HE KEEPS IN MIND THE ORGANIZATION WHICH HELPED HIM TO RECOVER HIS FREEDOM

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out distinctly that arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be a measure of last resort.   
Although Burundi has made a step forward in integrating this principle in the new Code of Criminal Procedure enacted in April 2013, there are still many children in custody in Burundian prisons. The majority of them are detained for the commitment of minor crimes whilst a large number of them are pretrial detainees.  
In addition, there is no legal aid system supported by the state for defendants who are unable to pay for a lawyer themselves. In other words, legal assistance in any form is not provided by the state.   
Although the Committee on the Rights of the Child has enacted the right to be assisted by counsel as a fundamental right where states must ensure that every child facing criminal justice must have, it is evident that juveniles continue to face criminal charges without any legal assistance.   
  
In order to fill this gap, IBJ established a Defense Resources Center in 2009 where IBJ lawyers are able to particularly take cases of children accused of crimes and deal with other cases as well.   
Since the opening of the centre, many children accused of various crimes have been acquitted thanks to the high quality of legal defense provided by the IBJ trained lawyers.   
Some of the acquitted youth go back school, while others run small businesses in order to meet their needs as well as those of their families.   
  
One example is that of Jimmy, who serves among children who coordinate public parking in the capital city of Bujumbura. In order to earn a little money, Jimmy helps people to park their cars and then offers to guard them. In return, he is paid with a lump sun of money.  
Two months ago, an IBJ lawyer, who was parking his car, saw a child running after him telling him to secure the vehicle in case of theft of mirrors, flashing lights or headlights. Later, when the lawyer returned, he was going to pay the young man, who replied: “*No sir, I cannot make you pay anything since I always remember the organization through which you assisted me in the court; the reason why I am free.*”  
  
The IBJ lawyer, after asking his name as well as the details of his case, was pleased to see the joy and gratitude Jimmy had while telling his story about how IBJ saved his life.   
This is undoubtedly a true sign of how donations given to IBJ have a strong and positive impact on the lives of vulnerable children.