



# Burundi

## Republic of Burundi

### Africa

#### Geography

**Area** 27,834 sq km. A mountainous, fertile country on the northeast shore of Lake Tanganyika, south of its “twin” Rwanda.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010 8,518,862	2.92%	306/sq km
2020 10,318,041	1.85%	371/sq km
2030 11,936,405	1.35%	429/sq km

The 2nd highest population density in Africa.  
**Capital** Bujumbura 480,000. **Urbanites** 11%.  
**Pop under 15 yrs** 38%. **Life expectancy** 50.1 yrs.

#### Peoples

**Kirundi-speaking** 98.2%. Considerable inter-ethnic mixing.  
**Hutu** 83.6% (estimate).  
**Tutsi** 13.6% (estimate).  
**Twa Pygmies** 1%. Neglected by other groups.  
**Other African** 1.6%. Congolese/Lingala 1.5%.  
**Other** 0.2%. South Asian, European, Arab.

**Literacy** 58%. **Official languages** Kirundi, French. All speak Kirundi. English use widespread.  
**All languages** 4. **Indigenous languages** 3.  
**Languages with Scriptures** 3Bi.

#### Economy

Landlocked and overcoming decades of conflict, Burundi is highly in debt and heavily dependent on outside aid despite recent political and economic stability. Tea and coffee exports are subject to weather and market fluctuations, and mineral resources are largely unexploited. Soil erosion is a serious problem due to “overcrowding” in a high density and highly agrarian society. It remains one of the world’s poorest nations with 70-80% living below the poverty line.  
**HDI Rank** 174<sup>th</sup>/182. **Public debt** 156% of GDP. **Income/person** \$138 (<0.5% of USA).

#### Politics

For 400 years, Tutsi lordship over the Hutu majority dominated the political life of Burundi. After the country’s independence from Belgium in 1962, the Tutsi constitutional monarchy was replaced by a military regime in 1966. Tutsi-dominated governments and military regimes since then have managed to retain Tutsi control of the army, commerce and education. The human rights record of the government has been appalling – Hutu attempts to gain power were followed by pogroms in 1972, 1988 and 1993-95. Since a peace accord in 2000, conflict has been reduced and almost removed altogether. Signs of encouraging progress include a new constitution safeguarding interests of minority groups, peaceful democratic elections in both 2005 and 2010 with a Hutu president, and an army more representative of the population.

#### Religion

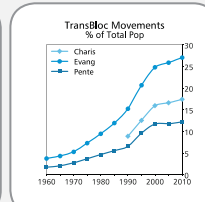
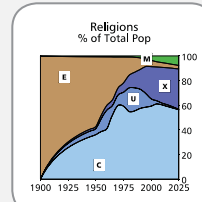
Freedom of religion.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Christian	90.46	7,704,984	3.1%
Muslim	5.50	468,537	5.2%
Ethnoreligionist	3.80	323,717	0.9%
Non-religious	0.09	7,667	5.4%
Baha’i	0.08	6,815	2.9%
Other	0.07	5,963	2.9%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	27	9.89	842,000	5.2%
Independent	26	10.59	902,000	3.2%
Anglican	1	8.49	724,000	3.8%
Catholic	1	60.92	5,190,000	2.6%
Orthodox	1	0.02	2,000	0.0%
Marginal	1	0.19	16,000	12.2%
Unaffiliated		1.3	110,000	-13.4
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>		-1.35	-115,000	0.0%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Church	C	130	2,965,714	5,190,000
Anglican Church	A	8,203	246,088	723,500
Church of Pentecost	I	3,646	382,778	689,000
Seventh-day Adventist	P	250	121,200	220,584
Pente Evang Fell of Afr	P	465	89,000	165,000
Eglise Vivante	I	45	47,500	95,000
Methodist Ch Union	P	500	50,000	86,500
Christian Brethren	P	95	25,000	70,000
Evang Episcopal Ch	P	210	32,500	65,000
Union of Baptist Chs	P	95	32,418	59,000
Foursquare Gospel	P	354	20,700	41,400
Friends (Quakers)	P	74	17,000	34,000
United Methodist Ch	P	75	15,000	34,000
Other denominations[43]		1,492	120,813	236,000
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>				-115,000
<b>Total Christians[56]</b>			<b>15,634</b>	<b>4,165,7117,593,984</b>

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
<b>Evangelicals</b>			
Evangelicals	27.0	2,303,387	3.8%
<b>Renewalists</b>			
Charismatics	17.4	1,483,120	3.9%
Pentecostals	12.2	1,037,000	3.6%



## Answers to Prayer

- 1 **Praise God for stability**, manifested through the signing of a peace accord by every rebel group, a new constitution and an elected government that represents both Hutu and Tutsi. After the horrors of this region of Africa in the 1990s, Burundi has made significant progress. Over 450,000 people once uprooted have now returned home. Most refugee camps have closed or are closing, and some IDP camps have become permanent. The current president is a professing born-again Christian.
- 2 **Praise for sustained evangelical growth**, although this now has slowed compared to the tumultuous 1990s. Nearly all Protestant and Anglican churches have seen significant growth, even during the periods of war. Many realize that nominal, shallow Christianity is inadequate to change lives and overcome the deep-seated tensions among ethnic groups. A number of groups in Burundi distinguish themselves by their admirably holistic approach to ministry.

## Challenges for Prayer

- 1 **The socio-political situation** is one of cautious hope. There have been many encouragements, but threats to the fragile new peace remain. The final rebel group, the FNL, signed the peace accord only in 2008. Pray for these key issues:
  - a) **Decades-old enmity between Tutsi and Hutu** that boiled into a violent eruption claiming 300,000 lives in the 1990s has simmered down with the peace accord and representational government. The systematic humiliation of Hutus has all but ceased, leading to a more peaceful co-existence. There is widespread intermarriage between these groups. Pray for genuine respect and cooperation as these two peoples build Burundi's future together.
  - b) **The president** is a former leader of a rebel Hutu group. He is a believer and has actively sought the counsel of Church leaders on several issues. His relative political inexperience, his past as a rebel fighter and Satan's desire to tear down Christian leaders each pose a danger; pray for moral integrity, wise advisors and spiritual grace to do the right things in the right way.
  - c) **The surplus of firearms** from decades of conflict contributes to the sudden rise of violent crime, especially armed robbery. With widespread poverty and no proper disarmament programme, such an occurrence was almost inevitable. Pray for the effectiveness of disarmament and gun amnesty programmes, many of which are run by church bodies; pray for people to hand in their weapons and pursue peace rather than lawlessness.
  - d) **Widespread corruption** persists, with bribery all but requisite for transactions of almost any nature. A 2008 survey ranked Burundi among the top states where corruption is worsening. The anti-corruption body has failed in its efforts to bring improvement. Pray for the lasting change only the gospel can bring.
- 2 **True peace and reconciliation** is something to work toward. Revival in the 1950s brought blessing and great church growth, but a generation later the land is physically, morally and spiritually devastated. Most Burundians recognize the Church as the only

institution in the land able to bring true reconciliation and peace; this in turn can be achieved only through God's intervention. Pray that the spirits of enmity and vengeance may be bound by the power of Christ. Pray for the peace-building work of groups such as the National Council of Churches and its constituent members, of World Vision and World Relief, Tearfund, African Enterprise, the Alpha Course and many others.

**B**

**3 Leadership for the churches** is in short supply; violence caused the closure of Bible schools which in turn cut off the supply of trained leaders. Now, schools are being re-established and new ones opened, but poverty holds back many prospective students from enrolling. Ask the Lord for financial provision for those who wish to equip themselves for the Lord's service. Pray also for the following, all vital in meeting the urgent need for Christian leaders:

- a) **Bible schools and theological colleges.** These include the Mweya Theological Institute (Free Methodists and **WGM**), a Pentecostal Bible school, the Matana Institute (Anglican-MAM) and Partners Trust International.
- b) **Christian universities,** a new development in Burundi. Most notable are Hope Africa University (Free Methodists) and the University of Light (Anglican). These seek to provide higher education with a biblical worldview, shaping the future leaders of the nation.
- c) **Modular training and TEE.** Both Great Lakes Outreach and Great Lakes Leadership Training (Friends) offer the former, while several groups, including Mweya, **CMS** and the **LM** offer TEE programmes. Emmaus, a Brethren ministry, runs BCCs not just in Burundi but throughout the region.

**4 Peoples and groups** of greater spiritual need include:

- a) **The Twa** (Pygmy) who are relatively well evangelized. About 8% are Christian. Their social marginalization and outright oppression is severe, and their education, health and economic status grim.
- b) **The Burundian refugee population,** Africa's largest in the 1990s, who live mostly in Tanzania. In 1972 about 200,000 fled to Tanzania where they have been ever since, a number that more than doubled in 1994. Over 12% of all Burundians were displaced by the genocide, many for more than five years. The camps are hotbeds of disease, abuse and resentment. Ministry to this group is difficult to sustain, but absolutely vital.
- c) **Returning refugees and IDPs** are a mixed group – some are eager to return, some cautious, some forced against their will to leave their temporary host country. They number more than 300,000 and represent one of the biggest challenges to the nation and the Church. They often lack even basic services (health, education, even shelter) and land. The problem with the lack of land is intensified by returners claiming their old property. Life in camps made them dependent on handouts and lacking in initiative, traits that will spell disappointment and worse in poverty-stricken Burundi. The Anglicans, Lutherans, Tearfund, **FIDA** and **REMA** (a local NGO) are just a few of many organizations focusing on this area of great need.
- d) **The Muslim community** has grown dramatically in recent years due to political manipulation by a former party chairman, external investment in Islamization, and the blamelessness of Muslims in the 1993 genocide. Unsubstantiated claims place Islam at 12% of the population. While this is unlikely, the rapid growth of Islam shows no signs of slowing. Most Christians and churches have little idea how to effectively minister to Muslims; pray for outreach training and for Christians to gain a heart for their Muslim neighbours and countrymen.

**5 Young people and children** suffered the brunt of the violence, upheaval and poverty of the last decades. Lift these issues up in prayer:

- a) **The physical needs of children.** Around 560,000 children have lost at least one parent, 45% of children under five are undernourished and many thousands suffer from malaria and AIDS. Violence against children is common. Only half of children attend school; but praise God for debt relief, which allows the government to offer free primary education to all children. This should raise enrolment significantly. Pray for the many ministries and NGOs that focus on caring for children and providing them with life opportunities.

## B

b) **Specific ministry to children** has been almost non-existent, but some agencies are beginning to focus on this issue. CEF, SU, the Anglicans, and New Generation (a local NGO) are examples of such.

c) **Student and youth ministry.** SU continues to have an effective ministry, especially in the area of evangelism. Seven growing GBU(**IFES**) groups now focus on evangelism and training leaders. YFC and the Alpha Course also have specific ministry to young people, the former developing Homes of Hope, where orphans from different ethnicities are raised together in a Christian setting.

6 **There is a genuine need for expatriate Christian workers.** Between 1970 and 1985, nearly all missionaries were expelled by the regime of that time; few returned thereafter due to ongoing instability. Many are needed to work with national leaders in areas of discipleship, theological education, reconciliation and trauma counselling, literacy and education and holistic development. Now, numbers of workers are increasing, but the large majority of these focus on Bujumbura, the capital. Pray for more workers for the neglected rural areas and for ministry that empowers Burundi believers rather than creates dependency. Pray for the calling of the right missionary personnel and their effectiveness, for godly modelling and good relationships with national believers.

7 **Christian media** – specific prayer targets:

a) **Bibles and Christian literature** – there remains a great shortfall. Prayer for millions more Bibles and Christian books would not be amiss. The African Pastors' Fellowship, Anglican Church and Langham Partnership are collaborating to foster writing and publishing books in Kirundi, especially for pastors. Several other Christian literature ministries exist as well.

b) **Literacy programmes** – the adult literacy rate is 58%, but the functional rate is lower. This situation is steadily improving because of free primary education and increasing numbers of churches and NGOs with literacy programmes.

c) **Radio** – TWR and IBRA combine to broadcast over 170 hours per week, but less than 10 hours are in Kirundi. Voice of Hope Radio is a Burundian Christian FM station reaching from Bujumbura out to Burundi and neighbouring countries. Pray for life to be imparted through these broadcasts.

d) **Audio** – GRN has audio resources in Kirundi and African French. FCBH completed the Kirundi audio NT, and has seen over 115 listening groups established.

e) **TV and video** – A French African Christian programme, *Le Club 700*, is on national television every week. The JESUS film has been viewed by most Burundians. Heritage Television provides daily Christian programming. Pray for lasting impact.