



**MINISTERE DE LA SOLIDARITE
NATIONALE, DES DROITS DE LA
PERSONNE HUMAINE ET DU GENRE**

Analysis of the situation of children in Residential Centres in Burundi

Executive Summary

Introduction:

Across the world, UNICEF estimates that there are over 2.2 million children living in residential care. In Burundi, as in many other countries, reliable statistics on children living in care are not available. In order to address this situation, the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), in its 2007-2011 Action Plan, stated that a national study would be carried out on the situation of children living in residential centres in collaboration with UNICEF and the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

The report of this study responds to the following objectives:

- To identify all the residential centres for children in Burundi, including the number of children residing in them ;
- To analyse the situation of children living in the centres ;
- To develop recommendations for the next steps.

Methodology:

In order to measure the quality of care found in the residential centres, the research team adapted the “Standards for the Quality of Care: East and Central Africa”, published by Save the Children in 2005. These standards, 85 in total after additions from the Burundi team, were used to collect information for each centre.

The data collection was undertaken in collaboration with the Ministry of National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender (NSHRG). The ten member field team was composed of: five Social Workers from the Ministry and five IRC Child Protection staff. This team carried out interviews with the Directors, staff members and children of each centre in order to collect the information necessary to measure whether each of the 85 standards was being achieved, or not.

Results:

The study found a total of 98 residential centres for children in Burundi, the majority of which are found in the urban centres of Bujumbura, the capital, and Gitega. These centres are providing residential facilities for 5,520 children (2,619 girls and 2,901 boys). Only 78% of these centres are registered with the authorities (local or national).

Among the 98 residential centres, 15 are designated as centres that provide services for children living with a disability (mental and/or physical).

Interestingly, 50 new centres were opened during what is known as the “crisis” period in Burundi (1993-2005) and 15 centres have been opened in the last 5 years.

The study found that centres are managed in a number of different ways: three centres are managed by the government; 47 centres are managed by the church (10 by the Protestant church and 37 by the Catholic church); 25 centres are managed by NGOs or local associations; 5 centres are run by international NGOs; and 18 centres are managed by individuals.

There are three primary physical layouts of residential centres in Burundi: centres with large dormitories; centres with small houses (sometimes with a “mother” for each house); and private houses that have been transformed into residential centres for children (where children sleep in bedrooms or other rooms that have been transformed into bedrooms).

Overall, the analysis found that only three centres (two in Bujumbura Marie and one in Gitega) were able to meet more than 80% of the 85 standards for residential care. Thirty-five centres managed to achieve over 50% of the standards and 63 centres met less than 50% of the standards. Nine of these centres are in an extremely precarious situation as they meet less than 20% of the standards.

Based on information from the 65 centres that provided the research team with their annual budgets, analysis of the data shows that the amount per child varies enormously between a minimum of 146, 580 FBu (117 USD) per year and a maximum of 5, 454,546 FBu (4,360 USD) per year. The average annual cost per children is only 315, 152 FBu (252 USD).

Finally, results from interviews with 1,003 children showed that only 18.3% of them reported that the reason for placement was due to the loss of both parents.

Conclusions:

This study found that there are currently 98 residential centres for children operating in Burundi and new centres continue to be built without permission from appropriate authorities. In addition, the legal framework for management and inspection of residential centres for children is extremely weak. A law for the placement of children in residential centres exists, but is little known or used by centre staff.

The majority of centres were not able to achieve even half of the 85 standards used for this study. In certain centres the situation for children is very alarming and basic needs, including nutrition, health, education and hygiene, are simply not being met. In addition, serious child protection concerns were raised regarding exploitation and sexual abuse. Finally, the majority of children in centres may well have contacts with a parent or extended family, meaning that they may not need to be in residential care at all.

Recommendations:

For the Minister of National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender (NSHRG)

- Form a technical team to:
 - Develop and adopt the minimum standards of care for residential centres Burundi;
 - Analyse the information for each centre and make the recommendations necessary to improve the conditions for the children living in these centres.
- Put in place a provincial level system to follow-up on recommendations made by the technical team for each centre (with the Family Development Centre and the Social-Cultural Advisor) with field visits at least every six months;
- Ensure that the law for the placement of children in residential centres is known and respected by the Centre Directors and the local authorities;
- Ensure that the provisions laid out in the Guiding Principles for the protection of replacement and the management and monitoring of residential centres are included in the development of a Code for the Protection of Children and a National Policy for Child Protection in Burundi;
- Ensure that residential centres are no longer categorised simply as “non-profit organisations” and that they are registered with the Ministry responsible for child protection;
- Urgently, put in place a joint system (Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of NSHRG) in order to review the procedures for registering centres in order to ensure that it is no longer possible to open new centres in Burundi without a detailed needs assessment (the proposals could be reviewed by the technical team or the provincial level coordination mechanism for child protection);
- Develop a legal framework and a long-term strategy for the process of deinstitutionalisation for the residential centres in Burundi. This strategy should include provisions for improving the quality of care in the centres that will remain and the development of foster care and adoption (both local and international).

For the Ministry of Interior

- Collaborate with the Ministry of NSHRG in order to improve the procedures for registration of residential centres and to ensure that the minimum standards for residential care for children in Burundi are met.

For UNICEF and the Donors

- Finance a “pilot” deinstitutionalisation process involving the reintegration of children who are currently residing in the residential centres where the situation is most concerning;
- Support the Government and its partners to develop and adopt minimum standards for residential care in Burundi and the development and implementation of a national deinstitutionalisation strategy.

For the Residential Centres

- Read carefully the minimum standards proposed in this report and reflect on how they can be put in place;
- Ensure that centres are registered with the appropriate authorities;
- Ensure that the centre staff are well versed in the laws concerning child protection in Burundi;
- Where possible, begin to develop a community based programme for the care of children;
- Do not take these recommendations or the process of deinstitutionalisation as a threat, but as an effort to ensure the protection, well-being and development for children in Burundi;
- Improve collaboration with the Ministry that is responsible for child protection.