

BURUNDI



Background information

Burundi got its independence in July 1962 and became a republic in 1966. But it soon got into political conflicts that lasted for more than 30 years and saw thousands of people killed, tortured and injured in ethnic violence. Many attempts were made in the 1970s, 80s and 90s to end the serial violence but without much success. However, the peace agreements signed after protracted negotiations in Arusha, Tanzania, and Pretoria, South Africa, brought peace in the country, with the two warring ethnic groups – Tutsi and Hutus entering into a power-sharing agreement.

Burundi Peace Process Negotiations took place for four years in Arusha and Pretoria between all

the Burundi parties and political movements in an attempt to put an end to violence and find a new peace formula for all. The peace initiative led to signing of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement on 28 August 2000, which put in place a transitional power sharing arrangement between the various political parties.

This went on until 2005, when on February 28, the country conducted a national referendum that ratified a new constitution, which set ethnic quotas for government positions, and paved way for parliamentary and presidential elections in July and August 2005, respectively. Mr Pierre Nkurunziza was elected President and in August 2005, was sworn in to take over the reins of power.

The country has an estimated population of about 6.9 million people. The population growth rate is 1.9 per cent. There are three main ethnic groups: the Hutus (about 85 per cent of the population), the Tutsis (about 14 per cent), and the Twa (about 1 per cent). The official languages are French and Kirundi, while Swahili is spoken by a sizeable segment of the population, especially those neighbouring Tanzania, where the language is the official medium of communication. English is increasingly taking root in Burundi, given its importance in international and regional trade and communication.

Despite the ethnic differences, Burundians have largely spoken one language — Kirundi — for a long time. Similarly, ethnic groups share similar values and live in the same communities. The main preoccupation of rural dwellers is agriculture and livestock husbandry. About two thirds of the people are Christian, mostly Roman Catholic. Protestants comprise 5 per cent of the Christian population, while the Muslims account for 10 per cent.

Burundi is a landlocked country and depends on neighbouring countries like Tanzania and Kenya for exports and imports. Agriculture is the mainstay of Burundi's economy, accounting for 48 per cent of its earnings. Its main cash crops are coffee and tea, which brings 90 per cent of the foreign exchange revenues. Industry and services account for 19 per cent and 32.9 per cent respectively.

Life expectancy is 43.5 years, with 42.91 years for males and 44.12 years for females. Literacy levels stand at 51.6 per cent, with 58.5 and 45.2 per cent for males and females, respectively. Participation in literacy programmes is hampered by shortage of teachers and inadequate teaching and learning materials.

Burundi is divided into 16 provinces, namely, Bubanza, Bujumbura, Bururi, Cankuzo, Cibitoke,

Gitega, Karuzi, Kayanza, Kirundo, Makamba, Muramvya, Muyinga, Mwaro, Ngozi, Rutana, Ruyigi. In terms of topography, the country has four zones namely the Rusizi plain, where the climate is tropical; the Congo-Nile Ridge, where the climate is mild and temperate; the central plateau, featuring rolling hills and; the depressions of the East and North-East, with tree-dotted savanna.

Education system

Burundi operates a 2-6-4-3-4 education system. Pre-school education takes two years and targets children between three and five years of age. Primary education takes six years leading to the certificate of elementary education. Since August 2005, primary education has been made free in Burundi. This was one of major reforms introduced in the country by the new President, His Excellency, Mr Pierre Nkurunziza, who took office in August 2005. With that new policy, primary school enrolment has increased remarkably and is expected to go up further in the coming years.

Secondary education is divided into two levels — lower and upper secondary education. Lower secondary education takes four years and admits those who pass the National Entrance Examination. At the end of the lower secondary education, students sit a common examination and those who qualify proceed to upper secondary, which lasts three years and leads to diploma, which paves the way to university education.

Those who do not go for general secondary school can join technical secondary education, which lasts seven years. After the first five years, one qualifies with 'Diplôme A3' (technician certificate or ordinary diploma) and after seven years, one gets 'Diplôme A2' (technician higher diploma). Secondary school enrollment is generally low, with only 8.5 per cent of eligible youth attending school.

After upper secondary, one can proceed to university. University education is divided into three

levels. The first level takes two years and leads to the award of 'Candidature'. Level two also takes two years leading to the award of a 'Licence'. Medicine takes another four years while civil and agronomic engineering majors last for another five years. The third level of university education is Doctorate. Those who go to the technical training institutes get a technician diploma certificate after three or four years of training. Currently, the country has only one public university, the University of Burundi, which is financed by the State and enjoys administrative and management autonomy. There are four private universities accredited by the government to offer higher education in the country. **Table 1** gives a summary of the country's education structure.

Enrolment trends

According to the Ministry of National Education and Culture, there were 191 pre-schools and 1,915 primary schools in 2004/2005. Some 8,859 children were enrolled in the pre-schools, which had 372 teachers. At the primary school level, there were 1,033,658 children with 20,322 teachers. As of February 2006, there were 165,528 students enrolled in public secondary schools, comprising 68,978 girls and 96,550 boys. In private secondary schools, there were a total of 12,427 students enrolled, out of which 6,890 were girls and 5,537 were boys. Technical schools offering short-term courses had 1,699 students, consisting of 625 females and 1,074 males, while those offering long-term courses had a total of 4,589 students, with 1,338 females and 3,251 males. In higher education, there were 25,000 students, with 6,250 females and 18,750 males. **Tables 2-4** show enrolment patterns at the various educational levels.

Table 1: Structure of education in Burundi

LEVEL	NO OF YEARS	AGE GROUP
Pre-school	2	3-5
Primary	6	6-12
Lower secondary	4	12-16
Upper secondary	3	16-19
Technical secondary (lower level)	5	12-17
Technical secondary (upper level)	7	12-19
University education	4-7	19 plus

Table 2: Total number of children enrolled in pre-school by gender, 2000/01 – 2004/05

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
2000 – 2001	1,331	1,301	2,632
2001 – 2002	2,071	2,061	4,132
2002 – 2003	-	-	-
2003 – 2004	-	-	-
2004 – 2005	4,481	4,381	8,859

Source: Ministry of National Education and Culture, 2006.

Table 3: Total number of children enrolled in primary school by gender, 2000/01 – 2004/05

YEAR	Boys	Girls	Total
2000 – 2001	415,257	330,918	746,175
2001 – 2002	444,452	360,883	805,335
2002 – 2003	464,260	413,116	877,376
2003 – 2004	521,370	431,116	952,486
2004 – 2005	555,471	478,187	1,033,658

Source: Ministry of National Education and Culture, 2006.

Table 4: Enrolment in higher education by gender, 2006

Category	Male	Female	Total
Public secondary schools	68,978	96,550	165,528
Private secondary schools	6,890	5,537	12,427
Technical schools (long courses)	1,338	3,251	4,589
Technical schools (short courses)	625	1,074	1,699
Higher education (public and private)	6,250	18,750	25,000

Source: Ministry of National Education and Culture, 2006.

Teacher education

Primary school teachers are trained in teacher training colleges, which offer courses divided into two cycles of two years each. In-service training of primary teachers is a regular activity of the Office for Rural Education (Bureau d'éducation rural - BER), a curriculum development agency. Secondary school teachers are trained at the University of Burundi from which they graduate after four years in various disciplines. Some teachers specifically trained for secondary education, are also trained at the Pedagogical Institute for three to five years. They are also trained at 'Ecoles normales supérieures'.

Other tertiary institutions

There are a number of training institutions offering courses in various disciplines, including business administration and computer science. These institutions include, Institut Supérieur de Gestion d'Entreprise, for management professionals. There are two levels of training: short cycle training for holders of the Diplôme d'Etat and long cycle training for holders of degrees in economics or their equivalent. There are also evening courses in various disciplines, including computer sciences.

Education funding

Education is one of the sectors consuming a large proportion of the national budget. Currently, the overall budget allocated to education is estimated at about US\$ 51 million. More than half of this budget goes to primary school education – US\$ 28 million, while secondary education takes US\$12 million or 24 per cent. Higher education receives US\$ 8 million, which is equivalent to 16 per cent of the budget, while technical training gets four per cent — US\$ 2 million. The budget estimates are contained in **Table 5**.

Table 5: Summary of education expenditure according to levels in US\$

LEVEL	AMOUNT	PERCENTAGE
Primary education	28,062,685	98%
Secondary education	12,389,019	98%
Technical training	2,101,844	98%
Higher education	8,510,268	98%
Total	51,063,816	98%

Source: Ministry of National Education and Culture, 2006. 1 US\$ = 980.605 (BIF).

Laws governing education

- Decree No 100/181 of 1988 concerning the Ministry of National Education
- Decree No 1/025 of 1989 concerning the reorganisation of educational system

Education administration and management

The Ministry of National Education and Culture is responsible for the provision of education in the country. Its responsibilities include policy formulation, curriculum development and implementation, supervision and examination. It accomplishes these roles through a number of bodies including Central Administration and Coordination, National Commission of Orientation to Higher Education and National Commission for Diploma Equivalencies.

Education challenges

- The quality of teaching at primary school level is compromised by lack of qualified human resources and lack of suitable school infrastructure.
- No official curriculum for early childhood education. Experience of community day-care centres and pre-school units that take into account the integrated early childhood development approach is limited.
- The number of school hours in a year - 585 hours - is inadequate.
- Since teaching in lower primary school is

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- conducted in Kirundi, transition to the second language - French - from the fifth year always create a lot of problem to learners.
- Education system is characterised by weak internal performance with high levels of repetition and relatively significant dropout rates.
 - The current education curricula, which has been in force for 12 years, do not sufficiently integrate contemporary societal concerns such as HIV/AIDS, environmental conservation, new information and communication technologies and other life skills.

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