

BURUNDI

Smart Card



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Geography

Burundi means place of the Rundi people. It is a landlocked country, slightly bigger than the state of Vermont.

Terrain: mostly made of hills - mountains with some plains in the east

Elevation: From 2534 to 8760 ft

Temperature: 62 °F to 74 °F daily - can go to 80 °F

Urban population: 75% of urban dwellers live in Bujumbura, the capital city

Rural Population: 92% live in rural areas

Territorial Security: internal political instability

History

Burundi was founded as a Kingdom in the 17th century and ruled by Tutsi Kings. Germany ruled Burundi starting in 1903 following the Berlin Conference to divide Africa. The Treaty of Versailles ending World War I transferred control of Burundi to Belgium.

Belgium ruled Burundi until its independence in 1962. The Belgians created a divisive atmosphere between the Hutu and the Tutsi before leaving Burundi. Political fights to control power ensued and resulted in deadly ethnic violence between the Hutu and Tutsi peoples in multiple events between 1972 and 1996.

A cease-fire agreement signed in 2000 in Arusha, Tanzania ended the violence between all actors by 2006. In 2010, Pierre Nkurunziza was elected president for a second term. In 2015, the president forced a third term in violation of the 2000 agreement and the constitution. His action opened a new political crisis, still ongoing, with new challenges.

Independence

Burundi became independent on July 1, 1962. Prince Louis Rwagasore envisioned unity among all Burundians. He and his companions challenged the Belgian colonizer politically in the early 1960s by organizing campaigns to disrupt the economic system exploiting Burundi.

Despite several arrests, Prince Rwagasore stood his course until victory was achieved. However, he was assassinated a month after winning crucial elections to proclaim Burundi's independence (1961). Although independence was won, Prince Rwagasore's dream to unite Burundi was cut short.

Burundians struggled through the years that followed his death as military and civil elites never hesitated to use violence to maintain privilege.

On October 13th - the anniversary of his death - Burundians celebrate this national hero as the father of the country's independence.

Overview

Population: 11.5 million

Ethnicities: Hutu 85%, Tutsi 14%, Twa 1%

Religion: Christian 67%, Indigenous belief 32%, Muslim 1%

Languages: Kirundi, French (official), Swahili widely spoken

Resources: gold, nickel - illegally exploited by powerful politically-connected people.

Holidays and Observances

Burundi celebrates Christian, Muslim, and secular events and figures. Note that all Christian holidays are set according to the Catholic calendar and Muslim holidays according to the lunar calendar. Secular holidays include Rwagasore Day (October 13) and Independence Day (July 1). With the political crisis lingering in Burundi, security issues and the high food prices impact the ability to host public events.

Religion

Belgian Catholic missionaries deeply influenced Burundi traditional life. The Catholic clergy fought against indigenous religion and converted many Burundians into Catholicism. Today, the Catholic clergy, which is composed of Burundians, is actively involved in the social and health activities in Burundi.

Burundi indigenous religion is still practiced. It includes the belief that all physical objects have spirits and great respect for dead ancestors. In the Hutu tradition, spirits often visit with evil intent, whereas in Tutsi belief, the ancestors' influence is more benign. In both traditions, invoking ancestors for help or acquiring talismans for protection is common.

The evangelical movement is growing in Burundi and is influencing politics. President Nkurunziza, a former Hutu rebel leader, is an evangelical pastor, as is his wife. He believes he rules Burundi by divine will. He even has a soccer team called Hallelujah FC. Yet, Burundians remain open-minded and tolerate new religions.

Military

The Burundian Armed Forces consist of a major army ground force and small air and navy forces. Predominantly Tutsi after independence, Tutsi military officers used the army to overthrow heads of state.

The Burundi Armed Forces slowly morphed after the 1993-2006 civil war. The Arusha Agreement (2000) demographically balanced force composition and integrated former members of the Forces for the Defense of Democracy (FDD), a Hutu rebel force, into military ranks.

The Burundi armed forces are also politicized. Former FDD members integrated in the army are pro-Hutu and remain close to the ruling party. They sometimes operate outside of the chain of command. This impacts both training and overall functionality of the Armed Forces.

Burundi has been involved in a peace-keeping mission in Somalia since 2008. Regional instability and Islamic terrorism are potential threats to the country.

Military Ranks

Private 1 st Class	Corporal	Sergeant	1 st Sergeant	1 st Sergeant Major
Warrant Officer	Warrant Chief Officer	2 nd Lieutenant	Lieutenant	Captain
Commandant	Major	Lieutenant Colonel	Colonel	Brigadier General

National Identity

Burundi is an old cultural and political entity of East Africa's Great Lakes region. Defining Burundians ethnically is vague and time-sensitive. The country's population includes the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa peoples. Hutus and Tutsis are nearly indistinguishable from a linguistic and cultural standpoint, though the Tutsi are a pastoral people and the Hutus are more agricultural. The Twa are a separate people who specialize in pottery and hunting. They tend to be short in stature and physically robust. All three groups work in economic harmony.

No folk festival is exclusively Hutu or Tutsi. In fact, most traditional celebrations show Burundi's homogeneity. Despite this fact, the imposed racial divide from colonial times still causes unrest from time to time. It will take strong political will and commitment to change. Meanwhile, the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa continue to live together, attend the same schools, and serve their country next to one another in the military.

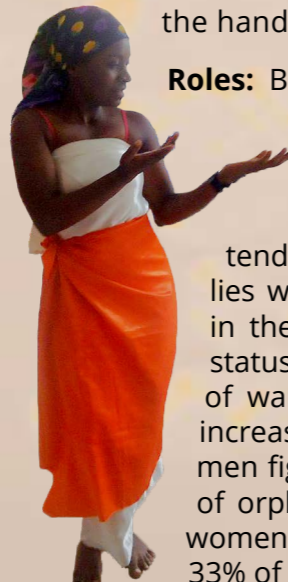


As a result, most believe the future is in the hands of the creator.

Key Cultural Considerations

Fate: Religion plays an essential role in the life of Burundians. Christianity, Islam, and traditional religions each profess a belief in fate. Burundians have great respect for dead ancestors and try to honor them, carrying on their legacy through everyday behavior. Years of wars and violence have caused Burundians to live each day conscientiously under the protective care of God.

As a result, most believe the future is in the hands of the creator.



Roles: Burundians' bond and trust are organized around close family ties. Collectivism is strong. Extended families are organized into clans and tend to live in close proximity. Power lies with men. Respect for women is in their power as life bearers. Their status is above children. Decades of war affected women's status and increased their responsibilities due to men fighting and the growing number of orphans. In cities, more and more women hold jobs. Women make up 33% of the Burundian parliament.

Emotion: Burundians speak with a lower pitched tone to boost a counterpart's confidence. They can be reserved, but are not shy. They are very polite and rarely use gestures when they speak. They avoid displaying emotions in public. Trust is earned through time.

Space: Burundians stand close to one another. Individuals of higher rank can tell you to move closer. Direct eye contact is considered normal when greeting others, but avoided when speaking. It is considered impolite.



Time: In Burundi it is not the clock that rules the day, but the relationship. Those who respect time or deadlines on commitments are well appreciated.

Honor: Burundians tolerate neither contempt nor humiliation in public. They uphold their dignity. They are reserved and often introspective. They celebrate the bravery of two historical heroes: Prince Louis Rwagasore who gave them their independence and King Ntare Rugamba who gave Burundi its current borders through struggle.

Education: Social status defines children's path to a better education. Poverty and the displacement of school-aged children due to the political crisis are the biggest obstacles to education. Most children finish elementary education; more girls are catching up on a longer school path dominated by boys. Soldiers have varying levels of education.



Group: Burundians are very conservative and have strong group commitment. They have unwritten rules in their social organizations, but are well aware of the norms in their society.

Marriage and family: Family in Burundi is the primary social unit. The law requires that everyone planning to live under the same roof with their partner must marry. The administration of President Nkurunziza hopes to strengthen family, moral values, stop relationships with multiple partners, reduce unwanted pregnancy, avoid abortion, and reduce the spread of sexually transmitted diseases among Burundians.

Communication

Though they tend to sit or stand close to one another in gatherings, Burundians keep a distance when addressing an older person or their superior, unless ordered to get closer. Direct eye contact is required during greetings. During the conversation, avoid staring as it may be perceived as rude. Touching someone is a sign that you are familiar with the person.



In Burundi, using a lot of gestures is a sign of nervousness and indicates poor control of emotions. This can affect rapport building with Burundians. Facial expressions are not welcome. You are expected to keep a neutral expression and use a low tone of voice. Honesty is an important quality to develop. Be careful about how you express an honest opinion. As a Westerner, you may want to say things directly (low context). In Burundi (high context), you should first think carefully about what you want to say before speaking. Good tact combined with politeness will do the trick.

Communication

English	French	Kirundi
Good Morning	Bonjour	Mwaramutze
Good Afternoon	Bonsoir	Mwiriwe
How are you doing?	Comment allez-vous?	Murakomeye?
Very well	Très bien	Ego
Thank you - and you?	Merci- et vous?	Murakoze - ndakomeye?
My name is...	Je m'appelle...	Nitwa...
I am thirsty	J'ai soif	Ndanyotewe
I am hungry	J'ai faim	Ndashonje
That was delicious	C'était délicieux !	Vyari Biryoshe
Excuse me/ please	Excusez-moi s'il vous plait	Mbabariba/ Ndasavye

Building Rapport

Welcoming and sociable, Burundians are open to meeting visitors. In Burundi, relationships built on trust are cemented slowly and over time.

When you first meet someone, it is best to bring up neutral topics of conversation such as health, family, work, American stories, and peace as an ideal, not as it relates to politics. You can also sympathize about the on-going socio-political crisis without going into details or taking sides. Subjects to be avoided include anything related to ethnicity, sexuality, religion, or any criticism of government politics or authorities.

You will be judged on your attire. Dress well and in line with your rank. People who respect time or deadlines are well liked and respected, but a certain amount of lateness is tolerated. It is best to use rank and family names when addressing people, but it is also acceptable to call someone Mr. or Mrs. followed by their first name. Humor is acceptable, but do not overdo it.



Negotiation

Speaking Kirundi during negotiation would be ideal, but using French also works. Note that official documents and agreements will be in French.

Negotiation starts with warm greetings and small talk with your counterpart. This is a strong cultural element in this society. Also familiarize yourself with the country's history and socio-political environment. Ensure that your assessment of the country and your counterpart factors in local history and experience and take the other side's interests into account.

As a negotiator, you must be able to work across ethnic and political division to attain your goal. The difference in perception and language between parties can heavily weigh in on negotiations. Collaboration with influential leaders of the hills and the cities is a must. Develop the art of listening. Note that Burundians are suffering from war fatigue. Any strategy to bring stability and security can be an advantage, but Burundi is also aware of US strategic partnership with Rwanda, which is its rival.

