

# Fragile Island of Peace

## *One Nation's Journey Past Violence*

In a world where military intervention is the de facto response to conflict, a group of Burundian leaders came together to try something different. This documentary film will tell their story, chronicling 10 years of a peace-building process that brought together leaders from rebel militias and the National Army—with powerful consequences.



A production of Spectrum Media  
In partnership with Filmmakers Collaborative

# Fragile Island of Peace: *One Nation's Journey Past Violence*

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## Introduction

In a world where war remains a day-to-day reality for too many and violence is the knee-jerk response to conflicts, military leaders from both sides of Burundi's twelve-year civil war came together to try something different. The peacebuilding process began when these fighters, rebel militias and the National Army, stepped away from the battlefield to meet in a neutral place to build trust and a sense of interdependence, and learn negotiation and leadership skills to help them move their country from war to peace. Ten years later, over 8,000 Burundian leaders ranging from presidents and parliament members to local mayors and police chiefs, from high school teachers to demobilized soldiers have learned these vital skills.

*"Peace is indeed harder than war, and its constant fragility is part of its beauty. A bullet need happen only once, but **for peace to work, we need to be reminded of its existence again and again and again.**"*

— Irish author Colum McCann

*Fragile Island of Peace* will tell the story of how deep, internal transformations among the leaders of warring factions led to a united commitment to nonviolence and a shared focus on battling Burundi's poverty instead of each other. The documentary will show cultural transformation as told through the personal experiences of those who have lived it and who have worked to contribute to a more peaceful society. Their uplifting stories reaffirm that hope for convergence and peaceful coexistence is possible, even in a region that has experienced so much violence.

*Fragile Island of Peace* will shine a light on the transformative process of **peacebuilding** in Burundi, a small landlocked Central African nation between the conflict zones of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Given its locale and what the peacebuilding efforts have accomplished, the film's message transcends the specifics of one small African nation. Peacebuilding has ended violence in many countries around the world, as different from each other as Ireland and Guatemala. Burundi's story deserves to be heard and the lessons learned from the Burundian's journey can be applied to conflicts around the globe.

# Synopsis

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*Fragile Island of Peace* will open with a travelling troupe of Burundian actors performing in a small rural village. They engage the villagers without stage or theater, with few props, using the strength of their voices and characters to deliver their messages. Through song, dance, and drama they reenact Burundi's violent past to help citizens process the trauma they have come through and reaffirm why the work of maintaining their fragile peace is so important. In vibrant costumes, they sing and cry and laugh, sharing both the joys of peace and the sorrows of war and dislocation with the surrounding audience. As we watch the troupe interact with the people of the village, our narrator will remind us of Burundi's bloody history.

**Burundi's violent past is not the story. Rather, it is the point of departure for the story our film will tell. *Fragile Island of Peace* will focus on what has changed since the peace process began...**

We will capture the traumatic violence experienced by Tutsi and Hutu during the civil war through historic footage and probing interviews with both victims and perpetrators. Our cameras will follow them to former scenes of death and destruction, and we will hear, first hand, the trauma that many people endured.

Yet, Burundi's violent past is not the whole story. Rather, it serves as the film's point of departure. This documentary will focus on what has changed since the peace process began and on some of the Burundians, from all walks of life, who are making that change happen. Their stories reflect the hope Burundians are now experiencing as a new and fragile peace has slowly emerged.

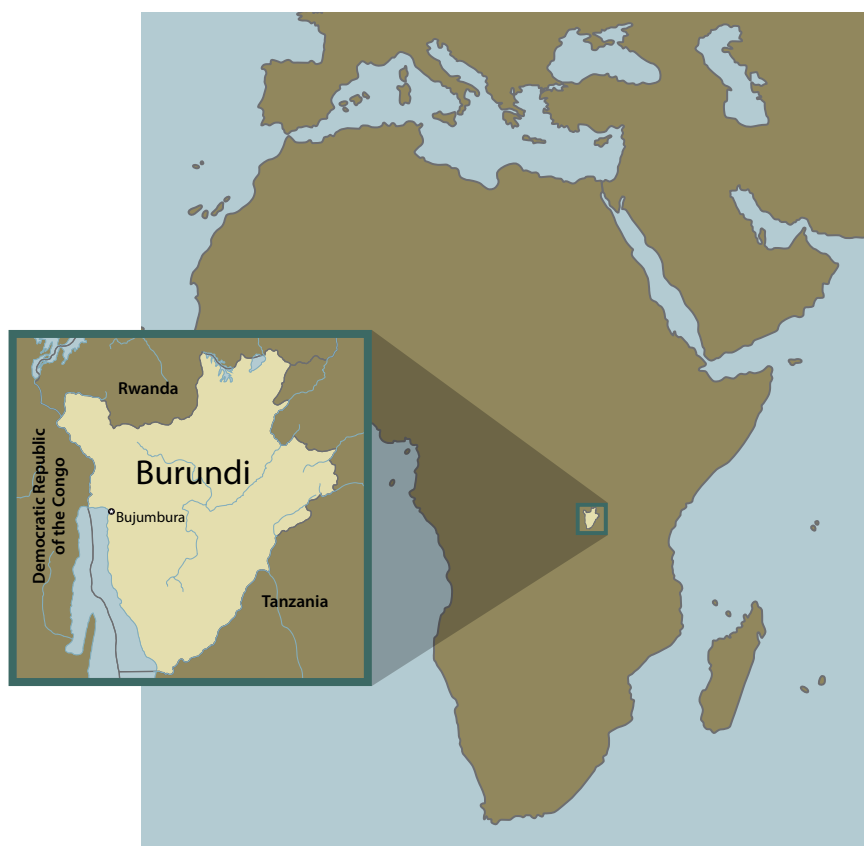
# The Story

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Beginning in 2003, a team of skilled peacebuilders from Europe and America worked with more than 8,000 Burundian leaders at all levels of government and civil society to build trust and communication, as well as train them in negotiation and conflict resolution skills. Given Burundi's small population, that's **one of every 1000 people**. These leaders have, in turn, used those skills to transform the country. That is the remarkable story we want to tell. **Though the events take place in Burundi, their meaning and impact transcend geographic boundaries.** The way peacebuilding was done in Burundi represents a unique model that merits the serious attention this film will give it.

Through compelling interviews and anecdotes from the participants in this remarkable program, this film will illuminate how minds and

hearts are changing through rebuilding relationships and trust. It's exciting, challenging work, with many rich rewards. The arc of this film will travel from individual narratives to the wider implications, illustrating how these personal changes have played out nationally, through policy changes, activities, curriculum reform, and innovative leadership. *Fragile Island of Peace* will tell the story of Burundi's complex and tenuous peace, threatened by political unrest and challenged by the country's wrenching poverty. Those conditions make the situation in Burundi precarious, therefore



*“We put a lot of pressure on leaders to sign agreements. But there’s no reason to think that the next day the leaders will see each other any differently than the day before, or that they will be more prepared to address the causes that underlay their conflict in the first instance.”*

— Howard Wolpe, *Former Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region, Africa*



Howard Wolpe in a training program with soldiers from the DRC

it is even more important to capture what happened during the peacebuilding process.

As the story unfolds and we get to know the leaders who went through the training, we will hear them talk about the rewards of learning skills and attitudes that reduce conflict. They will tell how it changed their perceptions of each other and their ability to work together and what they felt made these changes possible. Practitioners in the fields of peacebuilding, mediation, and conflict resolution, who have spent years in Burundi and other conflict zones, will share their perspective on what makes Burundi’s peacebuilding process effective and how this important work can be replicated elsewhere.



Downtown Bujumbura, Burundi

The peacebuilding process is ongoing but it is difficult to maintain. The people of Burundi continue to work together to ensure that peace can thrive, even in the face of adversity and latent tension. The process Burundi has been through underscores that when conflict is solved nonviolently; it makes the peace more enduring. For peace to succeed, it will require care and attention for years to come. The western version of the documentary will give viewers far from Burundi a window into what happened there and show why it is so important. The planned Kirundi version will remind Burundians of what is possible when they dedicate their efforts to peacebuilding and move from confrontation to collaboration.

Until now, no one has told this story on film, or made clear its implications for the future of peace throughout the world. While Burundi’s story is unique, it shouldn’t be. Although the world spends trillions of dollars on military expenditures every year, it doesn’t seem to make us more secure. Perhaps, this is a good time for global leaders to seriously consider alternative ways to heal the wounds of conflict and to begin using effective peacebuilding practices to prevent conflict, before it becomes violent.



# Storytellers

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The film will rely on participants in the peacebuilding process to illuminate what happened. We refer to them as our storytellers—they range in age and experience, each has their unique perspective, but they all share memories of the tragedies from the war and the peace building process that followed. Here we introduce a few of them.



Five members of **Fabien Nsengimana's** family were murdered on the same day. Years later, he found himself steps away from the perpetrator. Instead of seeking revenge, he greeted the man. Friends and family thought he was crazy, but Fabien hoped that by facing him, and forgiving him, he could change him. Fabien is now the Coordinator of the Burundi Leadership Training Program and trains Burundian leaders in negotiation and conflict resolution skills.



**Jean Petit Uwimana** had just finished high school when he came down from Burundi's countryside to study in the capital city of Bujumbura. At a terrifying time in Burundi's history, when Hutu students were routinely targeted and killed, he worked as a night guard, and put himself through college. Today, Jean Petit is a small business owner. He is putting his younger brother through school and teaching him how to lead a life free of violence and discrimination.



**Eulalie Nbizi**, is a Tutsi and head of Burundi's Teachers' Union. She uses her conflict resolution training to negotiate fair labor standards and help mediate the often heavy-handed government responses to demonstrations and political protests.



**Juliette Kavabuha**, a former minister and Senate member, now works in international development and is an active proponent of peaceful conflict resolution, particularly the role of women in sustaining peace in Burundi.



**Colonel Jean Bikamagu** is a Tutsi and was a Colonel in the former Burundian Armed Forces. He was reportedly involved with a group that assassinated Burundi's first Hutu President, plunging the country into years of violence. In his first leadership training he formed a friendship with Jérôme Ndiho, the former spokesperson for the CNDD, a Hutu of the rebel groups. Once sworn enemies, together the two brainstormed ways to assist ex-combatants.

*"I am enthusiastic about this film because it will show the process, allowing viewers to see how these personal transformations led to a political transformation."*

— Haile Menkerios, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, United Nations, New York

Stories like these are common in Burundi. They epitomize, on a personal level, the changes that have come about nationally. *Fragile Island of Peace* is the story of cultural transformation told through the personal accounts of those who experienced war and are now working as passionate peacekeepers. These are our storytellers, and they will take us on their journey—through the tragedies and the triumphs, from despair to hope. Yet throughout the film, the fragility of the relationships and peace itself will be an important part of the story.

# Target Audience

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## **International Diplomatic and Development Communities**

Institutions and programs can use *Fragile Island of Peace* to inspire, to develop awareness of a successful peacebuilding model, to augment skills training sessions, and for general educational purposes. For example, the Foreign Services Institute and graduate programs in international relations, as well as the various war colleges and diplomatic training institutes around the world—all of which increasingly recognize the need to understand and use peacebuilding processes—would benefit from this film.

**In recognition of its value as a potent resource for building awareness of peacebuilding, this proposed documentary has already been strongly endorsed by many key organizations in the target audience...**

Multilateral institutions like the UN, the UNDP, the World Bank, NATO, OSCE, OAS, and AU, national foreign assistance institutions such as USAID, DIFID, SIDA, and CIDA, and nongovernmental organizations such as Search for Common Ground, GPPAC, the Consensus Building Institute, and Amnesty International could learn from the work in Burundi. Relief and aid organizations, such as Action Aid, Mercy Corps, Oxfam or World Vision—all of whom now see peacebuilding as part of their responsibility—could use this film for educational and training purposes. Financial institutions, such as the Asian, African and Latin American development banks, could as well. Distribution among these influential groups is a critically important objective for this project.

**US and European Citizens** *Fragile Island of Peace* will be used to educate both domestic audiences and the international public, demonstrating how the peacebuilding process in Burundi could be replicated in conflict and post-conflict situations around the world. Sharing Burundi's story is a step toward building greater awareness of peacebuilding's value and efficacy. Informed citizens





*“This project has the potential to illuminate the multifaceted and complex reality of everyday peacebuilding efforts. It has the potential to demonstrate to youth and other viewers that there are alternatives to violence.”*

— Tony Jenkins, V.P. for Academic Affairs at National Peace Academy; Global Coordinator, International Institute on Peace Education, Columbia University

can work together to be a powerful lobby and influence their representatives and policymakers to support non-violent strategies to resolve conflict.

**Educational Market** There are currently more than 400 colleges and universities around the globe that teach mediation and conflict prevention; *Fragile Island of Peace* will inspire educators and their students, from secondary schools through doctoral programs focused on peaceful conflict resolution. The film is relevant to numerous interdisciplinary academic areas, including: conflict management, peacebuilding, international negotiation, mediation, and diplomacy, as well as social science, history, and African studies. *Fragile Island of Peace* will become a vital peacebuilding tool in these colleges and universities. To extend the value of the film, we will seek funding to produce a study guide and collateral materials to accompany the documentary.

# Reaching Audiences in Burundi and the Surrounding Region

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There is no one in this tiny country who hasn't been affected by the war and the violence.

One of the most powerful contributions we can make to the dialogue about peace in the region is to create a Kirundi version of *Fragile Island of Peace* that can be shown to the people of Burundi and its neighbors, Rwanda and the Eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Of all the audiences, people in this region are the most critical to reach because the threat of renewed violence continues. We are committed to making this story accessible to them.

The Kirundi version could reach the people who were deeply affected by the violence, who participated in the peacebuilding effort or witnessed its impact, they would all benefit enormously from seeing this story told back to them on film. For peace to endure, people need to be reminded of its value and motivated to sustain it.

As soon as we raise sufficient funds to produce the English language version, the project team will seek additional funding to create the Kirundi version as well. This version can be shown in Burundi, on national TV, through local NGOs, at schools and universities, as well as to government and military organizations to stimulate awareness and provoke dialogue. Moreover, shorter versions could be used by organizations trying to reintegrate child soldiers and help young people affected by the violence.

The Kirundi version would be a different film than the one aimed at the west. For Burundians, this is their story. They know the history and context better than anyone possibly could, and since most of the people in the film will speak Kirundi, the words and stories will reach people in a visceral way. The unfiltered stories of the transformation so many people experienced will evoke memories and help to reinforce people's commitment to maintaining peace.

# Powerful Endorsements

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*"We need to change the narrative of peace and security. To do that we need to shine a light on the transformative stories of what's actually happening in peacebuilding initiatives around the world. By highlighting Burundi as a microcosm of what is possible globally, we concretize the idea of peacebuilding as not only a viable response, but also a desirable response to conflict. This film will probe the question of what made Burundi's peacebuilding efforts successful and what parts of it can be reproduced."*

— Melanie Greenberg, President and CEO of the Alliance for Peacebuilding

In recognition of its value as a potent resource for building awareness of peacebuilding, this proposed documentary has already been strongly endorsed by many key organizations in the target audience. These include the Alliance for Peacebuilding, the United Nations, the UNDP Bureau of Conflict Prevention and Recovery, The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, the East West Institute, the Consensus Building Institute, the Organization of American States, and the Peace Education Center at Columbia Teachers College.



# Principal Production Personnel

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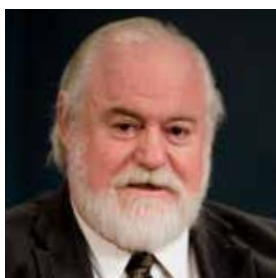
We have assembled an extraordinary team to create the film.



**Jamil Simon**, producer/director of *Fragile Island of Peace*, is the president of Spectrum Media. Mr. Simon is an award-winning producer and director of documentary and educational films and an expert in development communications. He has 20 years of experience in creating and implementing public-awareness programs to promote environmental, social, and economic reform in developing countries. Mr. Simon has worked on videos and public education campaigns in Haiti, Malawi, Tunisia, Jordan, Mali and the Central African Republic. He is passionate about using media to promote peacebuilding globally.



**Elizabeth McClintock**, consultant and field producer of *Fragile Island of Peace*, is a managing partner at CM Partners. As the lead facilitator and program designer for the Burundi Leadership Training Program, McClintock has worked on the leadership-training program since its inception. She brings to *Fragile Island of Peace* her singular insights, passion, and experience, her wealth of knowledge of the program and its participants, and essential personal access to the key subjects who will share their stories.



**Steve McDonald**, consultant and associate producer of *Fragile Island of Peace*, former director of the Africa Program and the Project on Leadership and Building State Capacity at the Wilson Center, brings 40 years of experience in Africa, a breadth of knowledge of Burundi specifically, and his central role in the design, implementation and management of the Burundi Leadership Training Program. A specialist in African affairs, he helped to design and initiate and now manages the Center's leadership capacity building programs in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia.





**Evrard Niyomwungere**, location cameraman for *Fragile Island of Peace*, is a native Burundian. Evrard is familiar with the rich history and nuanced beauty of the country; he will be able to add his experience and insights to the production of the film. Since 2010 he has worked on more than eleven films including *Festicab*, which won Best Documentary at a popular Burundian film festival in 2012. He is the co-founder and associate director of the production company “Objectif NEZA.”



**Gary Henoeh**, director of photography of *Fragile Island of Peace*, brings more than 25 years of experience, including substantial work filming in difficult situations throughout Africa, which have required considerable resourcefulness and persistence. His documentary credits include films for NOVA, National Geographic, Nature, American Experience, FRONTLINE, and the Discovery Channel, and numerous PBS series and independent documentaries.



**Peter Rhodes**, editor of *Fragile Island of Peace*, is a veteran editor of documentaries for PBS, the BBC and other networks, with over 50 credits since 1986. Some of his most recent work includes *Inside the Meltdown* for Frontline and *The Price of Sugar*, which won several awards and was short-listed for an Oscar in 2008. His eye for nuanced personal stories that move viewers is especially well suited for our story of how personal transformations illuminate the larger struggles across a nation in the throes of change.



# Approach to Production and Fundraising

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The *Fragile Island* story is compelling. The Burundi peacebuilding process presents a unique model that deserves closer scrutiny. That said, peacebuilding as a practice is not well understood and Burundi is a tiny country overshadowed by its neighbors in Rwanda and the DRC, far below the radar of most foundations. Both of these factors have made fundraising a challenge. Fortunately, the field of peacebuilding is slowly starting to gain some recognition. Organizations such as the Alliance for Peacebuilding are working hard to promote the practice as a viable alternative to military solutions for conflict. This film has the potential to be a powerful educational tool to help in that effort.

We have secured permission at the highest levels to film in Burundi. Moreover, we are fortunate to have located an excellent Burundian cameraman who will work with us on location. Evrard Niyomwungere, mentioned earlier, is a native to Burundi with a keen eye for its beauty and a deep understanding of the trauma the country experienced.

We want to underscore our determination to tell this story and make both versions of this film—we will do whatever we can to bring it together. As soon as we raise enough funds to start production, we plan to travel to Burundi for a six-week shooting trip. We will work in Bujumbura, the nation's capital, as well as other towns and villages around the country. When we return to Boston, we will begin editing the film. If we have only raised enough for the shoot and an initial edit, we will create a strong rough cut and present it to funders to secure the balance needed to complete the project.

*"To me, peace is when you're able to work, find food, sleep well at night, send the kids to school, and everyone works and goes home in safety without having to worry that your neighbor will harm you."*

— Survivor of the civil war in Burundi

# The Whole Program

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While the documentary film remains our main focus, it is only the beginning of what we hope will become a powerful educational program that will make the process of peacebuilding and its implications come alive for audiences in the West and in Africa. With sufficient funding, we plan to create a range of media components for this campaign, which will include:

- **Feature length documentary** for Western audiences
- **Dedicated website** to keep contributors and supporters informed on the progress of the film
- **Kirundi version** to be shown in Burundi and the region
- **Study guide and collateral materials** to expand the educational value of the film for college and university programs
- **Social media promotion campaign** linked to the film and its impact
- **Shorter French versions** for training purposes in Francophone countries in Africa

Ultimately, we hope this film will be the first in a series of films about the practice of peacebuilding, what it is and how it works. Future documentary films will take a close look at peacebuilding initiatives from around the globe, focusing on countries like Ireland, Guatemala, Timor Leste, and others that have experienced profound changes and growth through their peacebuilding programs.



## Fiscal Sponsor



Filmmakers Collaborative (FC) was founded in 1987. It became a national organization in 2008, and is now the grantee of record for over 200 media projects across the country. Their mission is to sponsor and support the independent media community through fiscal sponsorship as well through programs that bring people together for learning and networking. Filmmakers Collaborative is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization; therefore, contributions to *Fragile Island of Peace* are fully tax deductible.

## Video Samples

*Fragile Island of Peace* Trailer—A trailer we produced to introduce the film using interviews we shot and some stock footage:

[filmmakerscollab.org/films/fragile-island-of-peace/](http://filmmakerscollab.org/films/fragile-island-of-peace/)

Evrard was the cameraman for this short film in Burundi—*Caravan of Communication on Transitional Justice*, which was produced by a filmmaker named Pascal Capitoline. The film follows a troupe of actors who tour the countryside performing theater pieces that dramatize the trauma of the ethnic violence Burundi experienced as part of the healing process. You can see it on Vimeo:

[vimeo.com/65996320](http://vimeo.com/65996320)

## Contact Information

<b>Working Title</b>	<i>Fragile Island of Peace: One Nation's Journey Past Violence</i>
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