



MUSLIMS FOR
PROGRESSIVE VALUES

2020 - 2021

Inclusive Islam Curriculum - Burundi

by Muslims for Progressive Values

In Partnership with AICNDH | Grand Mufti of Burundi



Muslims For Progressive Values

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THE INCLUSIVE ISLAM CURRICULUM

This report is the result of a two-year program implemented in Burundi in 2020 to 2021 for the development and implementation of a children's curriculum rooted in human rights in promoting freedom of religion and belief, and women's and girls' rights. This program was wholly funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

Lead Organization

Muslims for Progressive Values

Implementing Partners

AICNDH, Grand Mufti of Burundi

Themes

Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) and Equal Rights for Women and Girls

Country

Burundi

Target Demographic:

Burundi Muslim women's rights organizations and the leaders of mosques and associated madrassas (religious schools) in 18 provinces of Burundi, which together serve a population of approximately 2.4 million Muslims. Primary languages are Kirundi and Swahili.

Objective:

To fundamentally change religious attitudes of Burundian Muslims so that they are more inclusive and supportive of FoRB and women's and girls' rights.

Overall Outcome:

A religious curriculum will be developed for children, which emphasizes inclusive concepts of human rights, FoRB, and women's and girls' rights as rooted in CEDAW, UNCHR, and SDGs #5 and #16. The curriculum will be endorsed by the Grand Mufti of Burundi. A comic book will be prepared for elementary-aged children and an instructional video will be created for teachers and imams. The curriculum will be produced in Kirundi, the language spoken by approximately 2.4 million Muslims in the region and will be made available digitally on the AICNDH website.

Specific Outcomes:

1. A practical curriculum for teaching the Islamic faith to children, which supports tolerance, FoRB, and equal rights for women and girls.
2. Endorsement of the curriculum by the Grand Mufti of Burundi, so that it has legitimacy in madrassas and similar contexts.

Outputs:

1. Roundtable discussion with project leadership to outline the religious curriculum emphasizing tolerance, FoRB, and gender equality.
2. Instructional comic book, videos, and teaching guide in Kirundi and English, made available on the AICNDH website.
3. Piloting of the curriculum in up to 32 madrassas identified by the Grand Mufti.
4. Evaluation of curriculum effectiveness through surveys and roundtable discussions with project leadership, heads of participating madrassas, and students.

Indicators of Project Success:

1. Imams and women's right organizations effectively use the curriculum to achieve a change in attitudes towards human rights, FoRB, and women's and girls' rights, based in CEDAW, UNDHR, and SDGs #5 and #16.
2. Number of students taught during the pilot period.

Sustainability

The project will produce a comic book, instructional videos, and teaching guide that can be utilized beyond the life of the project, including by the network convened under Activity 1. In Burundi, a young generation of Muslims will be taught to respect FoRB, women's and girls' rights, and other universal human rights.

Innovation

A religious curriculum for Muslim children supportive of universal human rights does not yet exist. Partnership with the Grand Mufti of Burundi is also unique as it is rare for a religious leader of this stature to build support for universal human rights, FoRB, and equal rights for women and girls.

Objective:

To fundamentally change religious attitudes of Burundian Muslims so that they are more inclusive and supportive of FoRB and women's and girls' rights.

Specific Outcomes: All outcomes were fulfilled

- A practical curriculum for teaching the Islamic faith to children, which supports tolerance, FoRB, and equal rights for women and girls.
- Endorsement of the curriculum by the Grand Mufti of Burundi, so that it has legitimacy in madrassas and similar contexts.

Outputs: Outputs 1 and 2 are fulfilled.

- Roundtable discussion with project leadership to outline religious curriculum emphasizing tolerance, FoRB, and gender equality.
- Instructional comic book, videos, and teaching guide in Kirundi and English, made available on the AICNDH website.
- Piloting of the curriculum in up to 32 madrassas identified by the Grand Mufti.
- Evaluation of curriculum effectiveness through surveys and roundtable discussions with project leadership, heads of participating madrassas, and students.

RESULTS

3.1 Roundtable Discussion (consultation with imams and women's groups)

The activities in Burundi fortunately had an early jump start pre-pandemic. Instead of the February scheduled start, we started work in January of 2020 with the launching and a discussion in consultation with imams and women's groups on the development of the curriculum designed for children in addressing gender equality, religious pluralism and many Sustainable Development Goals issues within the context of Islam, accompanied with comics.

Post consultation, on January 28, 2020, at the Safari Gate Hotel, our partner organization AICNDH organized the launching of the Development of an Inclusive Religious Elementary Curriculum with a panel that included Cheikh Juma Gilbert Salum (The Deputy Mufti of Burundi, COMIBU), Yahya Hamim (Director of Media and Public Relations at Ministry of ICTs), Imam Bukuru Elie Khalfan (President, Founder of Alliance des Imams du Corridor Nord pour le Developpement Humanitaire), Ani Zonneveld (President, Founder of Muslims for Progressive Values) and Ms. Esther Loeffen (Deputy Ambassador of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Burundi). See photo below



3.1 Outcome of Consultation

Recommendations and feedback:

Some recommendations made by imams and women community leaders:

1. Quality control can be ensured by training of the imams themselves before they can teach children this curriculum.
2. The shift from training programs for women to children is a welcome direction towards advancing women's and girls' rights for the next generation.
3. It is important to create a culture that disrespects abusive husbands and to favor and promote positive masculinity.
4. Elements of this curriculum need to be taught to adults and preached at the weekly Friday prayers attended by the community to normalize these human rights concepts. This will protect children from being punished from bringing home "new" ideas, thus stifling the purpose of this curriculum.



Pictured: Speakers, presenters, imams, and representatives from women's groups

Monitoring and Evaluation Tools	Results Observed Using this Tool
Project planning	The project is presented to the participants in the official launch ceremony by the program manager
Terms of Reference for an official launch of activities	An official launch of the activities organized on January 8, 2020 & Terms of reference for an official launch of the activities
Terms of Reference for the recruitment of two researchers	Two experts have been recruited
Terms of Reference for the Recruitment of a Video Producer and Photographer	A video producer and a photographer have been recruited
Terms of Reference for the recruitment of five cartoonists	Five cartoonists have been recruited

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURRICULUM

In Year 1, the round-table discussions provided the feedback, input and recommendations towards the development of the curriculum. This buy-in was also an important step to involving imams and community leaders as stakeholders with a program they helped envision, in inculcating human rights values in Islamic terms, which by default fights radicalism which is a concern of many imams we partner with. The work of these religious leaders has resulted in a change in attitudes from a peaceful coexistence within Muslim communities, and especially between the Muslim community and the rest of the non-Muslim communities.

The process of producing the curriculum was first to outline the subject matters that mirror the Sustainable Development Goals, addressing freedom of religion and belief and women's and girls' rights specific to the Burundian context, accompanied with verses from the Qur'an and *Hadith* to affirm the messages from an Islamic context. Once this was completed, storylines and teaching modules were developed. This second stage went through cycles of drafts and edits which took several months.

One of the key aspects of this curriculum is to also inculcate a Burundi-Islam culture. From MPV Ani Zonneveld's visits to Burundi, it is assumed that to be a Muslim means to dress like an Arab and for women to be covered. The first draft of a cartoon received is shown in Figure 1. MPV directed the attire to be revised to incorporate traditional Burundi print wherever possible without incurring extra expenses in the re-coloring process, as shown in Figure 2.



Figure 1

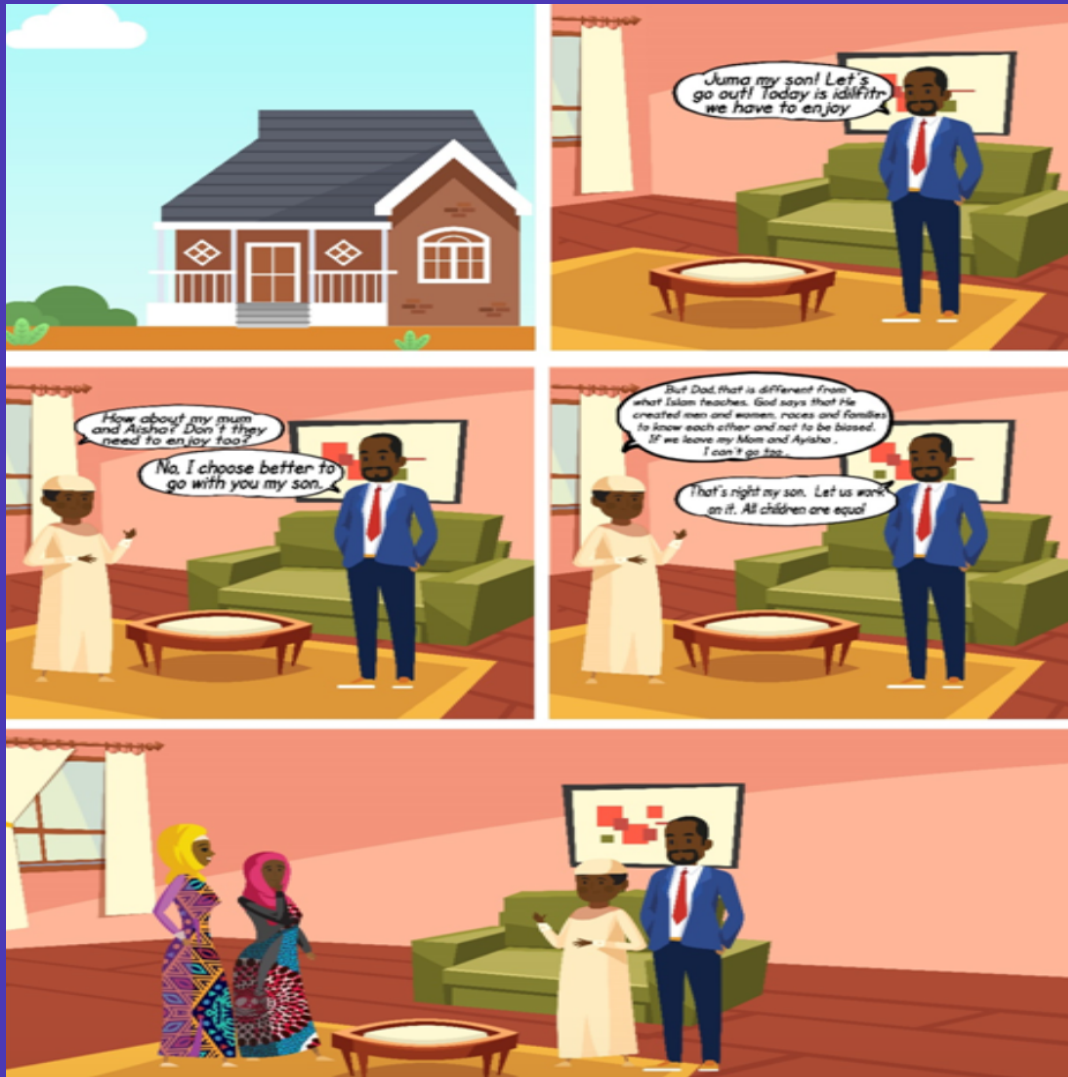


Figure 2: Revised coloring to incorporate Burundi fabric prints, less emphasis on Arab attired in robes worn by Muslim men, and darker skin tone.

CURRICULUM DESIGN

The design of the curriculum was outlined in English, and only after all of the curriculum's contents, including chapter outlines, storylines, religious references, teaching modules, comics and its correlation to the Sustainable Development Goals were approved, was the curriculum and all its content developed and translated in Kirundi.

The English version was initially created purely for the purpose of MPV to produce and monitor the contents, but it is now a curriculum that is shared with other partner organizations in the Alliance of Inclusive Muslims network as there has been a great interest in not just the contents such as gender equality, respect for all faiths, and care for the environment, but for its critical thinking and child-centric teaching methodology.

The curriculum has been completed and physical copies of it have been printed. See Appendix 4 for the English version.

The curriculum is divided into three levels:

Level I 5 Chapters

- Hygiene
- Animal protection
- Beliefs or medication
- Environmental protection
- Judgment

Level II 7 Chapters

- Gender based violence:
- Tolerance of religions
- Education and Islam
- House maid jobs in Islam
- Inheritance & property rights
- Freedom to belief
- Protection of natural forests

Level III 8 Chapters

- Women and leadership
- Gender based discrimination
- Modernity and Islam
- Wealth and Islam
- Unwanted pregnancies
- Right to ownership
- Family planning
- Family care

PRODUCTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO, PROMOTION OF THE CURRICULUM

An instructional video was produced to instruct the teaching methodology, which is hosted on YouTube for the imams to access at their own expense and without the in-person training of the teaching methodology which makes the curriculum unique.

In addition to producing the instructional video, AICNDH also proceeded with implementing a recommendation, that parents and the communities themselves need to be exposed to and educated on the contents of the curriculum so that children will not be punished for coming home with “new” ideas.

In the following pages are tables that demonstrate the promotional efforts of the curriculum, with the number of sermons, forums, and workshops conducted, and the location and number of children in attendance at madrassas where the lessons were taught to normalize the concepts of FoRB, women’s and girls' rights and critical thinking to the Muslim population. Sermons made during Friday prayers by our #ImamsForShe Champions to promote our human rights curriculum ran from October 2020 to December 2021.



Picture: Imam Khalfan (L) with the physical copy of the curriculum.

Total number of prints:

5 in English and 100 in Kirundi for EU 146

SERMONS

Number	Mosque	Province	Khutbahs	Audience Men	Audience Women
1	Rugari	Muyinga	Hygiene	152	20
2	Gasorwe	Muyinga	Animal Protection	70	33
3	Gasura	Kirundo	Believes & Medication	105	44
4	Rukago	Kayanza	Environmental Protection	89	7
5	Answar	Ngozi	Judgement	258	46
6	Matongo	Kayanza	Gender Based Violence	57	10
7	Nkohwa	Ngozi	Tolerance of Religions	47	9
8	Mparamirundi	Ngozi	Education & Islam	107	21
9	Musenyi	Ngozi	Housemaid Jobs in Islam	200	11
10	Nyagatovu	Ngozi	Heritage	44	1
11	Rukongwa	Ngozi	Freedom of Belief	55	88
12	Gashoho	Muyinga	Protection of Natural Forests	144	36
13	Masanganzira	Ngozi	Women & Leadership	91	5
14	Butihinda	Muyinga	Gender Based Discrimination	198	33
15	Kobero	Muyinga	Modernity & Islam	206	12

Number	Mosque	Province	Khutbahs	Audience Men	Audience Women
16	Murama	Muyinga	Wealth & Islam	170	23
17	Kirembe	Ngozi	Unwanted Pregnancies	134	14
18	Buhinyuza	Muyinga	Right to Possessions	57	2
19	Kiryama	Muyinga	Family Planning	60	9
20	Remera	Ngozi	Family Care	99	12
21	Kananira	Ngozi	Hygiene	44	2
22	Rubuye	Ngozi	Animal Protection	146	6
23	Mivo	Ngozi	Believes & Medication	93	10
24	Shikiro	Ngozi	Environmental Protection	101	10
25	Ruhororo	Ngozi	Judgement	66	4
26	Nyamurenz	Ngozi	Gender Based Violence	74	11
27	Gihungwe	Kayanza	Tolerance of Religions	56	6
28	Kirema	Kayanza	Education & Islam	96	9
29	Bwasare	Muyinga	Housemaid Jobs in Islam	43	2
30	Karama	Muyinga	Heritage	92	12
31	Busoni	Kirundo	Freedom of Belief	41	12
Total				3254	429

WORKSHOPS

Number	Province	Topic	Audience Men	Audience Women
1	Ngozi	Gender Based Discrimination	14	23
2	Gitega	Family Care	11	29
3	Gitega	Gender Based Discrimination	12	13
4	Makamba	Gender Based Discrimination	9	30
5	Makamba	Family Care	14	16
6	Muyinga	Gender Based Discrimination	13	14
7	Muyinga	Family Care	17	14
8	Bujumbura	Gender Based Discrimination	24	37
Total			114	176

PARTNERING MADRASSAS

Number	Province	Zone / Commune	Madrassa Name	Number of Children
1	Bujumbura Capital City	Ntahangwa Commune	Markaz Alhikmat Cibitoke	512
2	Bujumbura Capital City	Ntahangwa Commune	Madrassa Taqwa (Cibitoke)	126
3	Bujumbura Capital City	Ntahangwa Commune	Madrassa (Cibitoke 12 Av)	146
4	Bujumbura Capital City	Ntahangwa Commune	Madrassa Azhar (Cibitoke 11 Av)	231
5	Bujumbura Capital City	Buterere Zone	Madrassa Alawiya	131
6	Bujumbura Capital City	Buterere Zone	Madrassa Aseme	89
7	Bujumbura Capital City	Buterere Zone	Madrassa Rahman	137
8	Bujumbura Capital City	Buyenzi Zone	Madrassa (Av 11, NO 7)	89
9	Bujumbura Capital City	Buyenzi Zone	Madrassa (AV 17, NO 64)	103
10	Bujumbura Capital City	Buyenzi Zone	Madrassa (AV 8, No 64)	201
11	Bujumbura Capital City	Buyenzi Zone	Madrassa (AV 1, NO 9)	194
12	Bujumbura Capital City	Buyenzi Zone	Madrassa Kumkukwe	236
13	Bujumbura Capital City	Buyenzi Zone	Madrassa Kadiriya (AV 17, NO 21)	96
14	Bujumbura Capital City	Buyenzi Zone	Madrassa (AV 8, NO 10)	266

Number	Province	Zone / Commune	Madrassa Name	Number of Children
15	Bujumbura Capital City	Buyenzi Zone	Madrassa (AV 17, N034)	123
16	Bujumbura Capital City	Buyenzi Zone	Madrassa (1 AV at Cheikh Songoro's)	217
17	Bujumbura Capital City	Bwiza Zone	Madrassa Tahdhiib (Jabe)	321
18	Bujumbura Capital City	Bwiza Zone	Madrassa Answar	236
19	Bujumbura Capital City	Gihosa Zone	Madrassa Gihosha (Boarding)	108
20	Bujumbura Capital City	Rohero Zone	Madrassa Iqraa	63
21	Bujumbura Capital City	Kinindo Zone	Madrassa Kumuyaga (Boarding)	89
22	Bujumbura Capital City	Kinindo Zone	Markaz Tauhiid Kibenga	123
23	Bujumbura Capital City	Kinindo Zone	Madrassa Kibenga	237
24	Muyinga Province	N/A	Internat Kayenzi	86
25	Muyinga Province	N/A	Madrassa Al Kahfi (Muyinga Centre)	56
26	Muyinga Province	N/A	Madrassa Kungoro	68
27	Muyinga Province	N/A	Madrassa Gasorwe	45
28	Muyinga Province	N/A	Madrassa Kirembe	63
29	Muyinga Province	N/A	Madrassa Butihinda	123

Number	Province	Zone / Commune	Madrassa Name	Number of Children
30	Muyinga Province	N/A	Madrassa Kamaramagambo	99
31	Muyinga Province	N/A	Madrassa Alhikmat	126
32	Muyinga Province	N/A	Madrassa Abu Huraira	189
33	Muyinga Province	N/A	Madrassa Jabal Nuur	231
34	Muyinga Province	N/A	Madrassa Mukoni	156
35	Muyinga Province	N/A	Internat Gahororo	99
36	Ruyigi Province	N/A	Madrassa Answar	36
37	Ruyigi Province	N/A	Madrassa Shafi	69
38	Ruyigi Province	N/A	Madrassa Gisuru	54
39	Bujumbura Province	N/A	Gatumba Madrassa	325
40	Gitega Province	N/A	Madrassa Ibadhi	267
41	Gitega Province	N/A	Madrassa Jumuiya	129
42	Gitega Province	N/A	Madrassa Tahdhibul Islaamiya	69
43	Gitega Province	N/A	Mutaho Madrasat	147
44	Mwaro Province	N/A	Madrasaat Mwaro Centre	19
45	Karusi Province	N/A	Madrassa International	96
46	Karusi Province	N/A	Madrassa Buhiga Centre	89

Number	Province	Zone / Commune	Madrassa Name	Number of Children
47	Kirundo Province	N/A	Madrassa Kumuyaga (Boarding)	99
48	Rumonge Province	N/A	Madrassa Munnawara	326
49	Rumonge Province	N/A	Madrasatul Tahfydhwu	421
50	Rumonge Province	N/A	Madrassa Nkakara	254
51	Makamba Province	N/A	Mdrassat Ittihadu	263
52	Makamba Province	N/A	Mabanda Madrassa	124
53	Makamba Province	N/A	Madrassa Nyanza Lac	362
54	Rutana Province	N/A	Rutana Madrassa	69
55	Rutana Province	N/A	Mwumba Madrassa	59
56	Ngozi Province	N/A	Madrassa Gisha	67
57	Ngozi Province	N/A	Musenyi Mdrassat	102
58	Ngozi Province	N/A	Madrassa Gashikanwa	89
59	Ngozi Province	N/A	Madrassa Remera	124
60	Ngozi Province	N/A	Gatsinda Madrassa	98
61	Ngozi Province	N/A	Mwumba Madrassa	45

Number	Province	Zone / Commune	Madrassa Name	Number of Children
62	Ngozi	N/A	Nyamurenza Madrassa	78
63	Cibitoke Province	N/A	Madrassa Rugombo	214
64	Cibitoke Province	N/A	Madrassa Cibitoke	98
65	Cankuzo Province	N/A	Madrassa Cankunzo	89
66	Kayanza Province	N/A	Madrassa Kirema	98
67	Makamba Province	N/A	Kanyanza Madrassa	88
68	Bubanza Province	N/A	Kidahwe Madrassa	26
Total				9985

District / Province	Number of Madrassas
Bujumbura Capital City	23
Muyinga Province	12
Ruyigi Province	3
Bujumbura Province	1
Gitega Province	4
Mwaro Province	1
Karusi Province	2
Kirundo Province	1

District / Province	Number of Madrassas
Rumonge Province	3
Makamba Province	3
Rutana Province	2
Ngozi Province	7
Cibitoke Province	2
Cankuzo Province	1
Kayanza Province	2
Bubanza Province	1
Total	68

MONITORING-EVALUATION & PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

AICNDH organized a monitoring and evaluation session in the Ngozi Province, at Winner's Hotel where 21 people were tasked with evaluating the following topics:

1. Impact of the curriculum in the Muslim community
2. Contribution of the imams and parents to promote the curriculum
3. Projection of the educational video

At this point the curriculum had already been implemented in the different provinces of Burundi in 68 mosques through our #ImamsForShe Champions network with 45 imams committed to utilizing the contents of the curriculum in their madrassas and *khutbahs* (sermons). The testimonies of the participants were very clear, encouraging us to organize training workshops.

M&E of the Curriculum for the perspectives of stakeholders:

Children

- Memorization of Quranic verses and readings of different *Hadiths* for environmental protection, social cohesion, and the fight against violent extremism
- Knowledge of basic concepts relating to inheritance and family planning
- Knowledge of the harmful effects of both girls and boys not attending school
- Memorization of poems stipulating family well-being for peaceful cohabitation

#ImamsForShe Champions

- They strengthened knowledge of human rights in general and the rights of Muslim women and girls in particular, as well as notions of freedom of religion or belief and peaceful cohabitation
- The ease of delivering lessons according to the learning manual adapted for children

Parents

Parents whose children followed the teachings of the curriculum were satisfied with the way their children understand the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet, from a purely logical and critical thinking foundation and its real-life application, in contrast to the learning practices of memorization without any understanding of its meaning.

AICNDH

The curriculum made it possible to:

- Disseminate the SDGs to a much wider and younger audience, therefore influencing the next generation.
- Relay the values of the #ImamsForShe campaign in a broader public space
- Facilitate the preparation of *khutbahs* to adapt to the lived realities of the communities
- Help mobilize funds from potential donors

COMIBU

- A well-designed program for children in madrassas, which will facilitate the desire for learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Seven recommendations were proposed at the M&E session:

1. Multiply the booklets to make them available for all the children of the different madrassas because so far one booklet is shared between 5 children for the 2 madrassas of the City of Bujumbura. 103 booklets are shared in the 66 other madrassas, spread across the country.
2. Start up a multidisciplinary center for the training of imams, or alternatively, sponsor imams to do professional internships in other countries where a progressive interpretation of Islam is taught.
3. Multiply CDs to enable more accessibility of the curriculum.
4. Train parents so that they can help their children during any revisions at home.
5. Equip the madrassas with specialized equipment such as flat screens, overhead projectors, and laptops for the projection of educational videos during lessons.
6. Promote the curriculum on billboards.
7. Advocate for the validation of the curriculum as a textbook for use in religion classes in Islamic schools nationally.

Recommendation to the funder:

Behavior change is a long process. It is not obvious that with a 24-month project we can permanently change mentalities and behaviors that have become deeply rooted in a community for more than 200 years. However, this inclusive curriculum has produced effects that are very encouraging and that predict that children will adopt behaviors and attitudes learnt from the lessons and chapters therein, values with an inclusive worldview.

For this reason, we call on the funder to:

- ✓ Fund the project so that all madrassas in Burundi are covered.
- ✓ Share information about this curriculum and the results of this evaluation with other donors to enable us to continue to scale up what was started to achieve gender equality, FoRB, peace and security and therefore the SDGs.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the quality of the work is comprehensive and excellent and activities of normalizing human rights terms that encompasses freedom of religion and belief and gender equality were implemented despite limitations.

There was also a shortage of funds needed to print physical copies of the curriculum. There are **9,885** students in **68** different madrassas in this pilot project. We did not expect such a large pilot project and therefore only budgeted to print 100 copies.

Financial constraints limited the number of training sessions that imams needed to implement and understand the teaching methodology. As a result, an alternative mechanism was implemented to maximize the curriculum's full potential by inserting the substance of the curriculum into other programmatic activities outside of this grant.

Outputs fulfilled: four out of four

- 1. Roundtable discussion with project leadership to outline religious curriculum emphasizing tolerance, FoRB and gender equality.*
- 2. Instructional comic book, videos, and teaching guide in Kirundi and English.*
 - Instructional video was produced to instruct on the teaching methodology and is up on the YouTube channel and not on the website. There isn't enough funds to hire and maintain a web administrator.
 - This curriculum was taught in 68 madrassas all over the country and it was developed in three tracks:
 - 20 instructional videos of 45 minutes each presented by a Champion Imam; each video combines all the lessons of an entire chapter
 - 20 comics, professionally designed
 - 20 educational skits from 20 dialogue created for the comics
- 3. Piloting of the curriculum in up to 32 madrassas identified by the Grand Mufti.*
 - Curriculum was endorsed by the Grand Mufti in 2020 before him stepping down. Instead of 32 madrassas, a total of 68 madrassas piloted the curriculum
- 4. Evaluation of curriculum effectiveness through surveys and roundtable discussions with project leadership, heads of participating madrassas, and students.*

INDICATORS OF PROJECT SUCCESS

1

Imams and women's right organizations use the curriculum effectively to achieve a change in attitudes towards human rights, FoRB, and women and girls' rights, based in CEDAW, UNDHR, and SDGs #5 and #16.

2

Number of students taught during the pilot period: **9,885**

Child's Rights

"Parents complained about the brutality of certain Imams towards children and the injustices that those children suffered without being able to denounce them. Many of these children even gave up going to the madrasas because of the learning conditions which are not favorable for them. Parents were forcing their children to keep on going there despite the awful learning conditions, thinking that it was the teaching methods of our religion to be violent. With this curriculum, we understood that what we were experiencing was rather contrary to how it should be done"

An Imam in Bujumbura Mayorship said:

"Imams were not used to talking about women's rights in madrasas and they are limited themselves only to making children memorizing the verses of the Qur'an. The inclusive curriculum was an opportunity to review our teachings, to introduce a very sensitive and very important subject in our programs. Providing us with Quranic references and traditions of the Prophet encourage us to better guide our learners".

INCULCATING A CULTURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHILDREN IS THE ONLY WAY FORWARD TOWARD A PEACEFUL FUTURE

