

NEW GENERATION, NEW RWANDANS IMAGE PROGRAM

Because of war and Genocide perpetrated against Tutsi in Rwanda in 1994 and its consequences in the Great Lakes Region, the Rwandans image is violence, hatred, resentment, anger and selfishness etc. Thanks to the different programs for Rwandan youth, since the end of war and Genocide, the wished image of Rwandans is nonviolence, peace, love, forgiveness, mercy and progress for all.

AJECL is engaged on this way by creating the Saving & Internal Lending Communities (SILCs) for youth, Gwizamahoro clubs in secondary schools and High Learning Institutions, and by organizing Gwizamahoro cup at sector levels for boys and girls.

I. BRIEF PRESENTATION OF AJECL

The AJECL (Youth Association of Saint Charles Lwanga) was created in October 2004, in Saint Charles Lwanga Catholic Parish of Nyamirambo, Nyarugenge District, Kigali City, Rwanda. It was founded by Father Théogene Iyakaremye helped by a group of the youth from Nyamirambo Parish, encouraged by the Late Father Emmanuel Gasana who was then the Parish Priest. It obtained legal personality in 2008 by Ministerial Decree No. 58/11 of 18/4/2008 published in the Official Gazette of 26/01/2009. It was registered by RGB (Rwanda Governance Board) on 11/6/2013.

I.1. OBJECTIVES AND VALUES PROMOTED BY THE AJECL

According to the statutes of AJECL, its **general objective** is to help young people to become aware of the current problems they face and to find appropriate solutions for a better future both physically and morally ("Mens sana in corpore sano"= a healthy soul in a healthy body).

The specific objectives consist in promoting the Christian spirit among the youth, fighting against poverty through the culture of money saving and job creation, fighting against the HIV/AIDS pandemic and taking care of people affected and infected, and promoting the culture of Peace in their respective environments.

The key values favored by the AJECL were chosen either because they were little appreciated in the daily life, or because their interpretation did not contribute to the consolidation of lasting peace. They are: truth, freedom, tolerance, fraternity and patriotism.

I.2. THE MOTIVATIONS FOR THE CHOICE OF SAINT CHARLES LWANGA

The first motivation for the choice of Saint Charles Lwanga is the fact that the AJECL was founded in the Catholic Parish of Nyamirambo, having, as Patron Saint, Saint Charles Lwanga. The second motivation comes from the fact that the Catholic Church has made him Patron and Model of Young Africans. The third motivation is the fact that his life is an important source of inspiration for young people in the Great Lakes Region. Actually, the young people of the Region have often been dragged into rebellions (and it is not over yet) which were the basis of the deadly armed conflicts which have plunged the countries of the Great Lakes Region into mourning in recent years of the 20th century and the first years of the 21st century. In Rwanda, particularly, young people were enrolled in the militias who committed the genocide against the Tutsis in 1994. And yet the countries of the Great Lakes Region have been among the most Christianized in Africa for a whole century! Charles Lwanga, barely evangelized, very

quickly acquired the evangelical values which he himself transmitted to other young people. And thanks to him, they were able to resist all kinds of manipulation and exploitation from King Kabaka Mwanga, to the point of preferring death instead of acting against the acquired evangelical values!

At the beginning of the 21st century, we felt obliged to create a special space for Saint Charles Lwanga to take part in the education of young people from the first generation of the century, hoping to have the young people of the 21st century different from those of the 20th century and, therefore, a different century.

II. GWIZAMAHORO PROGRAM 2100

Confucius said: **“If your plan is for a year, plant rice; if your plan is for 10 years, plant trees; if your plan is for 100 years, educate the children.”** (www.citation-celebre.com) Inspired by the fact that what happened to Rwanda in the late 20th century, in particular the Genocide perpetrated against the Tutsis in 1994, was rooted in the policy of ethnic division introduced by colonization at the beginning of that century, the founder of the AJECL took the initiative to offer Rwandan society a long-term peace education program called **“GWIZAMAHORO PROGRAM 2100”**, to ensure the better 21st century.

II.1 STRATEGIC ORIENTATION OF GWIZAMAHORO PROGRAM 2100

The long-term vision of this program: All human beings of all generations live in peace and harmony

Mission: To help young people become aware of the current problems they face and find adequate solutions for a better future.

Purpose: The AJECL is a School of education for intra-intergenerational dialogue and sustainable development. "

Shared values: truth, freedom, tolerance, fraternity and patriotism (the world is the homeland given to man for his honest management).

Strategies:

1. Strengthen the capacities and power of young people in order to lead them to resist all forms of manipulation and exploitation, and to work with non-violent means for peace, social cohesion, justice and progress for all;
2. Promote the culture of intra-intergenerational dialogue for social transformation in the service of sustainable peace and development;
3. Identify and transform the factors and mechanisms that are detrimental to peace and life for each generation;
4. Invent and promote, through an action plan, new mechanisms and practices in favor of peace and life;
5. Maintain partnership with national and international organizations working in the field of human rights, peacebuilding and sustainable development;
6. Develop effective advocacy mechanisms to fight against the abuses, injustices and structural violence of our time.

All the AJECL programs, projects and activities are part of this long-term program.

II.2. NEW GENERATION, NEW RWANDANS IMAGE

Because of war and Jenocide perpetrated against Tutsi in Rwanda in 1994 and its consequences in the Great Lakes Region, the Rwandans image is violence, hatred,

resentment, anger and selfishness etc. Thanks to the trainings provided to Rwandan youth, since the end of war and Jenocide, the wished image of Rwandans is nonviolence, peace, love, forgiveness, mercy and progress for all.

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II.2.1. SAVING & INTERNAL LENDING COMMUNITIES (SILCs)

The entrepreneurial mentoring currently covers low-income young people organized in savings and loans groups in the districts of Nyarugenge, Gasabo, Bugesera, Gakenke and Rulindo. Young people are trained, during 20 to 40 hours, on the development and management of income-generating activities, leadership, honest management of money and peaceful resolution of conflicts. They form savings and loans groups in the community commonly called: SILCs (Saving and Internal Lending Communities). They start their savings and internal loans activities while having bank accounts in local Micro-Finance Institutions. More or less than 700 young people are mentored by AJECL in these groups. They can save, each year, between 14,000,000 and 18,000,000 Rwandan francs which they use in the form of internal loans throughout the year. They share among them their savings and interest earned each year and start over again.

The AJECL was able to mobilize 30,000,000 Rwandan francs to be used in the form of a rotating loan to support their savings. After 3 years of mentoring by the AJECL, the groups are mature enough to work effectively with Microfinance. Thus, the AJECL, in collaboration with its mature groups, creates new groups in the community that it accompanies in the same line.

II.2.2. GWIZAMAHORO CLUBS

Gwizamahoro club is defined as a youth class whose objective is to educate young people who will become citizens united by their history instead of tearing themselves apart because of it, citizens in harmony with God, with themselves, with others and with the environment, citizens characterized by the values of truth, freedom, tolerance, fraternity and patriotism. A group of 20 to 30 young people is trained for 40 to 60 hours using the modules prepared by AJECL. At the end of the training, the young people take the vows of active non-violence and are given a certificate of recognition. And then they are sent to their respective communities to live the ideal of peace with their brothers and sisters.

Until September 2023, the AJECL had more than 70 volunteer trainers able to train young people. The clubs are now established in 35 secondary schools in the districts of Bugesera, Rulindo, Gakenke and Nyarugenge. More than 1800 young people have already benefited from this training. Gwizamahoro clubs have also been created in different Universities and Higher Learning Institutions in Rwanda: UR Huye Campus, located in the Southern Province, Huye District, Ngoma Sector; UR Rukara Campus, located in the Eastern Province, Kayonza District, Gahini Sector; Ruli Higher Institute of Health Ste Rose de Lima (RHIH) located in the Northern Province, Gakenke District, Ruli Sector; INES Ruhengeri and UR CAVM Busogo located in the same Northern Province, Musanze District, Musanze and Busogo Sectors.

II.2.2. GWIZAMAHORO CUP

As part of promotion of the culture of fraternity and peace through active non-violence during this century, the AJECL, in collaboration with the parishes, organizes sports and cultural competitions for young boys and girls with a special trophy: "**Gwizamahoro cup**". The theme of Gwizamahoro cup is: "We, the elders of the 21st century, want to grow up in fraternal conviviality and never in hostility". It is an awareness campaign that collectively addresses the elders of the 21st century (those who will be aged 11 to 35 in 2025). *It calls on them, on the one hand, not to resort to violence to resolve their problems at the individual, family, regional or international level; it invites them, on the other hand, to take the path of active non-violence to resolve conflicts.* This consciousness applies the qualifying terms "benevolent elders" (Imfura z'umugisha) to the elders who cultivate fraternal conviviality and refuse the logic of violence; "malevolent elders" to those who maintain a spirit of hatred and violence; *the* "close friends of the 21st century" to the youngest of the 20th century who show the elders of the 21st century the way to build a non-violent future; and the description of "traitors of the 21st century" to 20th century youngest who transmit to 21st century elders a message of division and violence.

II.3. THE CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL OF PEACE

Since 2017, the AJECL has joined the whole world every year to celebrate the International Day of Peace, on September 21. On this occasion, a mass to pray for peace in Rwanda, in the Great Lakes Region, in Africa and throughout the world is celebrated. Those who have completed the peacebuilding training solemnly take the vow of active non-violence and receive their certificates of recognition. The trainers and beneficiaries of the training carry out a march for peace to demonstrate their thirst for lasting peace based on the values of active non-violence which promotes the universal fraternity of human beings.

The march for peace is closed by the watering of two peace trees planted at the Center Igicumbi cy'Amahoro in 2017. They symbolize the seed of peace sown in the hearts of all those who benefit from AJECL training, and intended to grow up, to spread its fruits throughout the country, in the Great Lakes Region, in Africa and all over the world. After that, there are various exchanges in the meeting room on the theme relating to the culture of peace. These are speeches which are delivered by beneficiaries of AJECL programs, guests as well as civil and ecclesiastical authorities, before sharing the Fraternal Agapes. It should be noted that the central idea of this annual activity is to promote the culture of universal brotherhood and peace as pillars of sustainable development in the 21st century.

III. ACTION PLAN FOR OCTOBER 2023 – SEPTEMBER 2024 : PEACEBUILDING

The general objective of this special plan is to train 1,000 young people on the culture of brotherhood and peace by using non-violence means to resolve conflicts at individual, family, national and regional level. These young people will make publically the vow of active non-violence and will be given the certificates of recognition in Nyamirambo Parish where AJECL have been created in 2004. These, with other 500 guests, will take a peace march from the Pelé stadium to the Catholic parish of Nyamirambo as a call for peace in the Great Lakes region on the International Day of Peace in September 2024.