



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

Centre Jeunes Kamenge, CJK (Burundi)

(2002)



...for their exemplary courage and compassion in overcoming ethnic divisions during civil war so that young people can live and build a peaceful future together.

Centre Jeunes Kamenge

Nine years of civil war in Burundi have brought ethnic hatred, upheaval and many, many deaths. The impoverished northern neighbourhoods of the town of Bujumbura have experienced their share of these atrocities, plus other problems particularly common to youth in such towns: alcoholism, drug abuse, prostitution, AIDS, unemployment, criminality and general hopelessness. This is the context of the work of the Centre Jeunes Kamenge (CJK).

CJK is the dream of three Italian Xaverian missionaries: Marino Bettinsoli, Victor Ghirardi and Claudio Marano. Their determination was to find a place where the youth of the neighbourhoods (age 16-30) could come and, through shared activity, learn to live together in friendship and mutual respect. It was founded in 1991, before the civil war, and by 1993 2,500 young people were members, attending meetings and religious events, playing sports, acting in plays, taking courses, studying various academic subjects and using the library's 14,000 books. In the field of education CJK's courses cover mathematics, physics, biology, accountancy and language classes in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, German and Italian. Training is offered in a broad mix of subjects: computing, typing, sewing, hairdressing, human rights and the Highway Code. Apart from these, there is a literacy project reaching 400 adults and adolescents each year, plus projects on AIDS, and peace and reconciliation.

These activities have been supplemented during the war years by giving help to bury the dead, caring for the wounded, supporting displaced people, distributing food, clothing and blankets, and giving health assistance. A 'Peace and Rehabilitation Project' organises inter-ethnic meetings, discussion groups and other events; and a summer camp for 1,000 young people focuses on rehabilitation and community building. The Centre has been attacked and looted, its management and workers threatened and some of its members killed. Its work has continued to prove that, despite everything that goes on outside, the young people of Burundi can live together peacefully, share their lives and build a future.

In 2001, the CJK had 20,000 members, representing an increase of 10 per cent in each of the two previous years and a measure of the value attached to their programme by the young people of northern Bujumbura. Up to 40 activities are organised each day, with 1,000 to 2,000 youths participating in these activities and using the free library. The literacy project has placed four outreach workers in each of the six neighbourhoods where it is active, to work with young people who do not come to the Centre.

CJK is also the principal co-ordinator (together with two other NGOs) of an Office for Community

Associations of the Northern District, which now has 300 member groups, many of which were founded by CJK. The Office provides them with technical support, helps with projects and fundraising, financial and other assistance with micro-projects. It works on various programmes of peace, reconciliation and reconstruction with the local authorities, the churches, primary and secondary schools and with departments of the national government. Each month CJK publishes a newsletter in the local language for its communities and community groups. CJK's newsletter was started in July 2001. It is called Arc-en-Ciel (Rainbow) where young people can express their ideas.

CJK has about 50 full-time paid workers and 40 volunteer 'associates'. Its 2001 budget was about USD 470,000, of which about 25% was spent on reconstruction in the war-ravaged Northern Quarter, and about 30% on the Centre itself. The Peace and Reconciliation project was the next largest with about 10%. Sport and music also occupy an important place in the life of the Centre. The principal funders of CJK have been Cooperation Italienne, Cooperation Belge, and the Conference Episcopale Italienne. Other important European donors have included Misereor (Germany), the Italian Caritas, the European Community, Austrian Cooperation, the local American Embassy, Manos Unidas (Spain), Développement et Paix (Canada), and Les Amis du CJK (Italy and France).

In May 2005 CJK had 24,000 members registered.

Their new activities include

- coordination of projects in the northern area of Bujumbura
- coordination of religious communities (Catholics, Protestants, Muslims)
- a drug s project (sensitisation on the effects and psychological support)

Quotation

The Centre's goal is to embrace everyone so they can discover that differences between nations, ethnic groups, religions and social or political differences can become a richness for all in everyday lives. It is also necessary to educate, to train a new generation able to grow in respect, able to share the ideals of peace, able to work together. A new generation, a new society which will lead the country out of the horrors of war.

Claudio Marano

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