

Country: *Burundi*

Name: *The Spirit of Sangwe: Burundi's Largest-Ever Peace Festival*

Artistic Medium: *music, dance, theater, poetry, comedy groups*

Date: July 13, 2002 was the first festival, but the 2004 one integrated more grassroots organizations.

Contact: Search for Common Ground in Burundi

E-mail: burundi@sfcg.org

http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/burundi/burundi_spirit.html

http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/burundi/burundi_hero.html

Search for Common Ground in Burundi organized a peace festival in the “quartiers” of Bujumbura in Burundi. The festival, started in 2002, was a success and became an annual event, so that by 2004, there was a bigger emphasis on grassroots and community togetherness than in 2002, in order to have maximum impact on the community. The festival was comprised of musicians, dancers, actors, poets and comedy troupes performed while workshops elaborated on the themes of the festival in order to foster dialogue that would continue after the festival ended.



Over 500 musicians, 250 dancer, 50 actors and 6 poets performed in the Sangwe Festival for four days in six “quartiers” of Bujumbura, Burundi. The final night’s activities were held in the football stadium and more than 10,000 people crowded in to join in activities for peace and reconciliation. The audience was as diverse as the artists, with local youth, street kids, women's groups, street vendors, and the elderly all taking part in the Festival's activities.

One of the performers put the spirit of the festival in the most appropriate words, stating that “Hutus, Tutsis and Twa are all Burundian.” Started as a radio program of the Studio Ijambo, the festival is a representation of the importance of performing arts in the role of peace building.

In the margins of the festival, there was active collaboration and cooperation in the form of a special day long workshop for 100 of the participating musicians. The issues addressed were the protection of intellectual property as well as the use of traditional musical instruments and culture in their performances. These workshops

continue even when the festival is not underway to continue the dialogue on these issues and foster a vibrant civil society.

In April 2004, Studio Ijambo brought artists together again for a three day *Heroes Summit* in Bujumbura in order to acknowledge those who had saved the lives of people from different ethnic groups during the conflict. People from Rwanda, Congo and Nigeria also joined the summit and were addressed by Burundi's Vice President as well as the UN Deputy Special Representative for Burundi, the Minister for Reconciliation and the mayor. A variety of activities took place, including visits by small groups of Heroes to various local peace groups, roundtables around issues such as coexistence, justice, truth, forgiveness and reconciliation, identified as critical by the Heroes. The summit was broadcast on national television and the Heroes, who had saved lives as far back as 1972 and had lived in fear for over 30 years, were recognized and praised.