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BURUNDI

SNAPSHOT

Women Fight Corruption in Small Steps

A woman leader takes personal responsibility to fight corruption after receiving USAID training



Photo: Burundi Policy Reform Program

Judith on the far right is leading fellow trainees in a relaxation exercise to get them ready to focus on learning anti-corruption skills.

“The training I received was very useful. Since then, I am now conscious and I’ve started to take action in my personal and professional life.”

When it comes to civic involvement, Burundian women represent an untapped resource at a time when the country needs improved leadership at all levels of government and civil society. To fill this void, in 2009, USAID stepped forward to train more than 170 women leaders in Burundi, including parliamentarians and representatives of civil society.

Judith Ndabahagamyé, coordinator for a teacher’s association, participated in project trainings and took to heart her personal responsibility to fight corruption and build awareness in the education sector. The training showed her the various types of corruption that occur in daily life.

Months later, when Judith advocated for a student who was refused admission because he missed the final exams due to illness, a university representative offered to assist...for a fee.

She refused, and worked to resolve the problem in an ethical manner, which resulted in the student being allowed admission and eventually completing his education.

Said Judith, “The training I received was very useful. At first, I ignored small forms of corruption, such as offering some cash after receiving a public service. Since then, I am now conscious and I’ve started to take action in my personal and professional life.”

Judith believes so strongly in the training that she has offered it to her colleagues, with the program’s staff offering pro bono assistance. Thirty-three of her colleagues have now learned how to prevent corruption in schools, vowing to sensitize friends, family, students, and co-workers to fight against it and not to accept it as an unpleasant fact.

The training is emphasized in sectors such as education, where participants can have a positive influence by being strong leaders and role models, traits that will help Burundi in the future.