



Capital: Bujumbura

Languages: Kirundi, French

Religion: 62% Roman Catholic. Also Anglican, Protestant, Muslim

Population: 8,988,091

Refugees: 94,239

Internally Displaced Person (IDPs): 100,000

Burundi is a small, landlocked country in the Great Lakes region of east central Africa, bordered by Rwanda to the north, Tanzania to the east and south and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west. It is considered one of the poorest countries in the world. It has a terrain comprised of high plateaus divided by deep valleys and has an equatorial climate. Burundi draws water resources from such large bodies as Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika and the Nile River. Like many African nations, Burundi spent much of its existence as a European colony first of Germany and then Belgium. It became a trust territory of the United Nations and gained independence in 1962. Decades of civil unrest followed, particularly due to violent conflicts between the Tutsi and Hutu tribes. In 1972 a large group of predominantly Hutu refugees fled a Tutsi-led wave of violence and settled mainly into camps in Tanzania. Civil war erupted in 1993 and the 1994 genocide occurring in Burundi and Rwanda forced hundreds of thousands more refugees to swell the already teeming camps in Tanzania and neighboring countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo. The civil war lasted until 2005, but Burundi has managed to create some peace and stability since hostilities ended. This has prompted the repatriation of many Burundians to their homeland.

Most Burundian students recently resettled in the United States are part of the 1972 Burundian refugee group originating from isolated camps in Tanzania where living conditions were extremely difficult. Their parents either fled Burundi at a very young age or were born in the camps themselves. Burundian families are nuclear units and traditionally patriarchal. They have strong social ties and maintain close relationships with extended family members. All Burundian refugee children currently entering the public school system will have been born in refugee camps. As refugees they have experienced the trauma and chronic stresses of war, displacement, violence in the camps and limited food supplies. They have received primary education, but attendance was not mandatory and the schools were poorly equipped with teaching materials.