

EC Partner

CARE Austria

Facts and Figures

- **EC contribution:**
€725.500 (50% of total) granted in the period **2003-2006**
- **2600** Child-Headed Households participated in the project
- **6000** children live in those households
- **500** mentors are responsible for them
- **1250** children received school materials
- **1280** households received health insurance

Did you know?

Sub-Sahara Africa has **12** million orphans*



**EUROPEAN
COMMISSION**

*UNAIDS 2006 Report on the Global Aids Epidemic

Post conflict reconstruction

Nkundabana Initiative for Psychosocial Support (NIPS)

Being a child and head of household in Rwanda

"Many orphans struggle to meet their basic needs and because they have no adults to guide them, they often lack basic life skills and are not aware of their own rights."

Elie Nduwayezu
Program Coordinator



An orphan child with his sibling

Context: Taking care of the orphans of the genocide

Rwanda continues to grapple with the long-term consequences of war and genocide. Orphan children are the most severely affected population, often isolated and stigmatized. Elder children become de facto heads of households, taking care of their siblings and struggling to meet basic needs.

Objective: Create a Network of Community Care

The Initiative proposes an innovative approach to address the most pressing needs of child-headed households. *Nkundabana* are volunteers from the community who serve as mentors for orphan children. They conduct regular visits and provide support, taking special care on easing emotional distress and protecting children against HIV. CARE with the support of the European Commission assist the community network in several fields:

- HIV prevention and treatment: counselling and testing, payment of health insurances
- Ensuring access to primary education or vocational training: providing school material, checking school attendance
- Psychosocial support: group counselling, therapy sessions and fun-days organized twice a week for children
- Economic security: savings and loans scheme, financial training

Impact: What has been achieved by the beginning of 2006?

- Children who participated in vocational training are now able to earn money and satisfy their family needs
- The volunteers will continue for the long term to support the children after the NIPS project ends
- The Ministry for Gender and Promotion of the Family has expressed interest for a scale up of the model to other provinces of the country.

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The story of a Nkundanaba mother

Beatrice Nyiranzayino has been a volunteer mentor for the past year. Her primary motivation for accepting this role was simple: *"I am a mother. I think it is good to take care of others. If these children were my own and if I were no longer alive, what would happen to them?"*

The role of NKUNDABANA, a word which means *I love Children*, carries a great deal of responsibility towards the thousands of orphans who are heads of households. Mentors provide psycho-social support and protect the children from abuse and exploitation. During their weekly visits, the Nkundabanas talk to the children, assess the situation in the household and provide advice and support when necessary.

"If one of the children I visit is sick, I make sure they receive medical assistance", says Beatrice. *"Sometimes this means fundraising for the medicines or advocating for free treatment given the children's economic situation."* *"Many of the children do not have proper shelter,"* she adds. *"Although it is not our job to adopt these children when they are sick we do, on occasions, take them into our homes until they are feeling better."*

Advocating for the children's land right is also a big part of the Nkundabana's job. Despite the fact that laws protect the child's rights to the family land, often relatives and community members easily manipulate the children and steal their assets.

Involving the community is critical in helping people to take stock of the reality of children in their own area. *"The community must provide sustainable forms of support,"* explains Elie Nduwayezu, Program Coordinator for CARE in the Gitarama province, *"otherwise the children will fall between the cracks and since they represent the future, it is those who are closest to them who must take charge."*



Beatrice with one of her protected children