72] It was critical, therefore, for CICB to institute some everyday peace interventions at the grassroots to address incessant prejudices, change perceptions of young men and women, and emphasise common humanity and moral frame.

A third factor is lessons from previous peacebuilding interventions in Burundi. Since 2003, many international civil society organisations (CSOs) and Burundi non-government organisations (NGOs) have implemented peacebuilding activities targeting the three levels of leadership in the Lederach pyramid. Despite the prevalence of these interventions, the country still slid to violence, killings, and armed insurrection in 2015. Consequently, CICB opted to use interfaith interventions, with the main change being that this paradigm uses the moral power of faith leaders, religious texts, values, and tools such as prayers. This approach provides the grassroots actors with an alternative frame of healing, forgiveness, empathy, and tolerance.

Accordingly, CICB developed a pathway for change that empowered faith leaders at the grassroots with skills in conflict resolution and reconciliation. The model echoed the findings of the baseline (75%) and end-line (77%) surveys that Burundians trusted faith leaders to resolve inter-group conflicts. In turn, the empowered faith leaders would use their moral power, faith spaces, and tools to institute everyday peace at the grassroots through dialogues and community peace structures. To reinforce the empowered faith leaders' messages, CICB organised sports for peace, peace marches, and entertainment by traditional drummers. The logic of this pathway can be visualised as an inverted cone because the number of the reached grassroots actors increases upwards. Thus, empowerment of the faith leaders lies at the bottom as the substructure because they were few at the foundation, followed by public outreach and dialogue forums in the communes and collines, and public events (marches and sports for peace) at the top as the superstructure. The figure below represents this logic.



The Logic of CICB's interventions in the four provinces

Tracking change along this pathway required collecting empirical data from the four tiers of CICB interventions.

5. Methodology

Research for this paper collected data in two ways: a review of the CICB documents, which include project reports, baseline survey, and endline survey, and collection of primary data in the four provinces through face-to-face interviews, key informants' interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs).

5.1 Documents Review

The study premised documents review on the understanding that combining secondary data review with primary empirical evidence would enable more comprehensive analysis and understanding of CICB's interventions. This qualitative analysis targeted 22 documents as summarised in the table below.

No.	Document	Number of documents
1	Endline survey	1
2	Baseline survey	1
3	End-of-the-project report	1
4	Quarterly reports	3
5	Monthly reports	11
6	Annual project reports	3
7	IRCB's lesson's presentation during Faith to Action Network's convention in Nairobi	1
8	IRCB's lesson's presentation during the CRID exchange visit in Mombasa	1
	TOTAL	**22**

Table: Reviewed documents.

Both end-line and baseline surveys used quantitative and qualitative methods that targeted participants and beneficiaries of the CICB's activities. The two studies utilized the same standard questionnaire and a semi-structured approach that combined KIIs with FGDs. Data for the end-line survey constituted 20 KIIs' respondents (5 per province) and 72 respondents for FGDs (19 for Muyinga, 20 for Rumonge, 17 for Bujumbura Rural, and 18 for Bujumbura Mairie). The baseline research collected data from 100 people through the long quantitative survey (25 per province) and 80 respondents through KIIs and FGDs (20 per province). This paper presumes that the evidence as represented in the end-line and baseline surveys is fairly representative across the four regions.

5.2 Empirical Data Collection

The second method of data collection was primary research, specifically for this paper, which used KIIs and FGDs. Aiming at exploring change among the project participants and beneficiaries a year after the end of the project, primary research occurred between May and October 2021 and collected data from 31 project participants and beneficiaries. The study interviewed 10 KIIs (3 in Bujumbura Mairie, 2 in Bujumbura Rural, 3 in Rumonge, and 2 in Muyinga), and 21 FGD participants (7 in Bujumbura Mairie, 5 in Bujumbura Rural, 5 in Rumonge, and 4 in Muyinga). The table below summarises this data.

Province	Number of people reached via KIIs	Number of People reached via FGGs
Bujumbura Mairie	3	7
Bujumbura Rural	2	5
Rumonge	3	5
Muyinga	2	4
TOTAL	**10**	**21**

6. Data Analysis and Evidence of change

CICB's pathway for change has three categories of interventions: enhancement of the faith leaders' capacities in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, dialogue and awareness forums in religious spaces, and public engagement forums (peace marches, sports for peace, and entertainment through traditional drummers). Its reports reveal that it reached 4,151 participants and beneficiaries, and its pathway for change starts with the enhancement of faith leaders' capacities. The empowered faith leaders then used religious spaces, tools, values, texts, and narratives to promote healing, forgiveness, and tolerance, which, as explained earlier, are the building blocks of everyday peace. CICB then supported and reinforced the emergent healing, forgiveness, and everyday peace, with public events, whose central theme was tolerance and peaceful coexistence. In essence, therefore, the core aspects of everyday peace at the grassroots, which empirical evidence from the four provinces ought to speak to, are changes of individual views towards the 'other' and group relations and resolution of conflicts at the grassroots.

6.1 Transformation of Group Relations

To attain everyday peace at the grassroots, CICB planned to use the voices, moral authority, and spaces of faith leaders and institutions to build resilience, promote healing and forgiveness, and transform relations between 'tribal' groups, political factions, religious formations, and grassroots neighbourhoods. The organisation understood the complexity of the conflict issues, the effects of post-2014 violence on the grassroots communities, and the persistent memories of the past civil war and mass killings. It also understood that 86% of Burundians lived in the rural areas (communes and collines) where they coexisted as neighbours.[73] Therefore, the project activities aimed at empowering participants and beneficiaries by building their resilience and promoting healing, which means letting the last go, re-humanising the 'other', developing empathy, and understanding that all Burundians shared the same humanity and moral frame. Such understanding would probably cultivate forgiveness and tolerance and promote everyday peace.

CICB Capacity enhancement session

Collected evidence illustrates that CICB contributed to changing individual perceptions towards the 'other' and healing of memories to the extent that survivors of the post-2014 violence were willing to forgive and embrace everyday peace. As a young man, who was a political activist in Bujumbura Mairie, explained,

> "I used to participate in political activism, and we were not good leaders, but I changed after attending CICB forums. Now I work together with others of different political leanings, and we support each other. That is a real change for me, and I attribute it to the CICB dialogue sessions which I attended. I am actively involved in facilitating dialogues between young men and women of the ruling party and the opposition parties; I did that during and after the 2020 elections."[74]

The power of this evidence lies in the fact that it is from a young political activist who took part in activities against perceived political enemies. The young man probably participated in activities that abused the rights of those he regarded as enemies of his political party. However, CICB forums served as his moment of change as they shifted his views towards the 'other'. Another young man from the Anglican Church had a similar change.[75] A resident of the Mutakura neighbourhood in Bujumbura Mairie, he admitted that the killings of 2015 in his neighbourhood changed his life, and he "thought of adopting a spirit of vengeance." He developed hatred towards 'others' who did not share his "political opinions and same ethnicity," and he desired to know how to "use

a gun" so that he "could revenge the atrocities that had been committed against" him and members of his ethnic group. Full of "bitterness and hatred" when CICB invited him to attend a training forum, he testified that the training made him understand that not "all people from other political factions and ethnic groups are evil." He started changing his views towards the 'other' from a different ethnic group. "I decided to pursue peace. For the country to have peace, I must be the first one to safeguard peace in my neighbourhood," he revealed.

In essence, changes by the two young men were in line with the CICB's pathway for change and reconciliation theory on healing and forgiveness. In addition to changing their perceptions, they accepted that all neighbours shared a common civic identity and humanity and could tolerate each other and live peacefully in the same neighbourhoods despite their different political viewpoints and ethnic identities. This paper also suggests that CICB interventions probably changed the perceptions of more than 1,000 people in Bujumbura Mairie because the final report shows that its activities reached 1,135 people in the province.

Bujumbura Rural encircles Bujumbura Mairie and is one of the locations where PALIPEHUTU-FNL, which has strong anti-Tutsi sentiments, has been active since 1980. Evidence from the province demonstrates that CICB's use of religious values, texts, narratives, and tools such as prayers helped change individual perceptions and contributed to change in group relations. A young woman from the Anglican Church reported that she "was not interested in ethnic issues before 2015" but the events of 2015 changed her views. She started "mistrusting 'others' from a different ethnic group" and wanted "revenge for atrocities against my people." The CICB's use of religious texts and narratives changed her because she understood that "ethnicity is a matter of mentality." After all, "God did not mention ethnicity during creation." She, therefore, started changing the views of her "school friends" and improving ethnic relations in her neighbourhood. Such use of religious texts and narrative also resonated with a male pastor from the region.

> "I participated in the CICB forums as a returnee. My parents fled to Tanzania in 1972 when the army massacred our Hutu people. I was a child when my parents fled to Tanzania, and as I grew up, I learned that we were refugees from Burundi and that Tutsis had made us refugees. While we always harboured hopes of returning to our country, it was not easy to settle when we finally returned home because Tutsis had taken our lands. I hated Tutsis and I could not tolerate or coexist with them; I saw them as selfish, greedy, and egocentric. When I received an invitation to participate in a CICB activity, I attended but I could not sit next to a Tutsi. As I participated in dialogue forums, I started to overcome my hatred towards Tutsis. It was not easy to change, but I changed and I now understand that Tutsis are normal people like us." [77]

The pastor's evidence speaks to the use of religious texts and tools and the theory of group reconciliation outlined earlier. He powerfully articulates issues of memory and its role in healing and forgiveness, the pain of letting the past go, re-humanisation of the 'other', and empathy and recognition of common humanity. As a displaced person, who grew up in a refugee camp in Tanzania, narratives and memories of the past massacres shaped his worldview towards the Tutsi people. While bitterness and hatred towards Tutsis determined his relations in his neighbourhood, CICB forums provided a forum to change his views. He, therefore, overcame his anti-Tutsi narratives and intention to revenge, embraced his Tutsi neighbours in his moral sphere, and empathised with them. He accepted that they all shared common humanity, and he promoted tolerance and improvement in group relations as the pillars of everyday peace.

CICB sports event

A similar moment of transformation affected the late CICB Secretary-General. As a Tutsi from Rumonge, a former military officer, and a former government minister for five years during the military rule in the 1980s, he had avoided visiting certain regions of Burundi since the civil war. However, he believed that CICB activities were achieving impacts and he had to visit Bujumbura Rural to assess the progress. "I did not want to go to Bujumbura rural because I was very fearful. I trembled in the car when we started the trip," he explained.[78] "I expected hostility from the people, but they accepted me. As the CICB leader, I felt so proud that our project was changing the mindsets of the participants." Such acceptance of the 'other' were indicators that CICB's faith approach was helping participants overcome bitterness and revenge, accept forgiveness, and embrace everyday peace in the neighbourhoods. CICB's final report shows that it reached 842 people in Bujumbura Rural. Thus, it probably changed the perceptions of 842 individuals, who then changed the relationships between members of different ethnicities and political factions.

Evidence from Muyinga shows similar changes in the province. As a young Muslim cleric explained.

> "You know, the 2015 crisis shocked us all in our province. We thought that the 2020 elections would also be full of violence, but CICB introduced dialogues which changed young people and religious leaders. I believe this is why there was no violence in the 2020 elections. We appreciate when we see young Muslims, while dressed in the long tunic and the prayer hat, entering Catholic or Protestant churches and when we see Christians entering mosques."[79]

The cleric was a survivor of the violence in Muyinga, as the 2015 events heavily affected the province. His evidence illustrates that CICB's use of religious tools, texts, and narratives in dialogue sessions contributed to changing the perceptions of young participants towards members of different political factions, faiths, and ethnicity. In his neighbourhood in Muyinga, CICB activities changed hostilities between neighbours and members of diverse political and ethnic groups, and that possibly explains why Muslims and Christians started visiting each other's holy shrines. This paper infers that such visits were indicators that all were willing to embrace each other and attain everyday peace. Changing individuals' views towards the 'other' was critical for tolerance and group relations in Muyinga, where mass killings had happened in the previous civil war. Indeed, CICB's final report shows that it reached 1,365 people in Muyinga through different activities. It is therefore conceivable that it changed the perceptions of 1,365 individuals, who then changed the relationships between members of different 'tribes', political factions, and faith formations in their neighbourhoods.

In the southern province of Rumonge, violent clashes between *Imbonerakure* and youth militias of the opposition parties occurred from 2015 to 2017. The region was one of the hotspots of previous killings in the 1990s and the 1972 massacres started there. A young Muslim woman, who was a member of *Imbonerakure*, admitted her involvement in violence against 'others'. However, she changed her perspectives after participating in CICB forums. "I thank CICB for facilitating understanding between different ethnic groups and political parties. I am a member of the CNDD-FDD and I am active in imbonerakure," she explained. "Before I participated in CICB activities, I used to participate in fights between imbonerakure and the youth militias of the opposition CNL. The CICB became a bridge between us. Now I have changed."[80] This piece of evidence is powerful because the UNHRC Report blamed imbonerakure for violating human rights, including the right to life.

Not only does the respondent concedes her involvement in violence, but she explicitly articulates change of views towards the 'other', tolerance between different ethnic and political groups, and everyday peace. Further, she embraces her political opponents as

citizens of Burundi with whom she shares common humanity and espouses interfaith coexistence. "Before I joined the CICB dialogue forums, I believed that a Catholic Christian could not marry someone belonging to another religion and vice versa," she admits. "I thank CICB for the training because I now notice that there has been a change. For example, I know a Muslim girl who has changed her religion to marry her Catholic fiancé." Such neighbourhood tolerance is a pillar of everyday peace and improvement in relations between ethnic groups and political factions.

Another piece of evidence from a female Anglican lay leader reinforces that change in group relations. "I am an Anglican and a woman leader in my church. ... CICB has promoted dialogues between church representatives and this has strengthened relations between churches and neighbours," she affirms. "Before the project, neighbours were hostile to each to each other and had problems coexisting in the common spaces. In particular, the returnees experienced problems because others had occupied their properties. The CICB project has changed all those hostile relations and neighbours have started welcoming returnees."[81] In essence, her evidence confirms that CICB activities helped individuals change their views towards the 'other'. In turn, the change reduced hostilities between neighbours, improved relations between returnees and those who remained, and led to better collaborations between faith organisations.

Such changes agree with the postulates of peacebuilding from below and the everyday peace approach. CICB's use of religious tools, texts, and narratives encouraged participants to heal, forgive and embrace the 'other', and accept tolerance and everyday peace. It is probable that CICB changed the perceptions of more than 700 individuals in Rumonge because its final report shows that it reached 732 people in the province. In turn, it is conceivable that those individuals changed many others in the province and, thus, changed group relations by promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

This paper does not argue that all those who participated in the CICB activities changed their views towards the 'other' and promoted improvement in groups relations. However, adduced evidence tends to suggest that majority of the participants changed at a personal level. Some overcame narratives and memories of the past and started promoting intergroup relations. Others changed their perceptions towards their political adversaries and embraced them in their moral sphere. These changes are consistent with CICB's pathway of changing individuals, who then become change agents and improve intergroup relations. Cumulatively, such changes in individuals and improvement in group relations at the micro-level would lead to tolerance and everyday peace. This line of individual change and transformation of group relations speaks to the postulates of the reconciliation theory and grassroots peacebuilding approach. As it were, improving relations between groups required resolving grassroots conflicts which had contributed to the breakdown in those relations.

6.2 Conflict Resolution at the Grassroots

Empirical evidence shows CICB's contribution to the resolution of conflicts at the *communes* and *collines*. Although the political-security crisis was national, the organisation's foundational premise was enhancing faith leaders' conflict resolution skills because top-level and grassroots actors are mutually constituted. Specifically, the post-2014 killings and memories of the past mass massacres shaped the discursive construction of exclusion boundaries and worldviews towards ethnic identities, tolerance, reconciliation, and everyday peace in the *communes* and *collines*. Another problem that CICB identified was the hostile relations between returnees and those who remained during different phases of the armed conflict. The logic of CICB's pathway for change was to empower faith leaders as the agents of change with basic conflict resolution skills. The empowered faith leaders would then use religious spaces and tools to resolve conflicts at the grassroots and lead dialogue forums. CICB's final report informs that it empowered 171 faith leaders – 46 from Bujumbura Mairie, 44 from Bujumbura Rural, 41 from Rumonge, and 40 from Muyinga.

According to one of the empowered faith leaders from Rumonge, faith leaders "have a great role to play in the processes of social cohesion and peacebuilding.' [82] She further espoused that CICB trained them on "conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence" and strengthened their "capacities to build trust, harmony, and social cohesion." Using their acquired skills, she added, "we organised sessions in our respective communities and we shared our knowledge with other members of local communities on radicalisation, conflict resolution, and peaceful coexistence." In brief, they used their enhanced skills to resolve conflicts and improve relations between individuals and groups in the collines. The involvement of grassroots faith leaders and improvement of group relations agree with the postulates of the bottom-up peacebuilding approach and the notion of everyday peace. As the primary actors at the *collines* level, faith leaders used religious tools, texts, and narratives that resonated with the population. Indeed, additional evidence from a civil society activist from Rumonge supports this argument.

> "The CICB project helped us resolve many disputes between returnees and those who remained in the province. We held an awareness forum at Kigwena with several religious leaders, those who had just returned and those who had remained. Before the CICB project, we did not have a clear mechanism for resolving such disputes; CICB helped us develop a framework of engagement that we explained to them and later used to resolve the conflicts. All of them accepted our framework, and they now live peacefully."[83]

The bigger issue in this evidence is the legacy of forced migration and subsequent refugee returns which created divisions between those who fled and those who stayed. As the baseline survey found, land claims by returnees whose families were displaced in 1972, 1988, and 1993 always raised bitterness and degenerated into conflicts.[84] Therefore, central to improving group relations and attaining everyday peace was resolving conflicts between returnees and those who stayed, especially those who occupied returnees' former lands. As a young female Muslim participant summarised, "CICB project was a bridge between the families of the returnees and those who remained in the country. We knew families who took other people's properties and plots of land after they fled. It became chaotic when the owners of those lands and properties returned."[85]

This paper infers that establishing a mechanism for resolving land disputes in Rumonge was a way of improving group relations, promoting tolerance, and cultivating everyday peace because faith leaders constituting the mechanism became bridges of everyday peace in the collines. Additional evidence from two women from Bujumbura Rural, a Lutheran and a Catholic, supports the argument of the empowered faith leaders becoming bridges of everyday peace.[86] In summary, therefore, this paper holds that CICB empowered faith leaders, who then employed religious tools, texts, and narratives that resonated with the grassroots actors who were struggling with narratives and memories of the past killings. By providing space and mechanisms for resolving conflicts, CICB contributed to the improvement of individual and group relations and the attainment of everyday peace at the grassroots.

CICB training in Bujumbura Mairie

7. Challenges and Lessons

7.1 Challenges

The bottom-up peacebuilding approach emphasises grassroots interventions, especially in countries emerging from intractable conflicts. Therefore, the first challenge that CICB encountered was the fact that underlying the political-security crisis were many factors, some of which go far into the past. Among these are memories and narratives of the past killings, which still shape perceptions and opinions towards tolerance, reconciliation, and everyday peace in the grassroots. Peacebuilding in such a context requires investment in time and resources that CRID could not provide. Because CICB does not have sufficient resources, it chose a model built upon small, practical steps that involved grassroots-based faith leaders who would cascade the work even without funds from international partners. A second challenge is guaranteeing the sustainability of the CICB interventions because the conflict did not start from the bottom, and the combatants were security forces, armed groups, and informal youth militias. To mitigate that challenge, CICB opted for everyday peace at the micro-levels on the understanding that attaining many islands of everyday peace in different *communes* and *collines* would end the cycles of violence and influence peace formation at the national level. Another challenge is that CICB empowered faith leaders with basic skills in conflict resolution and promotion of tolerance. As agents of change, the empowered religious leaders would use their religious institutions, legitimacy, moral power, and religious tools, values, texts, and narratives to resolve conflicts at the grassroots, promote tolerance, improve group relations, and build everyday peace. However, CICB has no mechanism of following them after the end of the CRID project and, thus, no guarantee that these leaders will continue with the interventions.

7.2 Lessons

Analysing the evidence adduced in the preceding sections leads to the following four lessons.

1. The crisis and direct violence which engulfed Burundi from 2015 did not emanate from the grassroots; rather, it emerged from the top at the national level. However, as the background section has implied, studies on Burundi reveal that the top-level and the grassroots level are mutually constituted, and state-society relations are heavily top-down. In turn, top-down relationships have led to a power imbalance between the two levels as vertical relations, personalised ties, and logic of hierarchy are stronger while CICB interventions and the logic of everyday peace at the micro-level heavily rely on horizontal linkages. Therefore, as much as the CICB team seeks to attain everyday peace

at the micro-levels through faith leaders and institutions, it is important that they engage state actors, particularly middle and lower-level state agencies. Involving state agents in the middle and lower tiers will buttress durable everyday peace at the lower levels.

2. The CICB model of focusing on everyday peace in a case of political and ethnic violence is viable. In particular, the logic of building islands of everyday peace at the micro-levels, which contribute to ending cycles of violence, can be universalised.

3. Despite the challenges of implementing peacebuilding interventions in a situation of ongoing violence, CICB activities achieved a quantifiable impact, as the evidence has demonstrated. Therefore, CICB interventions can be scaled-up by increasing the volume of activities in the same provinces and expanding the activities to other geographical locations.

4. The study has highlighted recruitment of young men and women into youth militias as a profound issue, which is worsened by the challenges of reconciling essentialised ethnic identities and a civic identity that bounds all Burundians in a common future. However, as the adduced evidence shows, CICB's pathway of combining peacebuilding interventions such as dialogue forums, local peace committees, and reconciliation meetings with religious values, texts, narratives, and vocabulary provided a way of surmounting these two challenges.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, CICB understood the Burundi context, the consequences of the post-2014 political violence and armed insurrection, and the role of faith institutions and leaders in responding to those challenges. The organisation premised its logic of bottom-up peacebuilding and everyday peace on the understanding that faith leaders are persuasive agents of change because they had institutions, moral power, spaces, and religious tools to advocate for tolerance, reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence. It recognised that the post-2014 political-security crisis and informalisation of state violence had divided religious leaders, revived memories of the past mass killings, and the country faced the prospects of plunging into another phase of civil war. Therefore, CICB opted for an interfaith approach that employed grassroots-based faith leaders as change agents.

This paper has adduced and evaluated the evidence illustrating that CICB empowered faith leaders with basic conflict resolution skills. In turn, the empowered faith leaders used their legitimacy, moral power, and religious values, spaces, tool, texts, and narratives to organise community dialogue forums and awareness meetings, which promoted tolerance at the grassroots, improved relations between ethnic, religious, and political groups, and advocated everyday peace in the *communes* and *collines*. The organisation then reinforced these activities with messages from public events. Informing CICB's choice of small, practical steps of promoting tolerance and everyday peace at the micro-level was the complex context of Burundi, lack of sufficient resources, the fact that violence and armed conflict did not start from the bottom, and questions of sustainability.

Empirical evidence from the four provinces has shown that CICB interventions changed individual worldviews towards the 'other', improved relations between ethnic, political, and religious groups, and encouraged tolerance, forgiveness, and empathy as the foundations of everyday peace in the neighbourhoods, *communes*, and *collines*. In sum, CICB intended that sufficient islands of everyday peace in different communes and collines would encourage Burundians to accept that they shared common humanity and civic identity and, thus, would contribute to breaking the cycles of violence.

Endnotes

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(ii) Representation of all parties in the state bureaucracy.
(iii) Constitutional restrictions to prevent any single party from becoming excessively powerful.
(iv) Pathways to integrate former rebels and minority groups in the Burundian armed forces.

The 2005 indirect presidential elections occurred on 19 August 2005. Members of the National Assembly and Senate chose the new president of the republic for a five-year term. They chose the sole candidate, Pierre Nkurunziza of the CNDD–FDD, by a vote of 151 yes, 9 against, and 1 invalid. Nkurunziza was sworn in on 26 August 2005. The election was held using multiple round systems. To win in the first round of voting, Nkurunziza was required to receive at least two-thirds of the vote (108 votes).

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80 Face-to-face interview with Sylvere Nsengiyumva, October 2021. CNL stands for Congrès National pour la Liberté (The National Congress for Liberty), a political party founded by Mr. Agathon Rwasa as the successor to PALIPEHUTU-FNL.

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