

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF BURUNDI

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“I KNOW MY STATUS, WHAT ABOUT YOU?”

The Anglican Church of Burundi joined other partners to celebrate World AIDS Day. This year the Province focussed on youth by organising a week of campaigning to encourage people to be voluntarily tested for HIV.

The campaign was organised in schools in Rumonge and Nyanza-Lac in the southern part of the country and facilitated by young people trained in life skills. Around four thousand people were voluntarily tested.

The Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Burundi stressed the importance of every person knowing their status. “The first step in fighting against HIV is to know your status. You can’t pretend to protect yourself from being infected without knowing whether you are safe or not,” he said. He officially opened the ceremonies by getting screened himself to show that being aware of one’s status is everyone’s concern.



Such campaigns are part of the work undertaken by the Church to help prevent and reduce the risk of being infected by HIV. Through the wider programme of developing life skills young people get the opportunity to be trained in different areas such as sexual and reproductive health, personal responsibility, alcoholism and substance abuse.

The Province of the Anglican Church of Burundi has also initiated youth circles of savings and credit using the “Village Community Bank” approach in a move to address the underlying issue of extreme poverty that contributes to the prevalence of HIV and AIDS. Since this started youth circles have been able to work together and have begun some income generating activities.

The local authorities in Rumonge and Nyanza-Lac expressed their gratitude for the contribution of the Anglican Church of Burundi. The senior advisor to the Administrator of Nyanza-Lac Commune said that the programme of life skills has contributed to the reduction of cases of pregnancy in schools and early marriages, and children stopping attending school. Statistics from health facilities show that the HIV infection rate has decreased due to agencies like the Church engaging in the fight against HIV.

16 DAYS ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

The Anglican Church of Burundi has conducted various activities during the 16 day campaign aimed to challenge people to end gender based violence and to advocate for victims.

The Provincial department in charge of GBV has organised a forum of civil society organisations to reflect on the coordination of work in this area. The participants stressed the importance of working together as a network in order to have more impact in reducing cases of gender based violence.

Throughout the dioceses of the Anglican Church women and men have been mobilised to participate in public marches against GBV. People had the opportunity to hear powerful testimonies of changes that have happened in families as a result of trainings from Provincial and Diocesan GBV departments.

Religious leaders trained and committed to raising awareness of the negative effect of GBV on victims and on families have had an impact on decision makers at local level in the fight against impunity of perpetrators and the giving of support to victims.

Revd Jeanne Francoise, the Provincial Coordinator against GBV said that many positive steps have been taken in fighting GBV but there is still more to be done. “We need to work hand in hand as we are all concerned. It’s our duty to stretch out our hands to those women and girls in distress because of violence,” she said.



The General Secretary of the Province who, with the Bishop of Gitega participated in the march in Makebuko to protest against gender based violence said that the Anglican Church of Burundi will never ignore any form of violence particularly that perpetrated against women and girls. “We take this opportunity to give a clear message to the authors of violence against women and girls that the Anglican Church of Burundi will oppose them even if they claim to be members of the Church,” said Rev Félibien NDINTORE.

TRANSFORMED LIVES THROUGH TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMMES

Giheta is one of the most populated communes in Gitega Province and its population depends mainly on agriculture. The majority of its ever increasing population is between 0-15 years.

The main challenges are the insufficiency of agricultural land along with low productivity. With the support of the Diocese of Gitega through Mothers’ Union programmes many families are discovering solutions to the challenges and positive changes have already been made.

The starting point was the literacy circles initiated by Mothers’ Union to fight against ignorance and illiteracy among adults. Women and men were integrated in those circles and received training. In addition other circles were set up to enable people to generate incomes from small projects.



The introduction of the savings and credit programme is now enabling families to meet basic needs and ensure education for their children. With loans received through the savings and credit groups some people are using them to improve agriculture while others have invested in small businesses. The community is seeing the progress made by beneficiaries of the programmes.

“I have been trained in literacy and now belong to a savings group. This is my 6th year and I have benefited a lot from the programme. I got credit that I used to rent lands where I grow various crops. With the money I earned I bought goats so that I can have manure to fertilize my lands. I have also bought a bicycle for my grandson to provide him with transport because he studies far from our home,”said an elderly lady in Giheta.

The facilitators of the circles are pleased with the impact that the programme is making but are constantly challenged by the large numbers of people wanting to be involved.



*The Province wishes you a very Happy Christmas
and
God’s blessings for the New Year*

Happy Christmas Joyeux Noel Noeli Nziza