

AUGUST 28, 2023

Your contribution via Global Giving has empowered International Bridges to Justice to further our mission in securing justice for children. With the support of our lawyers, there's a significant reduction in the duration children stay in pre-trial detention. Additionally, it lowers their vulnerability to potential torture during police questioning and enhances their opportunity for a just trial. Regrettably, many detained children get overlooked in justice systems that are overwhelmed and lack sufficient resources. As a result, they are often incarcerated with adults, exposing them to heightened dangers.

In Burundi, there are currently 199 children in prisons, which is double the amount registered in 2000. Out of these 199 detained minors, 150 had been incarcerated, whereas the remaining children were infants born in the prison. Finally, only 24 percent had been convicted, while the remaining 76 percent are awaiting trial, which could last years.

Your generous gift is instrumental in facilitating our initiatives. To shed light on the impact of your support, let's delve into the stories of rescue of 2023.

**Burundi**

From May to July 2023, Burundi Bridges to Justice took on 18 cases involving children in conflict with the law at the time of their arrest. Out of these 18 children, 8 were girls.

Thanks to the support from Global Giving, these 18 children, accused of various crimes, were provided with pro bono legal representation and guidance on upholding their legal rights throughout the criminal procedure. A significant majority of these cases resulted in positive outcomes. In fact, with your assistance, the dedicated team of lawyers at Burundi Bridges to Justice successfully secured the release of 12 children directly from police custody. Although children shouldn't be detained or put into custody, many were held in police cells for extended durations. This fact alone prompted the immediate release of 67% of them, as such detainment qualifies as arbitrary and illegal. Beyond the twelve released at the police stage, two cases were dismissed at the prosecutorial stage, while two others were granted bail during the council chamber proceedings, overseen by the presiding judge. The final two cases are still ongoing, with the children involved currently placed in rehabilitation centers as they await their court sessions. Here is just one of the stories of rescue:

**Teen faces Two-Year Prison Term over 12 Dollars**

June 20, 2023, Burundi - a 16-year-old boy named Taner\* faces a potential two-year prison sentence. The charges? ‘Undermining the national economy’. This sounds serious, but the charges revolve around a sum as minuscule as just over 12 US dollars.
Taner's ordeal began on the night of June 15, 2023, when he was arrested around 10 p.m. At the center of this controversy was a transaction involving BIF 35,000, equivalent to just over 12 US dollars.
Burundi has recently put new banknotes in circulation. However, not all people were able to exchange the old banknotes for the new banknotes in time. Taner was selling coal on behalf of a friend when he was offered two old banknotes of BIF 10,000 and three old banknotes of BIF 5,000 from a customer. Oblivious to the fact that these were old banknotes, which were now invalid, Taner finalized the sale. Upon close inspection of the banknotes, authorities soon arrested both the customer and Taner. Taner was now facing a potential two-year prison sentence.
Mrs. Fides Nibasumba, a collaborating lawyer with BBJ, argued in Taner's defense at the Ntahangwa Public Prosecutor's Office on July 4, 2023. She told the judges that Taner's inability to recognize the counterfeit notes meant the absence of criminal intent, aligning with articles 18,19, and 20 of the penal code. Her arguments resonated with the judges, resulting in the decision to grant Taner a provisional release. The customer was also released.

This case throws a spotlight on the challenges faced by everyday citizens in Burundi. For people like Taner, trivial oversights can be met with serious legal consequences.

**Thank you again for your support to IBJ! Every child deserves a second chance!**