

# **IDEAS BOX: AN INNOVATING PSYCHOSOCIAL TOOL FOR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**

IMPACT STUDY IN THE KAVUMU AND BWAGIRISA CAMPS - BURUNDI





# SUMMARY

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# 1. SUMMARY

*Deployed in Burundi for over a year now, the Ideas Box is facing real success. Use and community interest for the device are continuously on the rise.*

The mid-term impact report published in the summer of 2014 highlighted early trends after six months of observation. One of the main recommendations of this study was the organisation of a psychosocial assessment of the Ideas Box on Congolese populations living in refugee camps in Burundi.

This is the purpose of the present assessment conducted by the psychiatrist Christian Lachal, a mental health and post-traumatic stress disorders expert in humanitarian contexts. Based on more than a hundred individual and group interviews, as well as Ideas Box user attendance figures, this assessment provides evidence of significant impacts of the Ideas Box on at least three aspects:

- » **Support for post-traumatic stress disorder**
- » **Strengthening peace and reducing community tensions**
- » **Information security and risk prevention from rumors and misinformation**



Find the intermediary  
impact report 2014 on  
[www.ideas-box.org](http://www.ideas-box.org)



Refugees register  
at the Ideas Box -  
Bwagiriza, Burundi  
- July 2014

## 2. FACTS & FIGURES



**2004:** Bwagiriza camp opens. **2013:** opening of Kavumu camp. They are managed by the ONPRA (Burundi National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless persons).



**430,000:** the number of people from the DRC in exile in neighboring countries. <sup>1</sup>



**55,000:** the estimated number of refugees and asylum seekers in Burundi in late 2014. <sup>2</sup>



**4 Ideas Box deployed** in Makamba province: 3 in camps and 1 in a youth center.



**In each Box:** internet access, twenty computers and tablets, eBooks and paper books, and much more.



**Teams of 4 to 5 people** (a senior Burundian Ideas Box manager and facilitators living in the camp).



**5,500 people registered** in the Ideas Box in the two camps of Bwagiriza and Kavumu at the time of assessment.



Between April and July 2015, **21,686 visits** were registered in both Ideas Box (7,654 for Bwagiriza camp and 14,032 for Kavumu).

1. Statistics of HCR. <http://www.unhcr.fr/pages/4aae621d55f.html>

2. Statistics of Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) 's study and UNHCR (Burundi) ; April 2014



### 3. BACKGROUND



*In February 2014, the first two Ideas Box were deployed in Burundi, a nation in the African Great Lakes region hosting 50,000 refugees, mostly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.*

#### HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGES IN BURUNDI

Despite the instability in recent months, Burundi is a peaceful country in a region facing strong and growing pressures. In 2014, at the end of its civil war, **Burundi became a host country for refugees, with more than 50,000 refugees and almost 80,000 internally displaced people, according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).**

The refugee population consists mainly of Congolese who fled ethnic and political persecution in the provinces of North and South Kivu. They currently live mostly in four camps spread over the Burundian territory, including the latest, Kavumu, which opened in May 2013.

Camps face many challenges such as daily health issues; assistance in food and basic goods and housing; teaching conditions have deteriorated (enrollment rates are high but classrooms are overcrowded, there is a shortage of teachers and general lack of teaching resources); security risks; geographic isolation; limited and sometimes inexistent access to information and communication technologies; psychosomatic consequences of inactivity, etc...

While the fundamental principle upheld in the camps is to

promote Congolese identity above ethnic identities among residents, this common rule is not always respected or enforced. And despite this principle, refugees tend to repeat ethnic conflicts while in the camps. The problem of cohabitation due to the heterogeneity of the camp population doubles as an internalization of the violence suffered and / or acted out during the war. We observe an underlying violence and tensions in most of these camps.

## THE IDEAS BOX PROGRAM IN BURUNDI

### The Ideas Box in refugee camps

**In February 2014, two Ideas Box kits were deployed and have since been operational in the camps of Kavumu and Musasa. In July 2014, a third Ideas Box was inaugurated in Bwagiriza. In three months already, there were over 24,000 visits and 3,300 registered users.**

Focusing primarily to better **meet the educational, psychosocial and informational needs of refugee populations**, the Ideas Box provides free access to a wide variety of books (electronic, paper), films, educational and recreational resources, tablets and computers, the internet, creation tools (cameras, GPS, stationery) and entertainment.

During specific time slots, **facilitators and/or external speakers organize awareness workshops**, literacy and training sessions aimed at school groups that gather in the Ideas Box. Depending on the hosting infrastructure (building, hut, tent, outdoor deployment, etc ...), available spaces in the Ideas Box can be modulated to simultaneously offer different activities for different audiences. Thus, in the camps of Musasa and Kavumu, huts specifically built

to host the Ideas Box are used to show films through the Cinema module, isolated in a corner of the hut, while allowing continuous access of other users to the Library module, deployed in the main space. **Both Ideas Box can accommodate up to 70 people simultaneously.**

Access to the Ideas Box, like a traditional library, is subject to prior registration of each user, at which time individual information is collected.

Each user is issued a membership card he or she must present and "scan" to each input in the device and for the use of any module or resource. Detailed monitoring of the use of the Ideas Box at the individual level is therefore possible through the computer interface of the device.



Children watching cartoons in the Cinema module - Bwagiriza - November 2014



## PORTRAIT: DEM'S MONGA MULUDI

Dem's Monga Muludi is Congolese. He is native of North Kivu. A refugee in Burundi since 2013, he told us how he fled from the war during a focus group before the installation of the Ideas Box in the Kavumu camp.



*"I fled the atrocities of two rebel groups that waged war in Congo. Within minutes, our lives changed. We had occupations in Congo that we do not have here. We were studying there, here we do not study. We do not have time to grow here either. We are in the process of growing old with no future. Our future is really uncertain. But we remain hopeful. Here it is isolated from the world, in the middle of the forest. What we lack is especially culture. All we have here is the meals UNHCR gives us, but no books or no internet for information. We only have small radios that pick up a few channels. It really is not enough; we cannot elaborate our own culture. We spend most of our days in the house, or walking around the camp, doing nothing. I read and I also like to write. I am an artist and journalist, and I like writing slam poetry. I had a dream, to become a painter, but there are not enough opportunities here. Our passions have become pain. I am writing here. But to write, you must also read. These are things that I cannot do here. I write, but not like before, I do not improve my skills. I do not have access to things that would make me a great artist. "*



A teacher and his class in the Ideas Box - Musasa - Burundi - May 2014

## Conclusions of the intermediate impact report

Six months after the introduction of the device in Musasa and Kavumu camps, a first evaluation was carried out.

Centered on the dimensions considered by the device of the Ideas Box (education, psychosocial, information), the qualitative assessment has identified three levels of impact:

- » Child protection
- » Strengthening education
- » Strengthening community links

The first descriptive trends showed rapid growth in enrollment and diversity. The prolonged use of the Ideas Box by children and adolescents signals the sense of security that they feel while in it. It is for them an extracurricular workspace where they have access to knowledge and entertainment and where they can come and do their homework.

Following this first evaluation and preliminary trends highlighted, more detailed studies were undertaken to measure, according to scientific criteria, the impact of the Ideas Box program in the different refugee camps in Burundi. It is within this context that this study on the psychosocial impacts of the program was realized, [which aims to observe how the Ideas Box program helps to reduce the stress level of refugee populations, improve their psychosocial environment, and promote the resilience process.](#)

It must be noted that in parallel to this study, an impact assessment of the Ideas Box on the academic level of students is [underway](#) and will be available in the fourth quarter of 2015.

## 4. ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL



*This assessment is founded mainly on qualitative methods based on observation and monitoring of the individual users of the Ideas Box. It was conducted by an expert in mental health in humanitarian crises who visited Burundi in April 14-24th, 2015, in the camps of Kavumu and Bwagiriza*

**142 participants were interviewed** in focus groups of 7 to 11 people. The composition of these groups was based off of age and gender as well as certain groups considered "at risk" and particularly vulnerable: unaccompanied or separated children (ENA), babies, young children, and those who suffer from trauma or have specific needs. In total, 15 focus groups were organized: 8 in Kavumu and 7 in Bwagiriza.

Two other groups were established on specific criteria: one, for the youth group who directed the film "A Mysterious Dream" and the second for children who participated in the "A School of the Imagination" writing workshops (see below for more information on these programs).

**18 individual interviews were also conducted.** The

selection was made based on a simple criterion: one person corresponding to each type of focus group, but who did not participate, was selected.

**Finally, 20 babies and small children were examined with their mothers in both refugee camps.**

While the focus group provides a collective voice, individual interviews allow more privacy that encourages the story of life in the camps and highlights the emotions of the interviewees.

The languages spoken in order of frequency were Swahili, Banyamulenge, French, Kirundi, and English. The work of translation (linguistic and cultural) was entrusted to

PARTICIPANTS	NUMBER OF PEOPLE BY GROUP
Children ages 0 - 4 with their mothers	6 - 8
Children ages 5 - 11	6 - 8
Children orphaned or separated from one or both parents	6 - 8
Teenagers ages 12 - 17	6 - 8
Women ages 18 - 30	10 - 12
Men ages 18 - 30	10 - 12
People suffering from trauma or injuries	10 - 12

The study is based on 180 participants

a Burundian interpreter who had been living in refugee camp in Tanzania for seven years due to the Burundian civil war. If we estimate a 20% loss of information related to the translation, the contextual and cultural contributions of the interpreter are about 30%.

These focus groups and interviews give material gathered by taking systematic notes (despite the obstacle of translation). Afterwards, the analysis and identification of important points (findings) that emerge from this raw data and recommendations is collected.

Psychiatric diagnoses are reported every time it can add to the evaluation. ■



A mother and her daughter - Musasa - Burundi - February 2014



## 5. QUALITATIVE COMMENTS AND FIRST TRENDS DESCRIPTIONS



Children playing  
Connect 4 - Burundi -  
May 2014

*These observations, organized in three sections, highlight the stabilizing role of the Ideas Box in the camps, the diversity and adaptability of its tools, and its impact on the way in which people see themselves and envision their future.*

### 1. THE IDEAS BOX: A TOOL OF SOCIAL REGULATION

**The Ideas Box is a secure space where all generations come together. Its community engagement factor is undeniable, and promotes dialogue and conflict resolution.**

#### A. A safe space

Once deployed, the Ideas Box occupies a space of 100 square meters in the camp. Refugees of all ages (between 5 and 50 years old, excluding mothers who come with their babies) are frequent visitors. They are safe from violence. **It is particularly popular with the most**

**vulnerable populations, such as children.** Interviewed in focus groups, they talk extensively about the Ideas Box. They emphasize that it is a place where they can escape domestic violence, in which they feel a real sense of security. **Inside the Ideas Box, children are truly protected from abuse of all kinds, including at-risk behavior and problems related to lack of supervision.** Parents, confident in the potential of the Ideas Box, are eager to enroll their children.



## B. An intercultural place in a constant state of change

**The Ideas Box presents a linguistic and generational crossroads.** The content of the Ideas Box is universal and adapted to the different groups who frequent it. Different cultures are taken into account, especially in a camp where many ethnic groups coexist. It is an intercultural place. The differences (ethnicity, disability, gender, age, etc.) are not perceived as a barrier to the attendance of the Ideas Box.

If there are refugees who cannot read or write, they can access the Ideas Box by other means than the library module, for example through film screenings, games, or using tablets and computers. **For those who cannot physically visit the Ideas Box, there exists a phenomenon of "expansion of the Ideas Box at home."** Some women work at home, involved with their family and children, and do not have the opportunity to go to the Ideas Box. In this case, their relatives act as intermediaries.

This expansion principle is often found in families with members who cannot directly access the activities but who nonetheless want to be informed and participate indirectly. It is estimated that **for each user of the Ideas Box, 2–5 people who do not go benefit through this expansion phenomenon at home.**

*This is the case of B., 35, mother of eleven children (three of whom have passed away). The older siblings go to the Ideas Box and tell her what they have seen and done. The oldest, at fifteen years old, took part in a writing workshop and had his mother help him write a text. His younger brother enjoyed showing her and naming for her the animals he had drawn for his younger brothers who do not yet frequent the Ideas Box.*



Children watching cartoons - Bwagiriza - Burundi - November 2014

### C. A place to meet

For isolated people (orphans, loss of one or more family members, unaccompanied children) the Ideas Box is a way to fight against loneliness.

*One woman, interviewed in a focus group at Kavumu, explained that she was completely alone in the camp. Her husband, siblings, children and grandchildren were killed. She was melancholic as well as profoundly bored. She has received enough help that now she has nothing to do but ruminate on her past. But when she goes to the Ideas Box, her frustration becomes less burdensome. She reported feeling calmer, less tired, and not as lonely watching children play with the puppets. By coming into the IdeasBox, this woman like many others is looking to build relationships and become part of the community.*



Children reading - Kavumu - Burundi - July 2014

If this woman stays in the camp for a long time, newcomers will eventually come to the Ideas Box to assimilate into the community.

*That is what witness A., 21 years old, also says, interviewed during a personal interview. He arrived in the camp three months before the interview and was very excluded. He lost his father, mother and brothers during the war. These memories haunt him, and prevent him from fully living. He immerses himself in the Ideas Box every day because it is the best place for him to adapt to his new life.*

In this area of activity and discussion, it is not only easier to create bonds but also, in talking with other people, to learn how the camp runs.

## 2. A METAPHOR MACHINE

People primarily come to the Ideas Box to have fun and to leave behind the reality of the camp and of their solitude. The contents of the Box that are at their disposal as well as the tools of creativity allow the refugees to stimulate their imagination, to learn more about themselves, and envision possible futures. The Ideas Box is thus a means of productivity and a place where resilience is reinforced and post-traumatic stress is reduced.

### A. A space for recreation and imagination

The Ideas Box is primarily a recreational area, of relaxation and games where children can play. The talks highlighted the fun factor of the Ideas Box: people come to get away from their morbid thoughts, often related to traumatic scenes. This is the case of many children who tell, sometimes with difficulty, their stories full of death and violence.

*A young boy met during interviews seemed haunted by flashbacks of his past. Traumatic images paralyze him and curb his appetite. Orphaned when he arrived at camp, he was assigned to a host family with whom he got along, people he knew in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Yet he remains assailed by the images of the inert bodies of his parents. These images paralyze him so much that he flees from home. He comes to the Ideas Box for entertainment to escape his thoughts. He also uses other media forms available in the Box: computers to connect to Facebook and try to get in touch with his brother.*



Playing checkers in the Ideas Box - Musasa - Burundi - November 2014

## B. Narrating their trauma

In both camps, many people suffer from average to very intense distress. This distress can lead to real medical conditions, type of post-traumatic conditions, depression, fears, and deep anxieties. It is accompanied by impotent rage, and internal tensions.

There is among the refugees a real need to tell their story. The trauma of the story can be used to help people handle and overcome their PTSD and accelerate the process of resilience and healing. Every person affected by trauma must reflect on the event to overcome their depression and other psychosomatic symptoms in order to rebuild. This process, while active on an individual level, can nevertheless be stimulated by various creative activities. For most sufferers, this external stimulus is absolutely necessary. They need to find a safe place to deal with tensions.

For the interviewed refugees, the Ideas Box fulfills this role. The different contents of the Ideas Box can be easily assimilated and appropriated. They allow users to reflect on (via creation) or to understand their own distress. ■■■



A young Congolese refugee - Kavumu - Burundi - February 2014

## TELLING THEIR STORY THROUGH DRAWING

For children, exchanges have been facilitated by drawing. The Kavumu camp children were asked to draw "before" and "now" while those of Bwagiriza were asked to draw "the most painful events of your life." The drawings were followed by a children's story that explains their drawing in a caption. This is a way for them to express their pain pictorially. For these children, drawing is an out let and a relief.



**These drawings were made by V., an eight year old girl. She arrived recently at Kavumu after going through hell in Congo.**

The first drawing on the left represents "before". We can see a woman in the foreground beside a mortar with cassava in it. This woman is both herself and her own mother. In the background, we see the father and the house; the house is a central theme that is found in many drawings of refugee children.



The drawing on the right is "now a days": an excessively violent scene she did not experienced herself but that someone had told her about and still haunted her. Men are shooting at the house; you can see the weapon and bullets that reach the wall. Two women are fleeing. Brought to comment on her drawing, the girl indicated that these two women were "moms" running away and crying.



## 2 INTERESTING EXAMPLES OF CREATIVITY IN THE BOX:

### » A Mysterious Dream

**In the camp of Kavumu, a group of younger refugees made a short film entitled "A Mysterious Dream".**

Two young boys named Adamo Samwel and Bulambo Alain started the group. After their arrival in 2013, they created a theater company and wrote pieces on topics related to refugees: where are we and why are we here?

From the beginning of their adventure, they perceived the change around them: the refugees recognize themselves insubjects that are depicted with humour. They note that members of different ethnic groups become friends, inspired by the messages of peace.

**Thus the group is named Peace For Ever, a message to all refugees in the camp and in the world.** It now has twenty eight members: nine women and nineteen men between the ages of 13 and 29.

In 2015, some of the youths in the group saw that they had the opportunity to be trained in video editing in the Ideas Box. They then started a short film project written by them to be shot with the cameras of the Ideas Box. Thus began a video workshop supervised by one of the facilitators, himself a refugee. They shot their short film in and around the camp while learning technical (handling

the camera, sound, etc.) and directorial (Plan-sequences, guiding actors, script, etc. .) skills.

In many ways, this film is a metaphor **for the elements that encompass the various social, behavioral and emotional aspects of life in the camp**, such as social violence, violent personal behavior, particularly when alcohol is involved, the feelings of rage and desire for revenge (particularly among adolescents), the very frequent nightmares and guilt linked to transgressions committed or suffered in Congo.

Accompanied by the facilitators of the Ideas Box, they have turned the psychosomatic effects of trauma into supernatural images of zombies chasing culprits. It is particularly interesting to note that before making this film, none of the group members had seen films featuring zombies. However, the hallmarks of the genre are present in this film, as much in their way of moving the ghosts around as in the lighting and set design.

This movie was made with the cameras available in the Ideas Box gives us a good overview of **the richness of the tools** not only in the fight against post traumatic stress disorder, but also in the social treatment and prevention of traumatic flashbacks in the camp. The group Peace For Ever was able to access not only the hardware but also adequate training and a space to complete their projects.



*The film narrates the misadventures of two young refugees who are violent thieves. We can guess that these are former soldiers, haunted by the murders they committed in the Democratic Republic of Congo. One of them complains of the difficulties sleeping he has because of flashbacks that haunt him. While they are on their way to the city, they meet a man that they proceed to rob. What they do not realize is what they have done to his mind. The film then turns into a nightmare for the two protagonists: zombies appear to capture them before executing them, to punish them for all their evil deeds. While everything seems over for them, the viewer realizes that it was really a dream, echoing the first images of the film.*

The narrative method of cinema, its metaphors "that talk," and the identifiable characters convey a clear and understandable message to all refugees. Screened in several camps, it helps to collectively treat the wounds of the past. But it is also a message for the future: it is necessary that the atrocities committed in Democratic Republic of Congo are not repeated.

The group wants to create other short films dealing with the themes of inheritance, abortion, and reconciliation. They are now virtually independent. In view of these projects, they meet every day to work and think together.



Children writing stories - Bwagiriza - Burundi - February 2014

## » At the school of the imagination: a writing workshop and storytelling

From January to March 2015, the artist Claire Lecoivre hosted story writing workshops with children who were not able to imagine a story.

As we saw during the conduct of this evaluation, many children suffer from inhibition of the imagination. In this context, the artist worked to help the children progress on the structures of language: words, vocabulary, history as well **as building capacity to think, to imagine, and to structure themselves to express their experiences through metaphors and universal allegories.**

### " The earth and sky "

*The people who dwell on Earth eat pieces of the sky. People get bigger and bigger pieces but fail to finish them. The sky, angry, then decides to go back up. People are hungry and try to reach the sky, but they do not know how to fly. Hungry, they decide finally ... to cultivate the land!*

This story, entitled "Earth and Sky," was created by a child attending the workshop. **It is the experience of famine which is expressed by the child as an allegorical tale. In this context, the Ideas Box appears once again as a particularly useful tool to frame, support, and provide tools to stimulate creativity.**

### 3. A BRIDGE BETWEEN YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES.

The Ideas Box provides communities with a large number of tools and resources to help them understand their history and consider their future in a more peaceful manner. It functions as a bridge to understanding a painful history, learn about the present, prevent misinformation, and finally look to the future.

#### A. Understanding the history and rebuild

Access to reliable and verified information is very complicated in the Bwagiriza and Kavumu camps.

The Ideas Box is a way for refugees to learn independently. Ever since the rising tensions in Burundi, rumors are the main source of information in the camps. The internet access through computers provides greater information security. Thus, introductory courses to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) at different levels are taught in the IdeasBox to empower each person in their search for information.

Many refugees desire information. During a focus group of teens, they discussed the need to learn. If their parents talk to them about Congo, they will look in books to fact check what they've heard. What they find in books is often not the same as what their parents told them. On one hand, there are the personal and family history sides, while on the other there are journalistic reports of the history of Congo. The appropriation of knowledge by adolescents is **an important part of their empowerment. By understanding their history, they can look to their futures. They also use social networks to search for lost relatives in exile.**



Refugees using tablets and the Internet - Musasa - Burundi - May 2014

Due to the political situation linked to the elections in June/August 2015

## B. Contemplating the future

If the Ideas Box can help people reflect on the past, it is also the place where projects for the future can be started. Many refugees seek to give meaning to their lives. They may feel the need to identify with certain fictional characters carrying messages of hope, to appropriate a chapter in the history of their country, or to be in an ideal embodied in a film, just as a young boy shows his admiration for Superman who embodies for him the ideal of justice and courage. He seeks to emulate his model by trying to stop fights to which he is a witness.

The Box is also intended to develop skills for future projects: language skills, reading, computer language. These different media available in the Ideas Box are all ways of strengthening and nurturing the process of resilience of refugees to help them overcome their experiences.



Literacy workshop - Kavumu - Burundi - June 2014



### C. Strengthening the mother-baby bond

In each camp, a focus group was made up exclusively of women with young children, a population identified as being particularly vulnerable. A detailed observation of mother-baby interactions was performed. In most cases, the children have more or less an increased inhibition and remain very attached to the mother but do not exhibit characterized developmental problems. According to data collected by the IRC, some of them suffer from malnutrition because of food rationing.

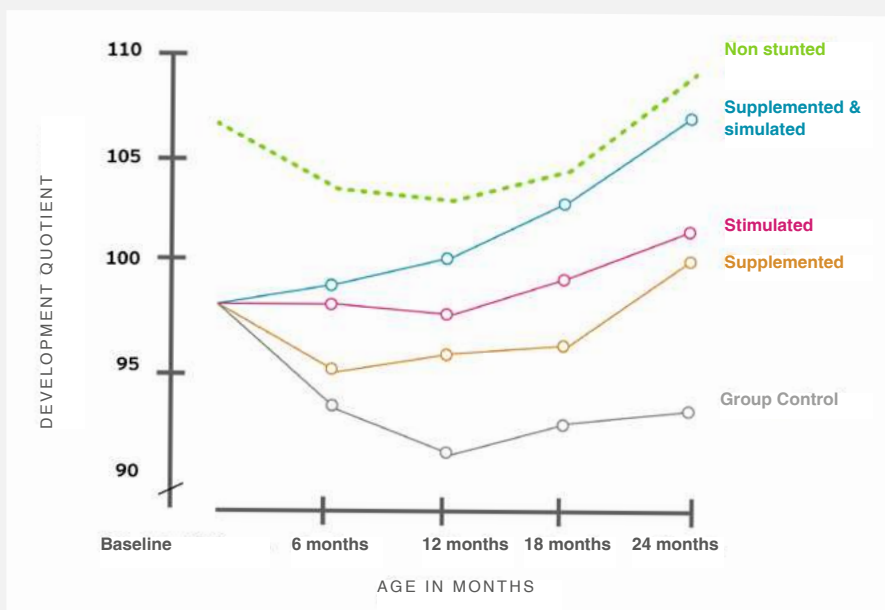
Chronic malnutrition exceeds the critical 40% threshold set by the World Health Organization in the Kavumu camp<sup>4</sup>.

Many studies have shown that activities that stimulate both mothers and babies combined with programs for additional feeding have much better results than the simple renutrition<sup>5</sup>. **These stimulation activities are integrated in the Ideas Box, a device that many mothers are already familiar with and attend.**



A mother and her child - Musasa - Burundi - February 2014

### NUTRITIONAL PSYCHOSOCIAL STIMULATIONS PROGRAM



UNICEF and WHO report on the integration of nutritional programs psychosocial stimulation in humanitarian emergencies: Why, What and How. Authors: S.M. Grantham-Macgregor, Powell, CA, Walker, SP, and Himes, JH (1991): Nutritional supplementation, psychosocial stimulation and stunted mental development in children: The Jamaican Study, Lancet, 338: from 1515 to 1525.

<sup>4</sup>. Joint report PAM and UNHCR datas (see above)

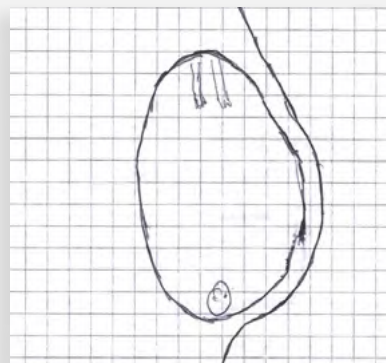
<sup>5</sup>. Sources: Sackler Institute for Nutrition Science. Every child's potential: Integrating nutrition, health, and psychosocial interventions to Promote early childhood development. The New York Academy of Sciences; 2013

Nature Events Directory: Science Events: Every child's potential: Integrating nutrition, health, and psychosocial interventions to Promote early childhood development. 2014. (<http://www.nature.com/natureevents/Science/events/18023>)



## GIVE THE KEYS TO PREGNANT WOMEN TO HELP THEM TO PICTURE THEIR FUTURE CHILDREN.

Made by H., future mom, this drawing represents the image she has of her child a few weeks before the birth. This representation is very basic, due to a lack of access to family or external sources to visualize pregnancy. However, how the mothers see themselves is essential, because it prepares them for their future role. It's in the Ideas Box that these girls can come and find the information they seek.



For many mothers, in fact, the Ideas Box has great informative interest. They use multimedia resources to improve their knowledge on the needs of their babies and ask for Swahili language films about children or early education. In the Bwagiriza camp, a number of adolescent girls are pregnant, primarily due to rape. Their situation is extremely precarious: they lack medical care, psychological counseling, and information. However, the issue of access to quality information not only concerns the subject of their children. When the women were asked about transmitting knowledge to children, they say it is more than necessary to pass on their history and the history of wars.

They are afraid that their children, as adults, will reproduce conflicts that their elders were involved in. To allow for a familial education about peace, the Ideas Box provides several tools and materials that help people develop their ability to express and illustrate their memories.

*One of the mothers, F, 15 years old, is evidence of this radical isolation, even while she is in a confused state. At 15, F is towards the end of her pregnancy. She was sexually abused by a man now in prison and does not want this child, who only increases her already immense distress. F said she had recently learned the circumstances of the death of her parents, killed during the war. The news was given to her by her aunt in a violent manner, something that managed to destabilize F. even more. During the evaluation, she seemed "spacey" and has no knowledge about motherhood.*



Women reading - Kavumu - Burundi - March 2015

## D. An addition to school

In the interest of prolonging mother-infant relationships, the Ideas Box appears helpful at every stage of the education of children. We noted earlier that an assessment of the impact of the Ideas Box on the academic level of students is ongoing and should be completed in Q42015, but it is already interesting to note how the box is in the educational background of the child and is positioned as a complement to the school to develop other skills in children, especially life skills.

The previous study showed that teachers overwhelmingly go to the Ideas Box in order to find educational resources and appropriate tools which enable them to enhance their skills and knowledge, and enrich their courses.

But the Ideas Box is primarily for children and constitutes a hitherto non existent school environment. For the respondents, it is clear that it does not replace the school; it is perceived as an additional resource. Children also indicate implicitly or explicitly that they use both the Box and school equally.

The Ideas Box is instead used for taking computer classes, increasing literacy, perfecting language, and speaking or attend tutoring activities.

More broadly, the Ideas Box is a tool for stimulating creativity, group work, collaboration, capacity of initiatives, and learning the rules of respect for others and empathy, building life skills that allow greater adaptability to the environment.



A boy using the tablets to make music - Kavumu - Burundi - July 2014

### A TYPICAL IDEAS BOX SCHEDULE

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9H00 – 9H30	opening and installation of the kit				
9H30 – 11H30	inventory, maintenance, updating, preparation and weekly monitoring	school group (elementary) <sup>2</sup>	literacy and speaking workshops	school group (elementary)	literacy and speaking workshops
11H30 – 12H30		usage des TIC (débutant, intermédiaire)	free activities:film screenings, book clubs, etc.	ICT users (beginner, average level)	awareness workshops: carte blanche to local NGOs and actors
13H00 – 15H30	school group (high school)	free access			
15H30 – 16H00	Packing up				

<sup>2</sup>. The school groups give rise to a multitude of activities: scientific and technical knowledge, reading a loud and expression, use of Khan Academy (mathematics), computer discovery, artistic and creative workshops, etc.



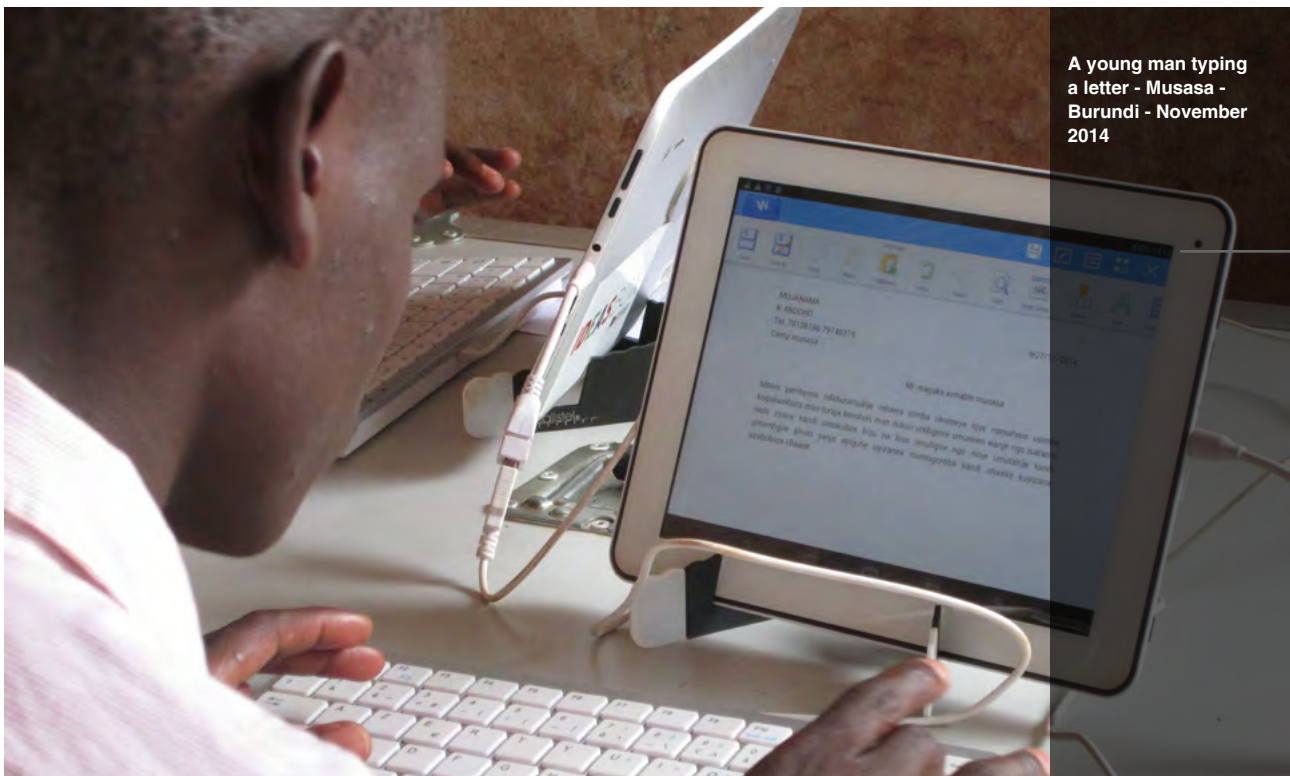


Above : Young Congolese students learn mathematics with Khan Academy -Musasa-Burundi  
Bottom : A child draws from the model -Musasa- Burundi





## 6. IMPACTS



*From analysis of the results observed in this study, three psychosocial impacts of the Ideas Box on the community and environment emerge: (1) building resilience and the fight against post-traumatic stress disorders, (2) capacity-building strategies for peace and finally (3) information security.*

### » IMPACT #1

STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE AND CONTROL OF POST-TRAUMATIC DISORDERS

### » IMPACT #2

PEACE BUILDING

### » IMPACT #3

STRENGTHENING INFORMATION SECURITY

## » IMPACT #1

# STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE AND CONTROL OF POST-TRAUMATIC DISORDERS

**The Ideas Box meets the requirements to help refugees start a process of resilience that allows them to recover from their traumatic state, and overcome their stress and their apprehensions to plan for the future.**

Different qualitative observations on the ground highlighted the fact that the Ideas Box represented for many an attractive and safe place. **It is therefore necessary as a "safespace"<sup>6</sup>** : a quiet space, safe and secure where the refugees can have fun, express themselves, and create freely. **In camps where the underlying violence is present, it is important to help build the sustainability of such places where people can feel safe.**

The large number of memberships to the Ideas Box by refugees often showing states of distress, shock or traumas a major impact of the functioning of the Kavumu and Bwagiriza camps. As we have seen, the variety of tools offered by the Ideas Box actually a machine that can be used **to produce metaphors.**

Psychologically, the appropriation of different content leads to better understanding of oneself and the key and turn to the future. **The Ideas Box meets a number of conditions to facilitate the process of resilience.** As we know, to acknowledge the trauma (in illustrating and by translating into images) overcomes depression and helps to rebuild a positive self-image. The various activities that have been organized, such as the writing workshop by Claire Lecoivre, can help the refugees express their pain. It is also a space where individually and collectively possible futures can be built. Socially, there is a strengthening of communities that, in the same way, is a positive impact on the most traumatized refugees.

Generally the Box, which is not a program in the usual sense of the word, leaves a lot of freedom of action and choice to users. This gives them an initiative and an agency they have little opportunity to exercise in the camp. As many activities are with others (members of the team of the Box, other refugees), **the Box strengthens community affiliation and spirit.**

The Ideas Box thus has a real impact on psychosocial assistance: one can come and seek individual



A disabled child scans his Ideas Box member card - Musasa - Burundi - May 2014

psychological support while maintaining the connection to the group. It is a place of exchange, of encounter, a common place for all.

<sup>6</sup> The definition of "safe space" has been adapted from the Report of Fund United Nations Population "Draft Guidance on Establishing Safe Spaces "



## » IMPACT #2

# PEACE BUILDING



**The second notable impact of the device is its role in reducing violence and building peace in the camp.**

Whether you're feeling unhappy, unwell, afraid, or annoyed, the Ideas Box is a safe space. In the same camp, this is a device that allows people to escape or control the violence—hence the continued presence of particularly vulnerable groups: children, young single women, etc..

*So reflects a math teacher met during interviews. To escape the tensions with in her home and avoid arguments, this teacher comes into the Ideas Box for entertainment and communication; it is a place where argument is not an option.*

With what it offers, the Box allows for many refugees to calm the anger and violent emotions and therefore can act as **a social regulator**. The Box functions as **a containing unit** and for many refugees, especially young people, is **a "home"** where the tensions, fears and torments from

the outside do not penetrate. At the same time, the Box is open on the life of the camp and does not maintain the illusion of a magical place. We note the various talks the repeated affirmation of mothers with infants, they want to use the Ideas Box to ensure the encouragement of peaceful ideas to their children. The film "A Mysterious Dream" is a great example of that peace education that affects all members of the community, despite their ethnic and social differences.

**The Ideas Box contributes to peace building** as defined by "activities away from the heart of the conflict in order to reestablish peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than the mere absence of war:" <sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> According to the Brahimi Report (Task Force report on the United Nations Organization's peace operations) 2000. "Undertaken activities on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for those foundations were building something more than just the lack of war." A / 55/305-S / 2000/809, para. 13

## » IMPACT #3

# STRENGTHENING INFORMATION SECURITY



**From not only computers or tablet connected to the Internet but also in debates and information sessions, refugees have access to verified information through the Ideas Box.**

**The Ideas Box appears as an effective instrument to fight against rumors and the risk of misinformation.**

The introductory course to ICTs have allowed people who have not previously had access to these tools learn to handle them independently. Those who already knew how to use them, usually the youngest, have often used them to connect to social networks and stay in touch with their families.

The information made available is of different natures; news, of course, but also any type of educational and information content: videos about education, about the history of a country, of ideas. **Young mothers are fond of small films and tutorials on the education of new borns.**

Information security provided by the Ideas Box seems to have a large number of induced impacts over the long term: improving lives, strengthening education, empowerment and community empowerment, vocational training, entrepreneurship development, etc...

And while it is true that the Box is across roads where language of ten poses problems for refugees in terms of understanding, it appears that this barrier of language causes them to develop strategies. They seem not to be ashamed by their difficulties; rather, this is an opportunity to overcome them.

## PORTRAIT : CONSOLATA KANYURHI MUSAWA



Consolata is married with eight children who are not with her in the camp. An influential female political figure with a degree in French, she was in charge of a school open by an international NGO. This school has hosted over a thousand students. Her political responsibilities have been varied: she was secretary of the Professional Council for Women in South Kivu and led the political party National Union for the Defense of Rights of Unemployed. She has been the only woman leader of a political party. She was also a frequent guest of TV and radio shows, and was often invited for political debates.

But since she arrived in the Kavumu camp, all of that stopped. She notes a real problem communicating with the outside world. First, she says, telephone communication is deplorable. If calls from DRC can come through, she cannot make outgoing calls because of the bad state that the telephone network in Congo is in. As a politician and head of a school, she is also very concerned about the lack of access to information and culture.

*"Information! You know, I was a politician, political scientist, head teacher and female leader. I was informed about everything that is happening in the world, every day. At this moment while we are talking, I have no radio, no television, nothing. Sometimes I have the impression of being abandoned. It's like being inside a tomb without being buried. I learned of the death of Mandela four days after his death. Before, I was the first to inform all women and all men of my town. I used to read. A principal, a politician has to read a lot. I had a lot of books in my office: educational books, political books. And to my teachers too! I was training, seminars. Education is changing and we have no access to information, training.*



*There is no internet, no computers. This is serious. We are not in the world, it is as if we were abandoned. You've seen the churches? There are more than 24! Do you know why there are so many churches? The refugees have no other occupation than to pray. They have no other hobbies: there's only singing and praying. And after the church, there is football. That's all we have as a distraction."*

But since February 2014, Consolata has had new access to information and culture due to the Ideas Box that was deployed in Kavumu camp. She is very positive about the role that this tool can play in the camp, especially among younger populations.

*"With the renovation you bring, I assure you that there will be a change. Our children will become scholars with this. We will compare them with children at home. With the Internet, with computers, with the IdeasBox, even with television, our children will see what they have not had access to for years."*



Consolata among Congolese refugees - Musasa - Burundi - February 2014

# 7 .PERSPECTIVES



Two curious children  
- Kavumu - Burundi -  
February 2014

## 1. RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS

We have seen that the Ideas Box plays an important role in resilience, building peace, and information security. If these psychological impacts are proved, it appears that with simple measures to integrate into the operation of the box the potential of the box could multiply.

First, it seems important to break down the remaining barriers to access to the Ideas Box. As we have seen, the device has very few barriers to entry, which is its strength: one can come here for a variety of reasons and can participate in many activities.

During our research, we observed the attractiveness of the Ideas Box for different audiences and generations. However, it seems that some users cannot enjoy the potential of the box because of the language barrier. Even if for many activities this poses no problem, mastery of the language remains an essential component for empowering people and strengthening communities. It might be interesting to facilitate mediation for people affected by the language barrier, through such

an explanation in Swahili of films in French or English, or amplification of literacy programs already in place. In general, it is necessary to improve information on the contents of the box for people who do not come due to their lack of knowledge about what they can find.

Secondly, it could be particularly useful to increase the number of speech, writing, drawing, or film making groups that help to structure thought by containing emotions and creating metaphors. The two examples observed during this study (the film "A Mysterious Dream" and writing workshops) have proven their effectiveness and justify their presence of the Ideas Box in this type of context. They must therefore become recurrent and structured activities of the Ideas Box. All facilitators should be trained in these practices, and guidelines for the implementation of this type of workshops and tools should be created. In situations where there is an ongoing psychological care, these activities should be conducted in close collaboration with the nursing staff.



## 2. THE IDEAS BOX, A TOOL TO DEVELOP IN THE CONTEXT OF MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS?

The Ideas Box appears as **a interdisciplinary tool** at the crossroads of the fields of education, protection, peace building, strengthening resilience, etc. **It thus echoes many Mental Health programs in which it might fit.** We are thinking here in particular of the psychosocial component of these programs designed to re-establish individuals for a collective approach (organization of group activities such as sports or discussion groups). **The Ideas Box as a tool to strengthen the community as a collective is exceedingly useful.**

By facilitating access to a wide variety of informational and educational resources, **the Ideas Box also allows to train on-site stakeholders and mediators.** There could be tutorials for training in the therapeutic relationship, to gain knowledge on education, etc.

The programs that could be particularly supported by Ideas Box are those **of parenting** (help parents take better care of infants) or **outreach programs to gender-based violence** whose implementation requires the presence of safe spaces for women and young girls who are more vulnerable.

The Ideas Box can also be a key tool in the context of **peace building** programs whose objectives are enhancing access to education, training mediators, promoting the ideals of peace within populations. Include as a model co-led by UNICEF program: "Learning For Peace" (2012-2015): inter-sectoral program (cross-sectoral) also including 14 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>9</sup>



A drawing of the Ideas Box - Musasa - Burundi - May 2014

<sup>8</sup> See Report of Sexual and Gender Based Violence Sub Group of August 2014

<sup>9</sup> <http://learningforpeace.unicef.org/about/learning-for-peace/>

## 8. CONCLUSION



The observations we made show that at the individual level the Box is not and should not become a place of care. But storytelling techniques can be and are already used in the Box. These techniques help to externalize trauma and facilitate resilience process.

Likewise, we have emphasized the important role of identifying media, idealized figures that people find in fiction, historical patterns, etc. The act of thinking, reflecting, getting information and telling a more nuanced story about past wars and emotional trauma makes it possible to highlight what was missing from a story. It also enables the refugees to take their own history and detoxify some of the memories, to confront their hatred of the other, and the feeling of being a victim. The collective effects depend on each individual person and are shown in different ways.

**The collective effects depend on each individual person and are shown in different ways :**

- ⦿ The location of the Box is obviously a reassuring place where the users like to be and in both camps, for children and adults, **a safe space**.

- ⦿ It's also a sort of **palaver tree**, but one where all voices can be heard, not just those of adult men. It is a place whose content is universal and reflects the same time, different cultures, different languages, special requests: it is therefore also **inter-cultural**.

- ⦿ Finally, it is **a place of community meeting**, either directly (everyone watches the same film, for example, and also enjoys being there to just be there, some busy, others not), or indirectly by those who come to the Box and talk at home about what is happening.

These different levels of observations have led us to identify three psychosocial impacts of the Ideas Box on refugee communities: **on strengthening the process of resilience and the fight against first trauma, the construction of peace and the reduction of community tensions, and finally information security and prevention of rumor**.

In fact, using the box as part of mental health projects and psychosocial assistance, especially parenting programs and those that target the most vulnerable populations (eg those who have suffered from gender based violence) could be very interesting.

More broadly, the Ideas Box is emerging as a powerful tool to build strategies and inter-sectoral action methods within the camps. **At the crossroads of education, protection, and the psychosocial, the Ideas Box is a toolbox that can also provide support for legal assistance, prevention, or training.** It therefore seems important to us to build partnership strategies to facilitate the implementation of Ideas Box on a large scale to facilitate collaboration between humanitarian actors and the circulation of information and activities in the refugee camps.



Children showing their Ideas Box card - Kavumu - Burundi in November 2014

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*Christian Lachal*