A dream worth believing in: Caring and educating children in Burundi
Ngabo Léonce

“All children must be given the same chance to pursue their dreams and an opportunity to realize their abilities. To us, that is what education should be: a place where children dare to dream big while always caring for others”

I grew up on the poor streets of Bujumbura, a homeless boy who struggled to study and complete a Bachelor degree. For many years our country had no peace and many who are now young adults grew up like me abandoned and in poverty. We have a mission to shelter, care for and educate orphaned, neglected and abandoned children and created a charity called Sonship. This is how I come to be a father to 120 neglected children and a mentor to young adults who have suffered abuse and rejection. The staff and volunteers are social workers and teachers, working with little but faith, caring and as much training as I can manage.

We started in a small campus with 3 to 6 year olds offering bilingual education, sheltering and feeding them in families. As the children grow we plan to extend the school through primary and secondary levels.

In the last year we had to leave our original campus and find a new place. We borrowed money and sent out many requests for financial help. Meanwhile the pandemic dominated every sector and we could find no help at all. In debt, we survived and managed to start a new place and keep it going even through a damaging rainy season that made everything even harder. Below is a photo of our new, still unfinished campus with two blocks of classes where we will be able to include the older children. It needs work such as paint, cement, tables, chairs, desks.

The new school venue has two blocks of classrooms. The one on the left is not yet ready to welcome the next level of our children, the primary school level. We are desperately trying to find some help to get the materials that we need such as reading and exercise books, teachers’ books, desks, chairs and tables. We need training too so that our staff and volunteers will have the teaching and social work skills to be able to give the children the gift of education.
New campus - unfinished block on left

Our country has suffered through decades of civil unrest. Everything was deeply affected: the economy, the environment, health, education and family life. This has made it impossible to find here the kind of help we need. Yet we must nurture the children and educate them so they will have a better future and the country can be healed from these troubles.

We are looking for all forms of help:
- Volunteers
- Training
- School supplies
- Learning materials for early childhood
- Books for young children
- Financial help

I would love to hear from the members of the International Network for School Social Work. You can reach me at sonship.bi@gmail.com

Where is Burundi?

My country is a small nation of 11 million people in East Africa.

Bujumbura, on the shores of deep Lake Tanganyika, is the largest city with half a million residents.