Expeditionary Culture Field Guide

BURUNDI

U.S. AIR FORCE

About this Guide

This guide is designed to prepare you to deploy to culturally complex environments and achieve mission objectives. The fundamental information contained within will help you understand the cultural dimension of your assigned location and gain skills necessary for success.

The guide consists of 2 parts:

Part 1 introduces "Culture General," the foundational knowledge you need to operate effectively in any global environment.

Part 2 presents "Culture Specific" Burundi, focusing on unique cultural features of Burundian society and is designed to complement other pre-deployment training. It applies culture-general concepts to help increase your knowledge of your assigned deployment location (Photo courtesy of IRIN News © Jane Some).

For further information, visit the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) website at www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/ or contact AFCLC's Region Team at AFCLC.Region@us.af.mil.

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PART 1 – CULTURE GENERAL

What is Culture?

Fundamental to all aspects of human existence, culture shapes the way humans view life and functions as a tool we use to adapt to our social and physical environments. A culture is the sum of all of the beliefs, values, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning for a society. All human beings have culture, and individuals within a culture share a general set of beliefs and values.

Members of a culture also usually assign the same meanings to the symbols in that culture. A symbol is when one thing – an image, word, object, idea, or story – represents another thing. For example, the American flag is a physical and visual symbol of a core American value – freedom. At the same time, the story of George Washington admitting to having chopped down a cherry tree is also symbolic, representing the importance Americans place on personal honesty and leadership integrity.

Force Multiplier

The military services have learned through experience the importance of understanding other cultures. Unlike the 20th-century bipolar world order that dominated US strategy for nearly half a century, today the US military is operating in what we classify as asymmetric or irregular conflict zones where the notion of cross-cultural interactions is on the leading edge of our engagement strategies.

We have come to view the people themselves, rather than the political system or physical environment, as the decisive feature in conflict areas. Our primary objective hinges on influencing constructive change through peaceful means where possible. We achieve this endeavor by encouraging local nationals to focus on developing stable political, social, and

economic institutions that reflect their cultural beliefs and traditions.

Therefore, understanding the basic concepts of culture serves as a force multiplier. Achieving an awareness and respect of a society's values and beliefs enables deploying forces to build relationships with people from other cultures, positively influence their actions, and ultimately achieve mission success.

Cultural Domains

Culture is not just represented by the beliefs we carry internally, but also by our behaviors and by the systems members of a culture create to organize their lives. These systems, such as political or educational institutions, help us to live in a manner that is appropriate to our culture and encourages us to perpetuate that culture into the future.

We can organize these behaviors and systems into categories – what the Air Force refers to as "cultural domains" – in order to better understand the primary values and characteristics of a society. A cross-culturally competent military member can use these domains – which include kinship, language and communication, and social and political systems among others (see chart on next page) – as tools for understanding and adapting to any culture. For example, by understanding the ways different cultures define family or kinship, a deployed military member can more effectively interact with members of that culture.

Social Behaviors Across Cultures

While humankind shares basic behaviors, various groups enact or even group those behaviors differently across cultural boundaries. For example, all societies obtain food for survival, although agrarian societies generally produce their own food for limited consumption using very basic techniques.

Conversely, industrialized nations have more sophisticated market economies, producing foodstuffs for

universal consumption. Likewise, all cultures value history and tradition, although they represent these concepts through a variety of unique forms of symbolism. While the dominant world religions share the belief in one God, their worship practices vary with their traditional historical development. Similarly, in many kin-based cultures where familial bonds are foundational to social identity, it is customary for family or friends to serve as godparents, while for other societies this practice is nearly non-existent.

Worldview

One of our basic human behaviors is the tendency to classify others as similar or different according to our cultural standard.

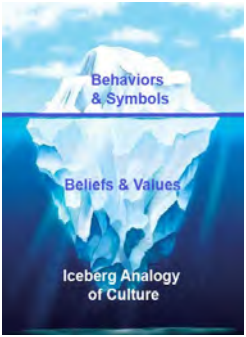
As depicted in the chart below, we can apply the 12 cultural domains to help us compare similarities and differences across cultures. We evaluate others' behavior to determine if they are "people like me" or "people not like me." Consequently, we assume that individuals falling into the "like me" category share our perspectives and values.

This collective perspective forms our worldview – how we see the world and understand our place in it. Your worldview functions as a lens through which you see and understand the world. It helps you to interpret your experiences and the values and behaviors of other people that you encounter. Consider your worldview as a way of framing behavior, providing an accountability standard for our actions and a logical explanation of why we individually or collectively act in a certain manner.

Cultural Belief System

An important component of a worldview is our belief system. A community's belief system sets its universal standards of what is good and bad, defines right and wrong behavior, and assigns a value of meaningful or meaningless. Our beliefs form the fundamental values we hold to be true – regardless of whether there is physical evidence to support these ideas. Beliefs are a central facet of human culture. They are shared views about world order and how the universe was physically and socially constructed.

While all people have beliefs, their specific components tend to vary depending upon respective world views. What people classify as good or bad, right or wrong depends on our deeply-held beliefs we started developing early in life that have help shape our characters. Likewise, these values are ingrained in our personalities and shape our behavior patterns and our self-identities. Because cultural beliefs are intensely held, they are difficult, though not impossible, to change.



Core Beliefs

Core beliefs shape and influence certain behaviors and also serve to rationalize those behaviors. Therefore, knowledge of individual or group beliefs can be useful in comprehending or making sense of their activities. We will use the iceberg model for classifying culture to illustrate two levels of meaning, as depicted. Beliefs and values, portrayed by the

deeper and greater level of the submerged iceberg, are seldom visible, but are indicated / hinted at / referenced by our behaviors and symbols (top level). It is important to recognize, though, that the parts of culture that are not visible (under the waterline) are informing and shaping what is being made visible (above the waterline).

In many cases, different worldviews may present behaviors that are contrary to our own beliefs, particularly in many regions where US forces deploy. Your ability to suspend judgment in order to understand another perspective is essential to establishing relationships with your host-nation counterparts. The ability to withhold your opinion and strive to understand a culture from a member of that culture's perspective is known as cultural relativism. It often involves taking an alternate perspective when interpreting others' behaviors and is critical to your ability to achieve mission success.

As you travel throughout the African Continent, you will encounter cultural patterns of meaning that are common among most African countries. What follows is a general description of 12 cultural domains which are used to frame those commonalities.

CULTURAL DOMAINS

1. History and Myth

History and myth are related concepts. History is a record of the past that is based on verifiable facts and events. Myth can act as a type of historical record, although it is usually a story which members of a culture use to explain community origins or important events that are not verifiable or which occurred prior to written language.

Africa has a history that spans the entire existence of humankind. In ancient times prior to the emergence of written languages, history and wisdom were preserved across generations and

ethnic boundaries through oral folk legends or myths. Most early human evolution began as hunting and gathering cultures in East and South Africa, with countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa renowned for their early human sites. In the last several millennia, the development of agriculture and pastoralism (animal herding) replaced hunting and gathering lifestyles (Photo: *Kutubiyya Mosque* courtesy of CultureGrams, ProQuest, 2013).

Ancient civilizations evolved in all corners of Africa, inspired in part by peoples from the Middle East bringing trade, beliefs, customs, language, and on occasion, colonization. Far from being isolated empires, the African civilizations were intimately connected by commerce and marriage throughout various regions of the continent, and when confronted by outsiders, managed to adapt to their influences. Eventually, Arab traders introduced Islam to Africa and also instituted the Trans-Saharan African slave trade that lasted from the 7th to 19th Centuries.

The “golden age” of European exploration, which lasted from the 18th to mid-20th century, prompted the wholesale exploitation of Africans resources – first human assets through slavery, followed by natural resources such as minerals, precious gems and metals, and wildlife, thereby diminishing most of what was traditional and African.

The introduction of the European Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade altered the slave trade through both the sheer number of Africans enslaved and through the cementing of a racist ideology of Black inferiority to legitimize the institution of slavery. Slavery decimated the African continent for over 400 years through the forced relocation of an estimated 25 to 30 million Africans worldwide. This figure does not include those Africans who died aboard ships or during capture. While abolition of the slave trade dissolved the institution of slavery, it did not end the European

presence on the African continent nor did it drastically alter their attitudes towards Africans.

Starting in the mid-19th century, European colonialism served to redefine African ethnic relations on a large scale; however, as African societies began to resist colonial rule and seek their independence, widespread ethnic conflict and genocide occurred. Sustained westernization and globalization continue to shape the continent through poverty, disease, and social reform. A history still to be recorded, Africa's future identity faces many challenges in critical areas such as environmental change, ethnic strife, women's health and security, and education.

2. Political and Social Relations

Political relations are the ways in which members of a community organize leadership, power, and authority. Social relations are all of the ways in which individuals are linked to others in their community. Traditional African political organizations in the form of bands, tribes, and chiefdoms have existed for several millennia and continue to influence contemporary African governments. Uncommon in modern society, bands are limited to hunting and gathering economies, such as the !Kung of the southern African Kalahari Desert and foragers of central African forests.

Tribes are still represented today across the African political landscape, although the use of the word "tribe" is sometimes misinterpreted due to its western notion of "primitiveness" and oftentimes substituted with the term "ethnic group." Lacking centralized authority, tribes are organized around segmented descent groups or in some cases age groups.

Everyday governance is discharged through councils of respected elders and sanctioned through ritual and other means. East African pastoralist groups such as the Maasai,

along with some West African tribes and the Berbers in North Africa, represent this type of organization.

Chiefdoms or kingdoms are ruled by kings or queens from a royal clan and generally incorporate millions of subjects. Kingdoms such as the Zulu or Swazi in southern Africa developed through conquest, while others like Ghana's Ashante developed through an association of related traditional states. However, colonialism eventually diluted the power and reach of these empires, whose leaders were often retained as indirect rulers or figureheads.

Today, all three of these political organizations still exist, although in the confines of modern African nation-states created by colonial powers who had little regard or understanding of African cultures. This juxtaposition of modernity with tradition has caused severe conflict throughout the continent.

Challenged to construct their respective "national" identities, regional leaders attempt to do so by diluting the traditionally cohesive power of ancestry. These national ruling elites, who derive their power from wealth and commerce rather than tribal affiliation, feel threatened by loyalty to these traditional organizations, labeling their rule as "tribalism."

This "class versus descent" scrimmage for power has resulted in conflicts across the continent and a dramatic divergence of interests. As a means to overcome these and other issues on the continent, a 55-nation federation, the African Union (AU), was formed in 2002. AU's charter is to promote "greater unity and solidarity between African countries and peoples" by building partnerships in all segments of "civil society."

3. Religion and Spirituality

Religion is a cultural belief system that provides meaning to members of a community. Religious and spiritual beliefs help preserve the social order by defining proper behavior. They also create social unity by defining shared identity, offer

individuals peace of mind, and explain the causes of events in a society. Prior to the arrival of Islam and Christianity, the African continent consisted of orally transmitted indigenous religious practices. As in many societies, African indigenous beliefs influenced diet, subsistence patterns, family structures, marriage practices, and healing and burial processes. In essence, Africans constructed their worldview through their indigenous religions.

Today, the African continent is primarily either Muslim or Christian. Other faiths such as Judaism and Hinduism exist as pockets in different regions of the continent, primarily in urban areas. The historical trajectories of Islamic and Christian expansion in Africa offer intriguing commonalities in how Africans across the continent initially reacted to the introduction of each of those religions. For example, it is common throughout the continent to find a blending of many elements of indigenous religious practices with local Islam and Christianity (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia).

Consequently, many African native religions share similarities with religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in their understanding of God as the creator and ruler of all life, although He is considered untouchable by humans.

However, unlike Christianity and Islam, many African indigenous religions believe that God is not directly involved in people's lives. To them there is a spirit world populated with former good and bad human beings. The good spirits intercede with God on behalf of their living families to whom they then relay God's will through dreams and acquired possessions. The bad spirits work to bring misfortune through sickness,

death, or natural disasters to those who behave inappropriately.

Many indigenous African religions revere "nature" spirits living in the sky, water, and forests. These impersonal spirits help protect people from harm and provide them with life's essential ingredients such as water, sun, and wildlife. This belief system is commonly referred to as animism.

Just as spirits mediate relations between God and humans, religious specialists act as mediators between spirits and humans to provide protection from harm.

4. Family and Kinship

The domain of family and kinship refers to groups of people related through blood ties, marriage, or through strong emotional bonds that influence them to treat each other like family members (often called "fictive kin"). The traditional African family with respect to marriage, family structure, and descent is a much different arrangement than is found in most American families. Likewise, there are several components of the traditional African family that are common to all African cultures.

First, perhaps the most difficult feature to reconcile to Americans is that of polygyny – the practice of a husband having more than one wife. A benefit of this arrangement is that it promotes societal alliances through marriage, procreation, and family wealth through female labor.

Second, due to polygyny, the family in most African cultures has historically consisted of an expanded set of kin or relatives that extends well beyond the American notion of a nuclear family. This arrangement created a family environment where children considered all siblings as "brothers and sisters" and all of the wives/mothers as "mother."

Third, the extended African family traces descent through either the male or female side of the family, a practice which differs considerably from the American family. Patrilineal descent (through the male side of the family) is the more common approach and usually features polygyny. The matrilineal (through the female bloodline) marriage pattern is more uncommon and almost always features monogamy – it is rare to encounter a wife having more than one husband.

Lastly, it is common for two or more blood lines (lineages) to share a common ancestor and collectively form a clan, which is the largest social unit. Clans do not have formal leaders or organizational structures. Membership is transferred from father to child and cuts across ethnic and social boundaries.

The dramatic social changes in Africa during and after colonialism in the last 4 decades have obviously affected the traditional family, and variations on these 3 features can be found across the continent.

5. Sex and Gender

Sex refers to the biological/reproductive differences between males and females, while gender is a more flexible concept that refers to a culture's categorizing of masculine and feminine behaviors, symbols, and social roles. Gender roles in Africa follow no single model nor is there a generalized concept of sex and common standard of sexual behavior.

Prehistorically, gender role differentiation in Africa's hunting and gathering cultures was based on a division of labor featuring different, yet complementary, sets of responsibilities for males and females, adults and children. Females gathered over half the caloric needs from natural vegetation, while also reproducing and raising offspring. Males were primarily hunters but also assisted with gathering.

These gender patterns continued as agricultural practices advanced.

Females shared in farming while continuing to provide for the family's subsistence, and males produced the cash crops. Pastoralists like the Maasai of Kenya traditionally have featured males involved in cattle-raising and females in food production.

The 19th-century European colonial period introduced a cash economy into Africa, with female labor used to produce the cash crops. By inserting male authority over females, colonial administrators disrupted the distinct yet complementary male/female relationship that had been traditionally African.

More recently, western influence across the continent has dramatically altered the traditional gender roles. Educational and professional opportunities for females, along with increased family migrations to urban areas, have radically altered traditional male and female gender roles.

Likewise, the number of singles parents and even child- or other relative-led families has increased with the predominance of HIV/AIDS-related deaths and warfare, further altering traditional gender responsibilities. Additionally, ethnic conflicts involving abuse of women are prevalent in many unstable countries, and while the rubric of traditional African gender generally remains, the forces of change are gradually ripping it away.

6. Language and Communication

Language is a system for sharing information symbolically, whereby words are used to represent ideas. Communication is defined as the cultural practice of sharing meaning in interaction, both verbally and non-verbally. America is predominantly a monolingual society, where traditionally, fluency in a second language has been considered a luxury rather than a necessity. Conversely, national survival for many societies in Africa required them throughout their existence to adopt multilingual

practices, if for no other reason than to preserve their native heritage.

You may find it challenging to comprehend the scope of Africa's linguistic diversity. There are over 2,000 African languages (many spoken-only) from 6 major language families, and perhaps 100 of these languages are used to communicate among the more dominant ethnic groups such as Berber, Swahili, Yoruba, and others.

Official languages of African nation-states are few, yet the linguistic diversity expressed across the continent (Nigeria has 250 languages) has prompted an awareness of the value of Africa's linguistic traditions. While most areas of the continent speak the adopted language of their colonial past – such as French and Portuguese in West Africa, French and Arabic in Morocco, and English in Kenya and South Africa – the majority of people also speak one or more traditional "indigenous" languages of their and other ethnic groups. As African independence spread throughout the continent, ethnic groups continued to depend on their indigenous identifiers, such as language, to celebrate their "release" from colonial rule and to preserve a sense of indigenous identity.

While communication styles tend to vary by ethnic or social groups, Africans generally are friendly and outgoing people although they tend to communicate with reserve to avoid confrontation. As in most kin-based societies, Africans believe that saving face or protecting one's honor and dignity are of utmost importance; therefore, they avoid public criticism and controversial topics at all costs – even to the extent of withholding their honest opinion or modifying the truth.

Africans admire and even expect extended greetings and small talk, and to attempt to rush or avoid social graces is considered disrespectful. Similarly, Africans avoid direct eye contact when communicating with new acquaintances and people of status,

particularly elders. They also are fond of non-verbal gestures, and it is common throughout African societies for members of the same gender to hold hands or touch while conversing.

7. Learning and Knowledge

All cultures require that the older generation transmit important information to the younger generation. This information can be strictly factual (for example, how to fulfill subsistence and health requirements) and culturally traditional (the beliefs, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning to the community). This knowledge transfer may occur through structured, formalized systems such as schools or through informal learning by watching adults or peers.

The contemporary African educational system hardly resembles the traditional pre-colonial structure, whereby community elders were primarily responsible for preparing youth for adulthood. Their instruction included fundamentals of ethnic ritual and ceremony, along with customary protocol for their distinctive gender roles. A rite-of-passage commemorating their successful journey from childhood to adulthood served as a form of graduation.

European colonialism brought a more structured, formal educational system that catered to a small group of African elite who demonstrated potential to administer expanding colonial territories. Following independence, many African nations adopted the European system because they believed it would prepare them to be more competitive in intra-continental and global marketplaces, thereby enhancing their quality of life.

However, progress in developing and maintaining reliable educational institutions has been slow for a variety of reasons. Since most Africans live in rural environments, they continue to rely heavily on child labor for family survival, resulting in decreased school enrollments or early withdrawals. Likewise, widespread HIV/AIDS epidemics, ethnic conflict, teacher and resource deficits, and inaccessibility to remote rural areas also hamper progress. According to 2017 statistics, only 80% of the

continent's children were enrolled in primary school, leaving over 33 million African children without any schooling at all.

8. Time and Space

In every society, people occupy space and time in ways that are not directly linked to physical survival. In low-context western cultures, people tend to be preoccupied with strict time management, devoting less effort to relationship-building. Conversely, most African cultures are traditionally high-context societies, whereby people center their activities on socializing and establishing close associations, having little regard for the passage-of-time.

Only after establishing trust and honor will your typical African counterpart agreeably proceed with business. In his worldview, time is a precious commodity used to establish relationships and form alliances. Any attempt to accelerate the tempo at the expense of social pleasantries will likely result in deadlock.

To an African, close physical proximity between individuals encourages cooperative trust, and for centuries they have viewed human linkage as a core element to survival. This closeness is best represented in a traditional African village where strong kinship connections are evidenced by a display of close interpersonal relations among family members.

While conventional African concepts of time and space remain intact, throughout the continent western influence and globalization have stepped up the pace of African living, mostly in urban areas. Consequently, rural-to-urban migrations have reshaped traditional social and subsistence patterns.

9. Aesthetics and Recreation

Every culture has its own forms of creative expression that are guided by aesthetic principles of imagination, beauty, skill and style. Prior to 19th-century European colonization of Africa,

recreation served a vital subsistence role, whereby adolescents and adults alike participated in intellectually stimulating leisurely activities that concurrently served to develop essential hunting and pastoral skills.

Games of chance and skill were important to early childhood development, providing social outlets within and outside their community. Featuring wrestling, jumping and running; traditional African sport was steeped in religious ritual.

Along with colonialism came the introduction to Africa of western sports such as soccer, cricket, rugby and track and field. This emphasis on western sport continued to thrive with African independence and globalization, as seen in sporting events such as the Olympics and the World Cup.

Leaders such as Nelson Mandela skillfully employed sport to promote a unified South African nation. Importing the predominantly “white” game of rugby, Mandela used it to fuse a racially divided country following his election in 1992. This event is the theme of the motion picture “Invictus,” exemplifying how sport can serve to create national identities and overcome ethnic division. His efforts have inspired many other African nations to follow suit.

Likewise, East African countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia have produced the world’s dominant male and female distance runners, and South Africa, Cameroon and Nigeria emerged as strong contenders in the 2010 World Cup. African nations are now competing in leagues such as the International Basketball Association (FIBA) World Championships, and there is also a

growing number of African basketball players on US college campuses and in the National Basketball Association (NBA).

10. Sustenance and Health

Societies have different methods of transforming natural resources into food. These methods can shape residence patterns, family structures and economics. Theories of disease and healing practices exist in all cultures and serve as adaptive responses to disease and illness.

Despite having only 17% of the global population, Africa is a victim of many of the world's debilitating health disorders. According to the World Health Organization, 70% of the global HIV/AIDS cases and 92% of malarial diseases occur in Africa.

These and other medical conditions are attributed primarily to viral infection and widespread poverty caused by extreme climatic conditions and civil unrest, coupled with inadequate preventative measures. While extensive drought generates widespread famine, civil disturbances generate millions of displaced persons. Likewise, with only 63% of the Sub-Saharan African population having access to safe drinking water, water-born bacterial diseases such as cholera and schistosomiasis are common.

Many people in Africa lack access to western medicine, and as a result depend on traditional health practices to combat disease. In addition, some traditional beliefs run counter to western medical practice and perhaps discourage individuals from utilizing those services even when they are available. This problem is further intensified by lack of federal regulatory healthcare management.

While modern healthcare procedures are more common in urban areas, many rural people rely on traditional practitioners who use a variety of plants and herbs to treat patients. Similarly, many families have their own secret remedies. While in some cases traditional medicine proves effective with fewer side effects than modern drugs, traditional practices do not adequately treat many of the more serious conditions.

On a positive note, western influence has stimulated some progress in combating Africa's health crisis. More resources are devoted to achieving basic human security by assessing disease symptoms early and with scientific accuracy.

11. Economics and Resources

This domain refers to beliefs regarding appropriate ways for a society to produce, distribute, and consume goods and services. Traditionally having an agrarian-based economy, Africa today remains predominantly agricultural, featuring less industrialization than most other parts of the world. Post-colonial adversities such as civil war, disease, poverty, and unstable dictatorships posed unusual hardship on several young African nations; however, Africa currently stands at the cross-roads of economic development with many nations becoming some of fastest growing regions in the world.

Colonialism institutionalized the exploitation of Africa's mineral resources, resulting in today's oil industry dominating the economic market in several coastal regions. A surge in global oil prices; a growing African middle class; and reduction in civil wars, foreign aid, and inflation collectively promise a more positive outlook for the future.

Countries such as Botswana, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and South Africa are economically the wealthiest on the continent, with regions such as East Africa showing signs of economic stability. Despite the economic upswing, much of sub-Saharan

Africa's future economic prosperity is held hostage by devastating diseases such as AIDS, particularly in areas of southern Africa, and the growing effects of climate change and man-made environmental degradation throughout the subcontinent.

12. Technology and Material

Societies use technology to transform their physical world, and culture heavily influences the development and use of technology. Africa lags far behind most of the world in manufacturing capacity and output. Even the more economically-developed nations such as South Africa are competitively weak when compared to non-African industrialized nations. During the 1970s and 1980s, Africa experienced some growth in raw exports although this increase did little to boost long-term manufacturing capacity.

Today, Africa is experiencing an actual decline in manufacturing capacity due primarily to a lull in the global economy, along with other indigenous issues such as environmental stress, poor physical and organizational infrastructure, and a shortage of skilled personnel. Likewise, African manufacturing capacity is no match against global powers such as China and significant Southeast Asian markets.

International aid from both governmental and non-governmental organizations has helped African nations establish preliminary economic footholds. For example, many of them have dedicated industrial developmental zones to attract foreign investment and increase export-related manufacturing capacity, although Africa is far removed from having a significant role in the global marketplace in the foreseeable future.

Now that we have introduced general concepts that characterize African society at large, we will now focus on specific features of Burundian society.

PART 2 – CULTURE SPECIFIC

1. HISTORY AND MYTH

History Overview

Small, landlocked Burundi is one of few African countries whose present territory aligns with its pre-colonial borders. Violence between Hutu and Tutsi punctuated much of Burundi's modern history. While Burundi remains one of the poorest countries in the world, a ceasefire and attempts to seek peaceful reform have brought modest economic developments and democratic gains to the country.

Early History

Although archeological evidence is scarce, scientists believe that members of a short-statured hunter-gatherer group were among Burundi's earliest inhabitants. Commonly referred to as Pygmies, these people likely arrived and settled in Burundi's forests around 7000 BC. Their descendents, known as the Twa, live in Burundi to this day (see p9 of *Political and Social Relations*). Around 1000 AD, Bantu-speaking subsistence farmers migrated from present-day Central African Republic and Chad, displacing many Twa hunter-gatherer groups. Sometime around the 1300s, cattle herders moved into Burundi, possibly from northeastern Africa.

As farmers and herders began occupying the same areas, the earliest political structure known as the ***colline*** or hill emerged in Burundi's mountainous landscape. The rugged terrain made concentrated settlement and communication over long distances difficult. Consequently, the people occupying each hill formed distinct communities—each governed by a chief—and maintained ties with neighboring hills. Herders and farmers shared land and resources and were linked socially, politically, and economically.

Are the Tutsi and Hutu Different Ethnically?

Some researchers believe that Hutu and Tutsi labels originally expressed economic class and occupational differences rather than ethnic distinctions (see p8 of *Political and Social Relations*). Although Belgian colonial administrators identified alleged physical differences between the Hutu and Tutsi, modern scientists have suggested that any variations in appearance at that time may have simply reflected the groups' different sources of nutrition. For instance, Tutsi herders consumed milk and beef, which allowed them to grow taller, while Hutu farmers subsisted on calorie-rich but nutrient-poor staple crops that limited their growth (see p1-2 of *Sustenance and Health*).

Traditionally, Hutu and Tutsi categories were flexible and allowed for movement between the two groups. For example, a Hutu who purchased cattle to herd could then be considered Tutsi. Similarly, a Tutsi who fell on hard times and had to sell his herd and turn to subsistence farming could be labeled Hutu. In pre-colonial times, the Hutu and Tutsi generally cooperated and lived alongside one another in relative peace.

Tutsi Kingdom

According to oral narratives and archaeological evidence, a leader named Ntare Rushatsi established a monarchy in the 16th century. Calling himself Ntare I, he united Burundi into a hierarchical highland kingdom that he ruled through local cattle-owning chieftains. These chiefs collected taxes and tribute from the farmers within their territories, passing a portion of it to the ***mwami*** or king. Around this time, standard labels emerged for each group: ***Hutu*** for farmers, ***Tutsi*** for cattle herders, and ***Twa*** for the forest-dwelling foragers.

The king and his aristocracy of chiefs, advisors, and potential heirs, collectively called the ***Ganwa***, were cattle-herding elites

who claimed to be neither Hutu nor Tutsi. Ntare I created a political bureaucracy that represented all groups and allowed for aggrieved forest-dwellers, farmers, and herders to seek mediation from the king and ***Ganwa***. This semi-feudal system was largely peaceful and remained in place until the late 19th century.

The Arrival of Europeans

Scholars believe British explorers Richard Burton and John Hanning Speke (pictured) were the first Europeans to visit Burundi, passing through the country in search of the source of the Nile River in 1858. Although Burundi's hilly terrain initially delayed further European exploration and expansion, eventually other Europeans, including Greeks and Germans, came to Burundi. In addition to trade goods such as cloth, metals, and manufactured products, Europeans brought missionaries (see p2 of *Religion and Spirituality*) and diseases. Since most European powers had outlawed the slave trade by this time, Burundians were not enslaved in the Atlantic slave trade nor did individual Burundians perform an administrative role in slavery.

German Colonization

In 1890, Germany combined Burundi's Tutsi kingdom, then ruled by King Mwezi IV, with present-day Rwanda and parts of Tanzania to establish German East Africa. The Germans largely governed through existing political structures but sought a consolidated monarchy vested in local leadership loyal to German authorities. Because this arrangement greatly diminished their power, the ***Ganwa*** chiefs resisted. Although the Germans retaliated by burning villages, they permitted Mwezi IV to retain his position, though with less authority.

The Germans had no interest in inculcating German language or culture. Instead, through the German East Africa Company, they focused on extracting resources for Germany's economic benefit. Germany's colonial administration had little lasting

impact during its short reign, which ended in 1916 when Belgian troops invaded during World War I (Image: 1916 stamp indicating Belgium's occupation of former German East Africa).

Belgian Colonization

The Belgians officially gained the territory of Ruanda-Urundi (comprised present-day Burundi and Rwanda, which shared similar ethnic compositions) in 1918 with Germany's surrender at the end of World War I. Like the Germans before them, the Belgians were primarily concerned with economic profits from their colonial holdings. Consequently, they introduced coffee and tea cultivation, although only coffee was grown as a cash crop during the colonial period (see p1 of *Economics and Resources*). Belgian attempts to simplify pre-colonial Burundi's complex political system eroded the autonomy of the minor chiefs, bolstering the power of the Tutsi elite.

Racial Categorization and Tutsi Preference: Classifying the ***Ganwa*** as Tutsi, the Belgians made the traditional class categories more rigid and reinforced Tutsi dominance by developing a system of "scientific" racism. This system was based on supposed differences in height, skin tone, and bone structure among Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa. The Belgians documented these distinctions, created a classification system, assigned Burundians an identity, and issued ethnic identification cards. Belgians believed the apparently taller and fairer-skinned Tutsi were natural leaders and deserved education (see p1-2 of *Learning and Knowledge*). The legacy of this inflexible classification system persisted long past the colonial era and obscured the flexible, class-based origin of these labels.

Meanwhile, the Belgians placed severe restrictions on the Hutu and Twa, removing them from government positions and restricting their access to education (see p1-2 of *Learning and Knowledge*). By 1929, Belgian colonization had eliminated most of the existing political structures, concentrating power in Tutsi hands at the expense of the Hutu and Twa.

Resistance and Nationalism

At various times, Burundians revolted against their Belgian colonial masters. While ***Ganwa*** chiefs led most acts of resistance against the Belgian colonial authorities, common people also protested economic hardships caused by both the colonial administration's and ***Ganwa*** chiefs' heavy taxation. In one instance during the Inamujandi Revolt, a woman led rural farmers in the northern Ndora region in a revolt that lasted 2 years. Following World War II, the United Nations (UN) mandated that Belgium gradually prepare Ruanda-Urundi for independence. Consequently, Belgian colonial administrators allowed political parties to form starting in 1948.

UPRONA: In the 1950s, Tutsi Prince Louis Rwagasore (pictured) founded the nationalist Union for National Progress party (UPRONA). While most founding members were ***Ganwa*** or Tutsi elite, the party eventually also gained support from some Hutu. As UPRONA and other Tutsi-dominated groups began to push for immediate independence under a Tutsi monarchy, the Belgian preference for the Tutsi diminished. The Hutu were less vocally opposed to Belgian rule, causing the Belgians to perceive that the Hutu majority continued to support colonial governance.

Rwandan Ethnic Strife: In 1959, Hutu violence against Tutsi in neighboring Rwanda caused thousands of Rwandan Tutsi to seek refuge in Burundi, where the Belgian governor supported the Hutu's violent actions. Afterwards, UPRONA leaders intensified their efforts, emphasizing their preference that Burundi and Rwanda become separate independent states.

Independence

In 1961, Burundi held pre-independence parliamentary elections. Despite strong Belgian support for the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) of another royal clan, UPRONA won 58 of 64 seats and selected Prince Louis Rwagasore as Prime Minister. Burundi's nationalist victory was short-lived, however, when the PDC, with Belgian assent, arranged for Rwagasore's assassination a few weeks later.

As a charismatic and idealistic monarchist who opposed ethnic extremism, Rwagasore held promise of becoming a unifying figure. Instead, his death became the first of many tragedies in Burundi's modern history that prompted political crisis within UPRONA and the wider country on the eve of independence.

On July 1, 1962, Belgium granted independence to Rwanda and Burundi as separate countries.

Monarchy to Military Rule

Burundi became an independent constitutional monarchy under a relatively weak Tutsi King Mwambutsa IV (pictured), Prince Rwagasore's father. Political leaders were deeply divided as already high ethnic tensions worsened and thousands of Rwandan Hutu streamed across the border to escape Tutsi violence. Amidst these tensions, Burundi appointed its first Prime Minister, Pierre Ngendanumwe, a moderate and competent Hutu UPRONA politician, to 2 terms. Although the Hutu won a parliamentary majority in 1965, King Mwambutsa IV appointed a Tutsi Prime Minister, prompting a Hutu coup attempt that resulted in Tutsi killings. The Tutsi military retaliated by massacring some Hutu.

Micombero's Regime: A year later, King Mwambutsa IV's son Ntare V deposed him, forcing the King into exile in West Germany. Ntare V's reign lasted only 4 months when Tutsi Prime Minister and former Army Chief Michel Micombero overthrew the monarchy, likewise forcing Ntare to seek asylum in West Germany. Micombero further declared Burundi a republic, abolished Parliament, and proceeded to govern as a military junta.

Micombero's coup displaced other elitist Hutu sympathizers, entrenching an anti-Hutu political stance. As President from 1966 to 1976, Micombero presided over a single-party state that fiercely repressed all opposition. Nevertheless, both Hutu and Tutsi excluded from representation rose up in protest. While a 1971 Tutsi plot was disrupted, southern Hutu orchestrated a more serious uprising in 1972. Micombero and the Tutsi-dominated military reacted swiftly and severely.

Approximately 120,000 Hutu were massacred and another 300,000 well-educated professionals went into exile. Shortly thereafter, King Ntare V returned to Burundi where he was unceremoniously executed by the government. Seared into Burundians' memories, these events resulted in festering ethnic mistrust and a culture of impunity, for none of the 1972 genocide's perpetrators were ever prosecuted or punished.

Bagaza's Regime: In 1976, Tutsi Colonel Jean-Baptiste Bagaza mounted a bloodless coup against Micombero. He used foreign aid to reform the administrative and tax systems, build new infrastructure, and develop Burundi's coffee, cotton, and sugar industries. Yet, Bagaza ruthlessly suppressed political opposition and restricted religious freedoms (see p3 of *Religion and Spirituality*). In 1981, he sanctioned a new constitution that defined Burundi as a one-party state under the UPRONA party banner. In 1984, as the only candidate, President Bagaza received 99% of the vote (Image: Burundi's crest reads "unity – work - progress").

During Bagaza's regime, the Hutu were often forbidden from going to school, taking national examinations, or working in salaried jobs (see p1-2 of *Learning and Knowledge*). Hutu experiences in Burundi in the 1970s and 1980s, from societal exclusion to mass murder and exile, led to the founding of the National Forces of Liberation of the Hutu people (formerly known as PALIPEHUTU, currently the FNL), an organization that asserted Hutu rights at the expense of the Tutsi. In 1985, the FNL developed a militia and began advocating armed struggle.

Buyoya's Regime: In 1987, Tutsi Army Major Pierre Buyoya overthrew Bagaza, suspending the constitution and reinstating military rule under the Military Committee for National Salvation (CSMN). In 1988, another spasm of violence occurred near the Rwandan border. In retaliation for the death of a Hutu family and harassment by local Tutsi officials, the FNL and its supporters killed 300 Tutsi in the communes (see p3 of *Political and Social Relations*) of Ntega and Marangara. In response,

the military killed 20,000 Hutu while thousands more fled to Rwanda. Instead of seeking their prosecution, the Buyoya government granted amnesty to the Tutsi attackers.

In an attempt to break the cycle of violence, several moderate Hutu leaders requested greater Hutu representation in the government. Although Buyoya jailed those leaders, he did appoint a Hutu Prime Minister and establish a Commission to Study the Question of National Unity. Yet, the efforts of the Commission were superficial and did not address profound problems like power-sharing and the treatment of Burundians who had participated in the killing. Following nearly 3 decades of ethnic violence, the early 1990s brought a hopeful time. In 1992, Burundians approved a new constitution that allowed for a multi-party political system, thanks in part to attention and pressure from foreign governments and human rights groups.

Civil war

Military rule ended in June 1993 when Hutu Melchior Ndadaye of the Hutu Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU) defeated Buyoya in Burundi's first democratic election. The optimism that met the country's first Hutu President faded when Tutsi soldiers assassinated Ndadaye in October 1993. This murder sparked another wave of ethnic conflict, resulting in the death of about 100,000 people and starting a civil war that lasted until 2003.

In the midst of the violence, Burundi's Parliament appointed Hutu Cyprien Ntaryamira as the interim President in January 1994. Progress was halted again when Ntaryamira died along with the Hutu Rwandan President when the plane they were traveling in was shot down in April 1994. This act prompted the Rwandan Hutu regime to call for the complete extermination of Rwandan Tutsi, resulting in Rwanda's genocide. In Burundi Ntaryamira's death intensified the conflict between the Tutsi-dominant military and several Hutu militias. In October 1994, Hutu Sylvestre Ntibantunganya was appointed President. He governed almost 2 years as violence spread to the capital of Bujumbura.

Buyoya Returns

In 1996, as the fighting continued, Pierre Buyoya returned to the presidency in a coup aided by the military. Buyoya's second coup prompted an international outcry and economic sanctions on Burundi that were not removed until 1999.

Peace talks led to a transitional government and ethnic power-sharing agreement in 2001 that allowed Buyoya to continue in office for 18 months, followed by a Hutu for 18 months. Although some Tutsi and Hutu fighters laid down their arms, fighting intensified when other Hutu rebels refused the peace deal offered under Buyoya's administration.

Steps toward Peace and Democracy

In 2003, Hutu Domitien Ndayizeye of FRODEBU succeeded Buyoya. Ndayizeye successfully negotiated a ceasefire between the government and largest Hutu rebel group, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), effectively concluding the civil war.

Then 2005 became a watershed year in Burundi. In January the military—for many years a bastion of Tutsi power—embarked on critical reforms that included a plan approved in 2004 to integrate former CNDD-FDD Hutu rebel forces into the newly formed National Defense Force (FDN) (see p5 of *Political and Social Relations*).

In March, Burundians approved a new constitution that set ethnic quotas to ensure fair political representation. In addition, the UN supervised local, parliamentary, and presidential elections. In August, Parliament elected former CNDD-FDD Hutu leader Pierre Nkurunziza President by a 2/3 majority. In 2006, the last rebel group, the FNL, agreed to peace terms, although it still occasionally clashes with the FDN (see p4 & 7 of *Political and Social Relations*).

Myth Overview

In contrast to history, which is supposed to be an objective and fact-based record of the past, myths embody a culture's values and often explain the origins of humans, political structures, or how certain objects gain significance. Myths are important because they provide a sense of unique heritage and identity. Many of Burundi's myths include stories about members of the Burundian royal families and the drums associated with them.

Myths about Kings

Burundians traditionally told many stories about their rulers. According to one myth, Burundi's kings were semi-divine beings who emerged from seeds. Other stories venerate the Tutsi monarchy and tell of a Hutu named Samandari, a character who made fun of and played tricks on royals. Another myth explained that Burundian kings reigned from the highland region and rarely traveled because death awaited any monarch who journeyed to Lake Tanganyika. For this reason, presumably no Burundian king ever traveled to the lake, nor did King Mwezi IV dispel the myth after visiting the lake at the turn of the 20th century. He died from malaria on his way home.

Myths about Drums

In traditional Burundian society, drums were used as a means of communication between isolated hills, eventually becoming objects of national prestige owned and controlled by the Tutsi monarchy (see p3 of *Aesthetics and Recreation*). One myth in particular explains how drums became associated with kings. As the myth goes, a king killed his ox, placed its hide over a hole in a tree to dry, and went to sleep. When he awoke, the king discovered that a snake had slithered up from the tree but was blocked from causing him harm because of the hide. The king instructed his servants to make a drum from the hide and the tree. Because these drum components had saved the king, the drum became a royal symbol and an indicator of his kingdom's welfare (Photo: Members of the Intatana Drumming Group performing in Bujumbura).

2. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

Official Name
Republic of Burundi
Republika y'Uburundi (Kirundi)
République du Burundi (French)

Political Borders
Democratic Republic of the Congo: 138 mi
Rwanda: 180 mi
Tanzania: 280 mi

Capital
Bujumbura

Demographics
Burundi's population of 11.9 million people is growing at a rate of 2.85% annually, the 11th highest growth rate in the world and considerably higher than the US rate of 0.72%. About 44% of Burundi's population is under the age of 15. As of 2020, 86% of the population lived in rural areas. Burundi is one of Africa's most densely populated countries, although Burundi's 2019 population density of 1,077 people per sq mi was less than Africa's highest rate of 1,326 per sq mi in neighboring Rwanda.

Flag
The Burundian flag contains a white diagonal cross with 2 red panels (top and bottom), 2 green panels (left and right), and a white centered disk bearing 3 red 6-point stars outlined in green, and arranged in a triangular design. Green symbolizes hope and optimism, white stands for purity and peace, and red represents the blood shed during the struggle for independence. The 3 stars in the center disk represent the major Burundian ethnic groups—the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa—as well as Burundi's national motto: "Unity, Work, Progress."

Geography

Located in East Africa, Burundi is a hilly, landlocked nation which borders Tanzania to the east and south, Rwanda to the north, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to the west. While it lacks direct access to the ocean, Burundi shares access to regional lakes, including Lake Cohoha, Lake Rweru, and Lake Tanganyika, the world's longest and second deepest freshwater lake (Photo: Lake Tanganyika from space).

With an area of 10,745 sq mi, Burundi is slightly smaller than the state of Maryland and slightly larger than neighboring Rwanda. It features plains in the East, a central plateau, and rolling hills. The highest point is Mount Heha, an 8,759 ft peak located 30 miles southeast of Bujumbura. Lake Tanganyika in the Southwest is Burundi's lowest point at 2,533 ft.

Climate

Burundi's proximity to the equator results in its warm and humid climate at lower elevations and mild and temperate in the mountains. There are 4 distinguishable seasons in Burundi: dry (June-August), wet (September-November), short dry (December-January), and long wet (February-May). Daily temperatures vary substantially by altitude and time of year. In Bujumbura the average high temperature in the dry season is 86°F, while temperatures fall to the 70s during the more humid rainy season. In hilly and mountainous areas, average temperatures hover between 60°F and 75°F. In the central plateau, the annual average is 68°F. Burundi typically receives between 51 and 63 inches of rainfall annually.

Natural Hazards

Flooding, landslides, and drought are Burundi's major natural hazards. Although floods occur more frequently, droughts tend to cause more disruption and damage to the food supply. For instance, a drought in 2005 affected over 2 million Burundians, killing 12. Burundians' farming practices exacerbate deforestation and soil erosion.

Government

Burundi is a multiparty republic. Its 18 provinces are subdivided into 119 communes, further partitioned into ***collines*** or hills (see p1 of *History and Myth*). All Burundians 18 and over are eligible to vote.

Executive Branch

Elected by popular vote to a maximum of two 5-year terms, the President serves as chief-of-state, head-of-government, and commander-in-chief of the military. In addition to executing laws passed by Parliament, the President issues decrees that can modify legislation. Former Hutu militia leader and current President Pierre Nkurunziza (pictured) is of mixed Hutu and Tutsi descent, assuming the Presidency in 2005. The President appoints the Council of Ministers and 2 Vice Presidents with Parliament's approval. First Vice President Gaston Sindimwo, a Tutsi, manages political coordination, while Second Vice President Joseph Butore, a Hutu, coordinates economic and social affairs. Both were appointed in 2015.

Legislative Branch

Parliament consists of upper and lower houses, the Senate and National Assembly respectively. Per the constitution, the Senate consists of 54 members (43 in the 2015 election), 34 elected by indirect vote to serve 5-year terms. Locally elected officials select one Hutu and one Tutsi Senator from each of the 18 provinces, with the remaining seats reserved for minority representatives and former Presidents. An independent commission may appoint additional members to ensure ethnic balance.

The National Assembly comprises a minimum of 100 members elected by popular vote and must include 60% Hutu, 40% Tutsi, and an additional 3 Twa members. As with the Senate, the independent commission can appoint additional members to achieve ethnic balance. In 2015, President Nkurunziza's political party, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy - Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-

FDD) won 77 of 121 National Assembly seats and 33 of 43 Senate seats.

Judicial Branch

Burundi's legal system is based on Belgian civil law and traditional local laws. While a 9-member Supreme Court is the highest court in the country, a separate Constitutional Court ensures that laws and public servants comply with Burundi's constitution. The judiciary is supposedly independent, although the executive branch occasionally exerts influence. Corruption, lack of judicial training, and inefficiencies also negatively affect judicial processes and outcomes.

Political Climate

Burundi's 2005 constitution provides for power-sharing among the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa ethnic groups and for a system of checks and balances between the President and Parliament. It also includes a provision for female representation (see p1 of *Sex and Gender*).The President's CNND-FDD party dominated the country's first free and fair post-civil war elections in 2005. It then took advantage of its ruling party status in the 2010 elections, using state facilities and resources and garnering more media coverage than its opponents (see p9 of *History and Myth*). Such unfair advantages and serious but limited instances of overshadowing the opposition during the 2010 local elections prompted a response. Accordingly, a number of parties boycotted Burundi's first presidential election by direct vote held later that year. In turn, some members of Burundi's Hutu rebel group, The National Liberation Forces (FNL), resumed armed attacks (see p7-8 of *History and Myth*).

Currently, some Tutsi and Hutu political parties still hold extreme views, encouraging their youth militias to attack political opponents. For the most part, Burundian political organizations tend to cross ethnic lines, although some officials tend to favor their own ethnic groups to the point of causing widespread corruption. Overall, Burundi appears to be on the path of recovery from its civil war (see p8-9 of *History and*

Myth). The 2015 elections were expected to be a critical barometer of Burundi's democratic progress.

Defense

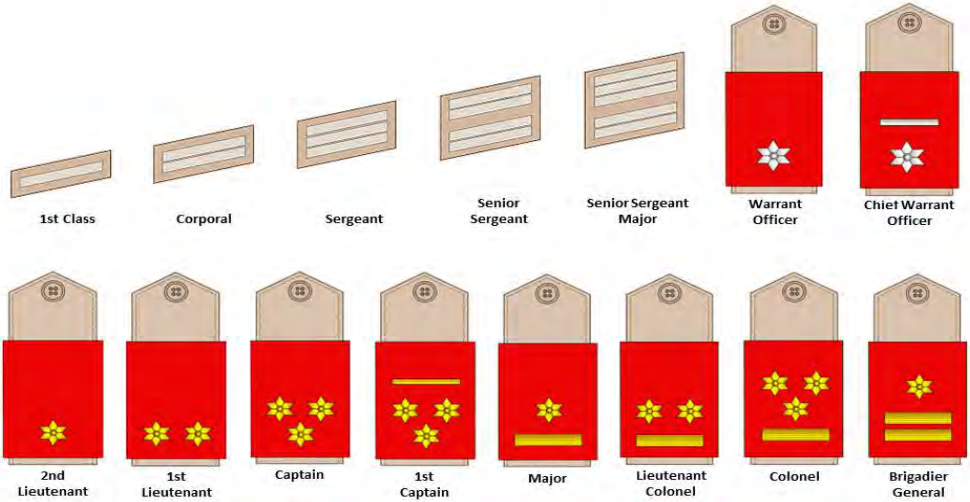
Burundi's National Defense Forces (known by its French initials FDN) are composed of the Army and National Police. Burundi spent about $61.7 million or almost 1.73% of GDP on its military in 2019. Its military is not well-equipped, and procurement is typically limited to small and medium caliber weapons, uniforms, radios, and ammunition. Military service is voluntary.

Although the Tutsi historically dominated the Burundian military, a December 2004 mandate required equal representation of Hutu and Tutsi within the armed forces. By 2009, over 20,000 former Hutu rebels were integrated. This ethnic assimilation and other reforms have diminished the influence of the military in Burundi's internal politics, where it previously played a significant role.

Army: With about 30,050 troops as of 2019, the Army's mission is to protect the country from external threats and help maintain internal security. Although primarily a land-based force, the Army includes a naval detachment that monitors the Lake Tanganyika shore, an Air Wing, and a Coast Guard component. Despite its small size and limited capabilities, Burundian Army soldiers participate in United Nations (UN)-sponsored peacekeeping engagements in Africa in order to gain experience, funds, training, and equipment. In addition, the US Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance program provides training and support to the Burundian Army (Photo: Burundian peacekeepers prepare for a mission to Somalia after completing US training).

National Police: Burundi's National Police (PNB) is a paramilitary force with approximately 21,000 personnel charged with maintaining public order, preventing and solving crimes, and helping to guard the land, lake, and air borders along with its Army counterparts.

Burundian National Defense Force Rank Insignia



Security Issues

Regional Instability and Transnational Crime: Although there are few known armed militia groups operating in Burundi, rebels and arms often cross Burundi's permeable borders with the DRC and Rwanda. The region's instability and poverty have facilitated the activities of criminal networks: Burundi is a source country for the trafficking of children and women for sexual exploitation and forced labor.

Refugees and Internally Displaced People: Since 2012, Burundi hosted over 66,000 refugees, most from the neighboring DRC. Burundi also counts over 168,000 internally displaced people who were forced from their ancestral homes due to violence and natural disasters (see p8-9 of *History and Myth*). Unable to return home due to land disputes and other issues, they live in 120 settlements in northern and central Burundi.

Domestic Insecurity: Foreign nationals should be wary of traveling outside Bujumbura, as the security situation is now volatile – stemming from the protest of the 2015 election. In addition, armed bandits may ambush vehicles at roadblocks. It is best not to walk after dark in Bujumbura where muggings, burglaries, and robberies are common. Furthermore, large public gatherings such as political demonstrations and even sporting events sometimes turn violent and should be avoided. (Photo: A Burundian dancer performs at the US embassy dedication).

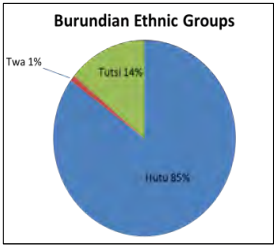
Terrorism: The Somalia-based Islamic terrorist group Al-Shabaab has publicly threatened Burundi for its support of UN peacekeeping missions in Somalia and poses a credible violent threat across East Africa.

Foreign Relations

With little influence on the world stage, Burundi's foreign policy focuses on maintaining friendly relations with its neighbors, which are critical in ensuring its access to global trade routes (see p3 of *Economics and Resources*).

While regional upheaval and refugee issues created tensions with neighboring Rwanda, Tanzania, and the DRC in the 1990s and 2000s, relations have improved. Despite a minor territorial dispute that occasionally prompts a display of force, Rwanda and Burundi have cordial though not close ties that include joint commissions on security, trade, agriculture, and social affairs. Relations with the DRC are also friendly and handled both bilaterally and through the East African Community. Burundi participates in several other multilateral organizations, including the UN, the African Union, and the Francophonie International Organization.

Burundi-US Relations: The US established diplomatic relations with Burundi in 1962 and recently opened a new US embassy in Bujumbura in May 2013. US interests in Burundi include continued internal peace, sustained democracy, economic development, healthcare improvements, and regional stability. US engagement focuses on trade, political and social development, and military cooperation. US military engagement with Burundi is designed to strengthen the bilateral partnership and improve Burundian capacity. US and Burundian forces conduct joint exercises; the US also trains Burundian peacekeepers before their UN deployments.



Ethnic Groups

Burundi recognizes 3 ethnic identities—Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa (see p2 of *History and Myth*—although ethnicity is not necessarily an identifiable characteristic). Most of its members speak the same native language (see p1 of *Language and Communication)* and exhibit few profound cultural differences. Hutu and Tutsi dress the same, conduct similar work, reside together in neighborhoods, and intermarry. In fact, some scholars believe that the labels “Hutu” and “Tutsi” arose from historical class-based distinctions rather than ethnic divisions (see p2 of *History and Myth*). Regardless, these categories were at the heart of Burundi’s violent past and remain important social categories for many Burundians.

Since the end of the civil war and the 2005 constitution's more equitable distribution of power, the 3 ethnic groups enjoy fairer representation in the government and military. Despite these positive changes, some discrimination and ethnically-motivated violence have persisted (see p4-9 of *History and Myth*).

Hutu

The Hutu, also called Bahutu, Abahutu, or Wahutu, comprise 85% of Burundi's population. Traditionally, the Hutu maintained a sedentary farming lifestyle and comprised a majority of the country's population.

Tutsi

Traditionally cattle herders, the Tutsi constitute 14% of Burundi's population and are also known as Batusi, Watusi, Watutsi, or Abatutsi. Although the Tutsi have always been a minority, they have historically maintained a dominant social, political, and economic position in Burundian society.

Twa

An estimated 120,000 Twa (also called Batwa or Pygmies) reside in Burundi. Although they are likely the oldest group in Burundi, the Twa represent less than 1% of the population. Historically marginalized in Burundian society, the Twa were traditionally a hunter-gatherer or forager people.

Burundi's traditional social system allowed for some degree of mobility between categories. For example, a Hutu who acquired a herd of cattle assumed a Tutsi identity. This sort of social mobility was generally not available to the Twa, who both the Tutsi and Hutu have regarded as inferior. Most Twa do not own land and are often forbidden from hunting, resulting in the destruction of their traditional way of life and in severe poverty. In addition, the Twa often face harsh discrimination (Photo: Burundian Twa women carry traditional pots).

Social Relations

Burundi's patterns of social stratification often align with its ethnic categories. The Tutsi traditionally enjoyed higher social status through their cattle ownership and association with the monarchy (see p2 & 4 of *History and Myth*). Similarly, the Tutsi today overwhelmingly occupy the more prestigious jobs in business, government, and the military and are better represented among the wealthy. While some Hutu have attained salaried positions and risen in the ranks in government and business, many Hutu are poor, often illiterate farmers. The Twa have even fewer opportunities to escape poverty due to inadequate access to education and other support services.

While ethnic identity is not usually discernible by sight, Burundians' dress, educational achievement, and lifestyle are key indicators of their social and economic standing. The elite tend to dress stylishly and have a good command of French, a competency often attained through university education at home or abroad (see p5 of *Learning and Knowledge*). The urban elite in Bujumbura often live in fashionable districts with exotic names like Havana and Bora Bora. By contrast, poorer Burundians often live in rural areas as subsistence farmers, wear imported second-hand clothing, and speak only native Kirundi (see p1 of *Language and Communication*).

Like many other Africans, Burundians tend to emphasize the importance of groups—especially extended family and their home villages—over individuals. Because personal relationships are crucial to maintaining social status, group members readily share their knowledge, resources, time, and possessions with other members. By helping their own group, members benefit from the group's social connections. People who put their own needs or desires before those of the group are disdained because their selfish choices could potentially destroy the entire network. Burundians tend to greatly respect their elders and people they consider wise and diplomatic (see p4 of *Language and Communication*).

3. RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Overview

Burundi is a predominantly Christian country. While reliable statistics on religious affiliation are unavailable, sources estimate that about 92% of Burundians are Christian, either Roman Catholic and Protestant. Estimates for the Muslim population range from 2-3% of the total population, while roughly 6% of Burundians practice traditional religions. The government nationally observes both Christian and Muslim religious holidays (Photo: Cathedral in Bujumbura).

Generally, Burundians of different faiths live and work together without friction. While President Nkurunziza identifies as a born-again Christian, several Muslims serve in his Cabinet. Religion historically has not been and still is not a source of group identity in Burundi. All faiths have Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa adherents from all regions of the country.

Traditional Beliefs

Religious beliefs and practices historically provided a basis for political power in traditional Burundian society. Viewed as the medium between the supernatural and the people, the king (***mwami***) had both religious and political responsibilities. In order to establish his legitimacy as ruler, the ***mwami*** performed rituals which bestowed the “essence of life” upon his people and reaffirmed his and his people’s places within a divinely ordained social hierarchy. The ***mwami*** received assistance from designated ritual specialists, such as royal rainmakers, who performed particular rites during fertility festivals.

Burundian traditional beliefs included several components, many of which remain customary today. First, Burundians believed in a creator god (***Imana***) a term that also refers to the force of good that causes prosperity, joy, peace, and fertility. Living things such as people, animals, and plants as well as stones, fire, and rivers, all have ***Imana***.

Second, Burundians traditionally believed that all people and animals possess the same basic life force or universal soul (***igitshutsu***). ***Igitshutsu*** is believed to disappear when an animal dies, yet transforms into an ancestor spirit when a person dies. Among the ancestor spirits, the ***bihume*** are the malevolent souls of people who died violent deaths and seek to disturb the living. Burundians believed these ancestor spirits could cause cattle epidemics, crop failure, and sickness among their own clan members. To appease an unhappy ancestor spirit, Burundians consulted diviners to communicate with the spirit or left food and beer next to the ancestor's grave.

Third, Burundians believed that the leader (***Kiranga)*** of all the ancestral spirits could prevent ***Imana*** from helping people. Consequently, Burundians did not directly worship ***Imana*** but rather attempted to support ***Imana*** by placating and honoring ***Kiranga*** through rituals, chants, and dances. Ritual specialists or priests acted as mediators between the spirits and the people, occasionally delivering prophesies, while the ***mwami*** proclaimed his superiority over ***Kiranga*** in stories and rituals.

Introduction of Islam

Arab traders brought Islam to the region at the end of the 19th century and established centers of Swahili culture and language (see p2 of *Language and Communication*). A few Burundians converted to Islam, forming small Muslim communities that included both Hutu and Tutsi.

Introduction of Christianity

European explorers and missionaries came to landlocked Burundi relatively late as compared to other African countries (see p3 of *History and Myth*) (Photo: Monument near Bujumbura where journalist Henry Stanley met missionary Dr. David Livingstone in the late 19th century). The French Catholic White Fathers ("White" refer to the ritual color of the missionaries' robes) arrived in 1879, although local resistance prevented them from establishing missions until the Germans

secured the area in 1892. By 1900, the White Fathers, joined by the White Sisters, began to establish churches and schools.

As the first Protestants in Burundi, the German Lutherans arrived in 1911 but left again when the Belgians invaded and ejected the Germans in 1916 (see p3-4 of *History and Myth*). A predominantly French-speaking Catholic country, Belgium supported the work of Catholic missionaries, eventually providing government sponsorship and funding solely to French-speaking Catholic missions.

Religion in the Colonial Period

Other Christian denominations sent missionaries to Burundi. The Seventh Day Adventists and Danish Baptists arrived in the 1920s followed by the British Anglicans, Swedish Pentecostals, American Friends (Quakers), and Free Methodists in the 1930s. Despite the presence of these other groups, the colonial regime's backing of the Catholic Church ensured its growth over that of other Christian denominations.

In their initial missionary efforts, both the Germans and Belgians favored the Tutsi as primary beneficiaries of mission services such as healthcare and education (see p1 of *Learning and Knowledge*). While its neighboring Rwandan Church also favored the Tutsi during the colonial period, the Burundian Catholic Church generally did not promote ethnic divisions or provide ideological support for a certain group (see p4-5 of *History and Myth*). Generally, the Tutsi tended to distrust Christian missionaries who found many of their early converts among the Hutu instead.

By the 1930s, many Tutsi had changed their opinion of the Catholic Church, and by 1948, 32 of 36 Tutsi chiefs were baptized Catholics. Overall, the Church was enjoying phenomenal growth among both Tutsi and Hutu. By the 1950s, many church functionaries shifted their focus toward the socially and politically disadvantaged Hutu in response to broader changes within the Catholic Church (Photo: Catholic Church in Gitega).

Religion after Independence

Following independence the Catholic Church never succeeded in converting Tutsi King Mwambutsa IV (see p6 of *History and Myth*), although it did win many local leaders and suppressed many local traditions. By the late 1970s and 1980s, the Burundian government perceived that the Catholic Church had begun to favor the Hutu over the Tutsi, and in response, attempted to restrict the Church's activities. Religious gatherings were prohibited without prior approval, the Church's youth movement banned, Catholic schools nationalized, and the Catholic radio station and newspaper closed (see p5-7 *History and Myth*).

After the 1987 military coup, President Buyoya, a Catholic, ended the restrictions on the Church (see p7-8 of *History and Myth*). While the Catholic Church as an institution was deeply implicated in the atrocities of the Rwandan genocide, it did not play a similar role in the Burundian violence of the last decades (see p8-9 of*History and Myth*). Today, some Tutsi and Hutu occasionally accuse the Church of siding with the other. Some Tutsi still view the Catholic Church as a potential obstruction to their interests, while some Hutu believe the Church has not done enough to end discrimination against Hutu.

Christianity Today

Although the well-established Catholic Church and Protestant denominations dominate the religious landscape, other types of Christian communities have emerged in recent decades.

Roman Catholicism: Burundi's Catholics live in communities across the country and identify as Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa. As Burundi's largest church, the Catholic Church has been very active in peace and reconciliation initiatives.

Mainstream Protestant Denominations: Most of the older Protestant denominations, including the Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, and Friends (Quakers) group together as the National Council of Churches of Burundi (CNEB). The Anglicans were traditionally associated with the Tutsi, while the

Baptists, Methodists, and Friends had a largely Hutu leadership.

Today, all denominations have members from all ethnic groups. Like the Catholic Church, the CNEB supports many peace and reconciliation initiatives. The Swedish Free Mission is Burundi's second largest church.

Independent African Churches: This grouping assumes several different forms, although most of them trace their founding to charismatic leaders who opposed the colonial regime and broke away from mainstream Protestant mission churches (Photo: US Army chaplains with their Burundian counterparts).

Charismatic Churches: This religious component is characterized by informal services during which worshippers pray loudly, speak in tongues, and sing, clap, and dance ecstatically. Members of these churches interpret the Bible literally and believe in faith healing, prophesies, and miracles through prayer. They are discouraged from gambling, consuming alcohol, and smoking cigarettes.

Charismatic Pentecostal churches are presently experiencing rapid growth. By emphasizing forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, and hope, Pentecostal churches have found a natural audience in Burundi's post-civil war. Their themes of liberation from poverty, sickness, and evil resonate strongly with many Burundians. Unlike many of the country's other religious groups, Pentecostals do not typically incorporate traditional beliefs and practices into their services, as they consider them incompatible with Christianity.

Islam Today

During the civil war, some members of the Burundian Muslim community refused to divide themselves along ethnic lines or take part in the violence. In addition, some Muslims welcomed displaced and needy families from all backgrounds, demonstrating a sense of solidarity that many Burundians

admired. This positive association with Islam, plus the growing use of Kirundi instead of Arabic in prayer services, has attracted many Burundians to the faith. Consequently, there has been a large increase in the Muslim population since 1993. Burundian Muslims live primarily in urban areas in the western part of the country.

Traditional Beliefs Today

A traditional worldview infuses daily life for many Burundians—even those who identify as Christian or Muslim. Many Burundians worship in a way that blends elements of both traditional religions and Christianity. Many Christians, for example, refer to ***Imana*** in their church worship services. Other Burundians, both Christian and non-Christian, may wear charms to protect themselves against the curses of malevolent spirits such as the ***bihume***.

In addition to expressing a connection to ***Imana*** in church, many Burundians also perform special rituals or ceremonies to bring ***Imana***, the force of good, into their lives and homes. A woman hoping to bear children, for example, may position a pitcher of water near her bed before going to sleep in the hope that ***Imana*** will bless her with creation during the night. Other Burundians perform rituals to venerate ancestral spirits in the hopes of influencing ***Imana*** who is considered benevolent but distant (Photo: US Army chaplains and Burundian children in Bujumbura in 2011).

Witchcraft: Accusations of witchcraft or sorcery often surge in times of political violence and economic uncertainty, occurring relatively frequently in Burundi. The media occasionally report cases of suspected witches slain by their alleged victims or accusers. Authorities have reported that Burundians working with so-called “witchdoctors” from neighboring Tanzania have killed more than 20 albino people in Burundi since 2008 with the aim of collecting their body parts for use in witchcraft rituals.

4. FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Overview

Burundians highly value their family relationships. As the foundation of Burundian society, large extended families offer a social network and an economic safety net. Individuals are expected to care for less fortunate relatives and abide by family decisions.

Family Structure

Burundian families are close-knit and typically patriarchal, meaning that adult males are the key decision-makers. Women are respected for their life-giving roles as mothers but often have little say in family decisions. Nevertheless, the civil war and the spread of HIV/AIDs increased the number of women and children-headed households, thereby upending the traditional patriarchal structure for many families (see p8-9 of *History and Myth* and p4 of *Sustenance and Health*).

Burundian families are obliged to ensure their members' welfare, even if it presents a hardship for them. They greatly respect their elderly family members and typically provide for them in their old age. Elders often advise younger family members and mediate family disputes. Burundians routinely treat and care for unrelated fellow villagers as if they were kin.

Polygyny: Outlawed in Burundi in 1980, polygyny is the practice of a man having multiple wives simultaneously. Polygyny was an acceptable tradition until Christianity gained influence (see p2-3 of *Religion and Spirituality*). Despite opposition from church groups and the state, some Burundians still practice polygyny, particularly Muslims and followers of traditional religions (see p1-2 & 5-6 of *Religion and Spirituality*). While almost 12% of married Burundians are part of a polygynous marriage, these relationships have no legal status.

Children: Burundians consider children as gifts, so most women bear several offspring (see p3 of *Sex and Gender*). Families tend to value sons more than daughters because a son will typically remain with his birth family after marriage and care for his elderly parents. By contrast, a daughter will become a member of her husband's family upon marriage.

Children learn to obey and respect their elders from an early age. Parents typically begin preparing their children for adult roles and responsibilities early, expecting them to contribute to the family's livelihood from a young age. Burundian mothers teach their daughters how to tend crops and manage a household. Girls as young as 5 often care for their younger siblings and cousins (see p1 of *Sex and Gender*).

Boys help their fathers with the livestock, in the fields, and around the house. A father typically teaches his sons a trade or profession (see p2 of *Economics & Resources*). Since many rural boys receive little formal schooling (see p2-3 of *Learning and Knowledge*), they rarely have the opportunity to pursue a trade different from their fathers.

Residence

Burundian residences vary by location and family financial status. Rural Burundians traditionally own homes on ancestral lands. Nuclear families (a couple and their offspring) often occupy a few grass thatched-roof huts enclosed by a fence within an extended family compound. Family members usually share a communal kitchen and, with no running water, a pit latrine (see p2 of *Time and Space*). Many rural homes were destroyed or abandoned during conflict, leaving many people without shelter or access to land their families had occupied for generations (see p7 of *Political and Social Relations* and p3 of *Sustenance and Health*).

In urban areas, Burundians often settle near extended family members or others from their home village. Families often rent apartments or single-family homes made of mud or cement blocks with tin, aluminum, or clay tiles roofs.

Urban homes typically feature a kitchen, a parents' bedroom, another bedroom for the children to share, and a small yard. Most homes are sparsely furnished with minimal decoration. Owning a home in an urban area requires considerable savings and is therefore a sign of relative wealth. Indoor plumbing and electricity are other signs of prosperity.

Rites of Passage

Burundians observe rites-of-passage ceremonies to commemorate the three major life stages—birth, adulthood, and death.

Birth and Naming: The arrival of a healthy newborn is a joyous occasion. About a week after birth, the baby's paternal grandfather gives his new grandchild a meaningful Kirundi name in a ritual called the ***kuvamukiriri***. Afterwards, close family and friends gather to meet the newborn. In a symbol of good fortune and fertility, the family places the baby on a seed-filled platter. The paternal grandmother then symbolically shows the baby the notable geographic features in the area. During this event, the new mother receives flowers and small gifts. Christian babies may also be baptized and given a Christian name in a church ceremony. While the birth of a single baby prompts universal celebration, the birth of twins is considered a misfortune in the traditional belief system that must be countered with the performance of certain rituals.

Coming-of-Age: Because many Burundians do not document their ages or mark their birthdays, coming-of-age can be a gradual process that culminates in marriage for both men and women. In many Christian churches, confirmation ceremonies mark young Burundians as old enough to make key faith decisions. Wealthier families that value education often mark school graduations as important milestones.

Burundians recognize puberty as another step towards adulthood. Sometime during puberty, young men in rural areas offer their fathers banana wine and request a place to build their own huts in the family compound. This act signifies that they feel ready to marry and provide for their own families.

Dating and Courtship

Although Burundian parents traditionally arranged their children's marriages, young Burundians today are increasingly likely to date before marriage. In Bujumbura, young men and women often meet prospective partners at dance clubs, parties, school, or the beach at Lake Tanganyika. Rural couples typically meet at traditional community gatherings, church, or the market.

After a series of casual dates, the young man typically offers the young woman a gift of jewelry or clothing to signal his intention to continue the relationship. The young woman's acceptance of the gift begins a new courtship stage. Next, the man demonstrates his financial well-being with a gift of money commensurate with his status. Women do not offer men gifts during courtship and are expected to return the money if the relationship ends.

The formal betrothal process begins with the prospective groom and his family visiting and offering beer to the likely bride's family (see p2 of *Sustenance and Health*). Both parties share the beer from a single pot to symbolize the union of their families. These festivities often take place in the presence of a community mediator known as the ***mushingantahe***.

Marriage

Although parental consent for marriage is not required under the law, most young people seek their families' guidance and approval when selecting a spouse. In addition, families often investigate the financial and social suitability of the match. Some Muslim families still arrange their children's marriages for them. Hutu and Tutsi often intermarry in both urban and rural areas despite Burundi's history of ethnic conflict (see p4-10 of *History and Myth*).

Although the legal marriage age is 21 for males and 18 for females, it is common for Burundians to marry much younger. In 2017, nearly 20% of women had married before their 18th birthdays and 3% of girls had married under 15. Nevertheless,

the high costs of weddings often delay first marriages. Many Burundians engage in co-habitation before matrimony. Others celebrate group weddings to reduce costs.

Brideprice: Once the families agree to the match, they must settle on a brideprice (***inkwano***). Intended as compensation for the bride's absence from and loss of labor to her family, the brideprice also proves that the groom is able to support his bride. A groom may pay the equivalent of hundreds of dollars in cash, livestock, farm equipment, and other goods depending on his social status. Once the brideprice is set, the couple selects a date, and a group of close friends plans the wedding.

Weddings: The groom usually pays for the wedding festivities. The day before the wedding, the bride's family celebrates and wishes her well in her marriage. Many Christian weddings occur in a church or the groom's home, while Muslim couples typically sign an Islamic marriage contract in the presence of close family and friends. Many brides wear Western-style wedding dresses. After the marriage ceremony, couples gather with family and friends in a celebration that usually includes banana wine (see p2 of *Sustenance and Health*), home-cooked food, drummers, singers, and dancers (Photo: Drums are common at most special events, including weddings and funerals).

Death

Burundians typically announce a death in the community through ritual wailing. Family members dress the deceased in traditional attire, placing the body on a mat in the home where visitors extend their condolences. To request spiritual intercession on their behalf, mourners often touch the body with hands covered in flour. Muslims typically bury their dead within 24 hours, while Christian burials occur within a few days. After the burial, mourners ceremoniously clean their hands and refrain from speaking the deceased's name to avoid misfortune. Mourners do not work for a time after the death and may take up to a week off for the death of an older person. The mourning period ends with a memorial service.

5. SEX AND GENDER

Overview

Despite their significant role in daily life, Burundian women have historically suffered discrimination. Because thousands of men died during Burundi's decades of violence, Burundian women increasingly have taken on societal roles once reserved for men (see p1 of *Family and Kinship*). In addition, the 2005 constitution ensured women greater political representation. Despite these gains, women and girls still face many challenges, including gender-based violence, discriminatory cultural norms, and less access to education.

Gender Roles and Work

Roughly 90% of Burundians work in the agriculture sector as subsistence farmers in rural areas (see p2 of *Economics and Resources*). Although both men and women plant, tend, and harvest subsistence crops, women also typically maintain the household, prepare food, and care for children. Women do not generally grow cash crops, such as coffee and tea, although they often assist. In livestock-owning families, men usually manage the herds, while women tend the subsistence crops.

In urban areas, many women work outside of the home in addition to managing their households. Men tend to hold positions of authority and earn higher salaries, while women often hold non-managerial and clerical positions. Some women own small businesses in Bujumbura and other urban areas.

Gender and Politics

Although traditionally excluded from governance, Burundian women now participate in politics at both the national and local levels. The 2005 Burundian constitution requires women to fill 30% of administrative and legislative positions which has helped to focus attention on women's issues in Burundi's decision-making institutions (see p4 of *Political and Social Relations*).

Since the 2015 elections, women hold 44 of 121 National Assembly seats and 18 of 43 Senate seats. Women also hold 6 of 20 positions on the Council of Ministers. Women remain underrepresented in the judiciary. In 1993, Sylvie Kinigi became the first female Prime Minister, a position abolished in 1998, later serving briefly as Acting President.

Burundi's Ministry of National Solidarity, Human Rights, and Gender is responsible for defending and expanding women's rights. Several domestic and international non-governmental organizations also monitor and work to increase women's participation in politics, the peace process, and community building. Despite these initiatives and positive trends in women's share of decision-making, a lack of education tends to limit many women's influence.

Gender and Education

Until a girls' school opened in 1908, only boys had access to formal education in Burundi. Many Burundians still share the view that girls should focus on mastering their domestic duties rather than receiving an education (see p3 of *Learning and Knowledge*). As of 2018, roughly 24% boys continue their education past primary school, 31% of girls do. While their access to education has improved, girls are still less likely to enroll in tertiary education than boys. Reasons for this disparity include the cultural preference for educating sons; high educational costs; public safety concerns especially during times of instability; and the fact that many Burundians marry and/or procreate at a relatively young age (see p3 of *Learning and Knowledge* and p4 of *Family and Kinship*).

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Burundian women are often the victims of GBV perpetrated by their husbands, other family members, or armed groups. Armed groups have used sexual violence against women and girls to intimidate and humiliate the population during episodes of ethnic violence (see p8-9 of *History and Myth*).

Since enactment of a 2009 law, perpetrators of GBV may receive life imprisonment if the victim is a minor or contracts HIV/AIDS. Despite this change to the penal code, GBV remains widespread and is rarely prosecuted. In 2017, roughly 94% of violence victims were female with the majority being minors. Of the cases identified, 23% involved sexual or physical violence. Prosecution rates are low for several reasons. Social stigmas attached to GBV dissuade many victims from reporting the crimes. Even if victims do report GBV, they face great economic costs: a GBV victim must pay for her perpetrator's provisions while he is held during the investigation. In cases of domestic violence, many families encourage women to endure spousal maltreatment to preserve their marriages.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): While FGM is common in many African countries, it is not practiced in Burundi. Consequently, Burundi has no laws prohibiting the practice whereby the female sex organ is modified to reduce sexual pleasure and promote virginity.

Sex and Procreation

Burundi's 2020 fertility rate is the 12th highest in the world at 5.28 children per woman. Although this rate is significantly higher than the sub-Saharan African average of 5, it is markedly less than Burundi's 1980s rate of 6.9. Many Burundian women become pregnant for the first time before turning 22, have closely-spaced pregnancies, and bear children well into their 40s (see p2 of *Family and Kinship*).

The government has taken steps to decrease the fertility rate, including promoting the use of condoms and increasing their availability. As of 2017, almost 29% of Burundian women used contraception, up considerably from a mere 9% in 2005. Wealthier, better-educated, urbanite women have the highest rates of contraception use, while poorer less educated rural dwellers have less awareness of and access to contraceptive methods. Abortion is legal only in cases in which the mother's physical health is compromised.

Homosexuality

Homosexuality and gay marriage are prohibited by law in Burundi. Homosexual acts are viewed as criminal offenses that typically incur fines of up to 100,000 Francs and/or imprisonment for up to 2 years. Although prosecutions for homosexuality are fairly rare, openly homosexual Burundians face discrimination and harassment. Consequently, few homosexuals in Burundi are open about their orientation. There are advocacy groups promoting homosexual rights and providing HIV/AIDs education (see p4 of *Sustenance and Health*).

Gender Equality and the Law

Burundi's 2005 constitution declares gender equality, disallowing discrimination based on gender. Since 2003 Burundi has had a National Gender Policy and associated action plan designed to correct gender inequalities. Other laws forbid sexual harassment in the workplace, require women workers to be paid the same as their male counterparts for equal work, and allow for 12 weeks of maternity leave at 50% of a woman's salary.

In practice, these laws and policies are often unenforced. Female employees are frequently victims of discrimination and often earn less than men in the same jobs. Similarly, employers can refuse medical coverage to female employees who are married. In addition, employers sometimes base female promotions on sexual favors rather than work performance. Local customs and traditional laws also disfavor women in inheritance, marriage, parental custody, and property laws. For example, men can confer Burundian citizenship to their children or foreign spouses, while women cannot.

6. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Language Overview

Unlike most African countries, Burundi is not linguistically diverse. Burundi's 3 ethnic groups—the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa—speak Kirundi as their native language (see p8-9 of *Political and Social Relations*). Kirundi and Burundi's colonial language, French, are its 2 official languages. While the educated upper classes often speak French at work and among friends, Kirundi is the language of daily life for most Burundians.

Kirundi

Also known as Rundi or Ikirundi, Kirundi is a Bantu language belonging to the Niger-Congo language family. Although Kirundi was originally the language of the Hutu farmers who arrived about 1,000 years ago, the cattle-herding Tutsi and forest-dwelling Twa eventually adopted it also (see p2 of *History and Myth*) (Photo: Burundians hold a banner in Kirundi on World AIDs Day).

Almost all Burundians learn Kirundi as their first language, while approximately 40% speak Kirundi exclusively. Written with the Latin alphabet, Kirundi is the language of instruction in public school through the 4th grade (see p4 of *Learning and Knowledge*). Although the Twa dialect is slightly different from that of the Hutu and Tutsi, the dialects are mutually intelligible.

Similarly, Kirundi is mutually intelligible with Ha (or Kiha), a Tanzanian language, and Kinyarwanda, one of neighboring Rwanda's official languages. Some linguists consider Kirundi and Kinyarwanda to be dialects of a single language known as Rwanda-Rundi. Kirundi is a tonal language, whereby a word can differ in meaning depending on the tone used.

French

Originally introduced by Belgian colonists (see p4 of *History and Myth*), French is spoken primarily as a second language by educated Burundians. Although fewer than a million Burundians speak French proficiently, it remains the chief

language in government, commerce, and higher education. In addition, French is the primary language of instruction in upper primary and secondary public school (see p4-5 of *Learning and Knowledge*).

Swahili

Swahili, also known as Kiswahili, is a prominent regional language and the first language of a small minority of Burundians. Most of Burundi's Swahili speakers live near Lake Tanganyika and around Bujumbura. Burundians involved in regional commerce as well as members of Burundi's Muslim minority commonly speak Swahili as a second or third language. It is also common to find several Swahili words and phrases incorporated within the Kirundi language.

English

Although Burundian students learn English in upper primary school alongside French, the number of proficient speakers remains small. English gained some popularity since Burundi joined the mostly English-speaking East African Community in 2007 (see p8 of *Political and Social Relations*). Many adults now study English in language institutes across the country. Some Burundians consider fluency in English potentially advantageous financially as Burundi seeks to increase its participation in global commerce and develop its tourist industry (see p1 and p3 of *Economics and Resources*) (Photo: Students at a US embassy-sponsored English class).

Communication Overview

Communicating effectively with Burundians requires not just the ability to speak Kirundi, French, or Swahili but also the ability to interact in culturally competent ways. Communication competence includes paralanguage (speech, volume, rate, and intonation), nonverbal communication (personal space, touch, and gestures), and interaction management (conversation initiation, turn-taking, and termination). When used properly, these aspects of communication help ensure that Burundians interpret statements as the speaker intends.

Communication Style

Burundians are typically reserved when conversing and may be particularly reserved and formal when speaking with strangers. In addition, many Burundians prefer an indirect communication style, choosing to talk around controversial issues or avoid them altogether. Although some humor can put people at ease and lead to a more open conversation, Burundians have little respect for individuals who continually make jokes. Similarly, foreign nationals should avoid sarcasm, as Burundians are likely to misunderstand their intent.

Burundians value achieving consensus in conversations. Consequently, they may not express disagreement as a means of avoiding uneasiness during a conversation. Burundians rarely offer their forthright assessment of a person or situation. Developing deeper, trust-based relationships over time and asking open-ended rather than “yes or no” questions can help produce more accurate answers.

Greetings

Burundian verbal greetings are intended to establish a friendly conversational tone and represent some of Burundi’s unique cultural traditions. For example, customary Kirundi greetings include not just typical hopes for peace and well-being but also the specific wish for large herds of cattle as a sign of prosperity (see p2 of *Economics and Resources*). Generally, neglecting to greet people is considered rude in Burundi.

Burundians commonly shake hands during greetings. Although handshakes vary by region, a common Burundian handshake involves the use of both hands of each member to convey deep respect: the right hands shake while the left hands grasp the right forearm of the other person just above the wrist.

Burundians who are close or have not seen each other for a while may embrace or kiss alternate cheeks 3 times instead of shaking hands. Acquaintances and friends may begin a greeting by singing at each other from a distance. When they

meet, they shake hands and continue to hold hands for several minutes.

Muslim Burundians may avoid physical contact with unrelated members of the opposite sex, offering verbal greetings rather than handshakes.

Forms of Address

Burundians generally address strangers and acquaintances by their titles and family names, reserving the use of first names and nicknames for family and friends. Many Burundians, especially in rural areas, do not have family names; in that case, it is polite to call a Burundian by his title and first name. Of note, Burundians may speak and write the family name before the given name, often writing the family name in capital letters in documents (e.g., SMITH John).

Burundians often use special titles of respect when speaking to elders, such as ***Nyokuru*** (old woman or mother) and ***Mutama*** (old man or father). Burundians typically use the formal French "you" (*vous*) with acquaintances and superiors. They reserve the less formal "you" (*tu*) for people they know well. Burundians consider failure to use the last name and formal pronoun conveys a lack of respect and propriety.

Conversational Topics

Burundians typically begin conversations with inquiries about health, family, work, home village, and other neutral topics before discussing more serious matters. Foreign nationals should refrain from inquiring about Burundians' ethnicity and other potentially controversial subjects, such as genocide, sex, politics, and religion. If these topics arise, the discussion should remain as neutral as possible, devoid of ridicule and excessive emotion.

Language Training Resources

Please view the Air Force Culture and Language Center website at www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/ and click on "Resources" for access to language training and other resources.

Useful Translations

English	French	Kirundi
Hello	Bonjour	Amahoro
Good morning	Bonjour	Mwaramutse
Good evening	Bonsoir	Mwiriwe
Good night	Bonne nuit	Ijoro ryiza
Goodbye	Au revoir	Mwirirwe(AM)/ Muramuke (PM)
See you soon!	À bientôt	Turasubira!
How are you?	Comment allez-vous?	Murakomeye
I am fine	Bien	Ndakomeye
What is your name?	Comment vous appelez vous?	Witwa gute?
My name is ____	Je m'appelle ___	Jewe nitwa ____
Pleased to meet you	Enchanté	Uwutanyazi
Yes	Oui	Ego
No	Non	Oya
OK	Bien	Nivyo
I don't know	Je ne sais pas	Sindabizi
Please	S'il vous plaît	Ndagusavye
Thank you	Merci	Urakoze (singular)/ murakoze (plural)
You're welcome	De rien	Kaze
Do you speak English?	Parlez-vous anglais?	Uravuga icongereza?
I don't know	Je ne sais pas	Sindabizi
Sorry?/(as in "please repeat")	Excusez-moi	Sabge?
Today	Aujourd'hui	Uyu munsi
Tomorrow	Demain	Ejo (can also mean yesterday)
Who?	Qui?	Ninde?
What?	Quoi?	Iki?
Where?	Où?	Hehe
When?	Quand?	Ryari?
How much does it cost?	Quel est le prix?	Amahera angahe?
What is that?	Qu'est que c'est?	Iki n'igiki?
Help!	Au secours!	Ntabara!
Stop!	Arrêtez!	Bangwe!

7. LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE

Literacy

- Total population over age 15 who can read and write: 68.4%
- Male: 76.3%
- Female: 61.2% (2017 estimate)

Traditional Education

Burundians historically used an informal, experience-based style of teaching to transmit values, skills, beliefs, historical knowledge, and a sense of community to younger generations. All adult family members participated in the education process consisting of hands-on lessons, storytelling, poetry, and songs. Male adults taught boys how to be breadwinners and family and community leaders, while women taught girls to conduct household and farming duties. Inherent to traditional education was teaching children to persevere during difficult tasks.

Introduction of Formal Education

New forms of education entered the region with the arrival of European Christian missionaries in the late 19th century (see p2 of *Religion and Spirituality*). Both the Germans and Belgians attempted to govern by simplifying Burundi's complex pre-colonial political system. In the process, they bolstered the power of the Tutsi elite, eventually cementing Tutsi dominance through a supposedly "scientific" system of racial classification (see p4 of *History and Myth*). These acts laid the groundwork for systematic discrimination against Hutu and Twa within Burundi's educational system that persisted into the 1990s.

Both the Germans and Belgians provided subsidies to Christian missions to build and run schools. The first Western-style school (for Catholic mission boys) opened in 1900, followed by a girls' school in 1908. The aim of these early schools was to transmit basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as Christian and Western values to prepare students for baptism into the Christian faith (see p2-4 of *Religion and Spirituality*).

Colonial administrators directed these early efforts at Tutsi, hoping that if Tutsi leaders participated, their Hutu subjects would follow. Initially distrustful of the colonizers' intent, the Tutsi resisted. Then, in the 1910s and 1920s, many Tutsi elite and some Hutu began sending their children to school after the colonial administration founded secular, government-run schools open only to the sons of Tutsi chiefs.

At that time, discrimination in the curriculum began with the teaching of the "scientific" and "historical" basis of Tutsi superiority, and only Tutsi received instruction in math and French. Unequal treatment continued in the 1930s, when the colonial administrators allowed Hutu to complete only the lower levels of primary education. This educational head start, combined with their preferential access to employment (see p10 of *Political and Social Relations*), enabled the Tutsi's dominant position in Burundian society (Photo: Burundi's Carolus-Magnus-School).

Education after World War II

Following World War II, the Belgian colonial government built more secular primary institutions, while continuing to subsidize church-run schools and largely ignoring the secondary and tertiary levels. Educational reforms in 1948 designated French as the primary language of learning in the upper grades and Kirundi in the lower grades. During this period, the government classified schools as either "central" or "bush/rural" schools. Located in Tutsi-dominated areas, the central schools taught French and offered all 6 grade levels, while the rural schools taught only Kirundi and typically lacked the necessary instructors and resources to teach all 6 grades. While not officially closed to Hutu or Twa, the central schools catered to the Tutsi, practically denying Hutu and Twa access to better education. Secondary schools at this time prioritized admission to the sons of the Tutsi elite with the goal of preparing them for service in the colonial administration. As independence neared, the colonial government modified its stance to offer more

support to the Hutu. Nevertheless, the education system largely continued to uphold societal discrimination against Hutu and Twa. Many areas lacked schools altogether and most children had no access to education. In 1957, about 2/3 of Burundi's children did not attend school. At independence in 1960, all of neighboring Belgian Congo and the colony of Ruanda-Urundi had produced just one university graduate.

Education after Independence

Three major disparities in the provision of education persisted after independence. First, funding and resources flowed disproportionately to particular regions. For example, Bururi Province, which is the home of three of Burundi's longest serving Tutsi Presidents, gained favor. Second, discrimination against Hutu and Twa continued. Third, Burundians continued to give boys preferential access to education over girls (see p2 of *Sex and Gender*).

Initial post-independence reforms proposed to expand the schools to serve as community centers for adults, making explicit their role in defining a national identity. The government devised a new curriculum emphasizing instruction in Kirundi and the practical agricultural and domestic science skills that the majority rural population needed (Photo: A primary school teaching team).

The Burundi populace responded favorably to these changes, although rising school attendance rates in the 1970s and 1980s made inequitable distribution of school staffing, equipment, and supplies rather obvious. Despite funding and resource shortages, many schools in Tutsi-dominated regions continued to operate as single full-day shift schools. By contrast, most schools in Hutu-dominated regions were forced to adopt a double shift school day, dividing students between a morning and afternoon session. Consequently, subjects were slashed from the curriculum to accommodate reduced instruction. Enrollment rates continued to climb through the 1980s at the expense of no notable improvement to education quality.

Education after 1993 Crisis

In the years before the armed conflict of 1993, school enrollments were at their highest levels as hundreds of new classrooms had been built (see p8 of *History and Myth*). As the violence escalated, school enrollments plummeted, teachers fled or were killed, schools were looted or destroyed, and the government drastically cut funding for education. After the crisis, the government immediately began to recruit new teachers and reopen schools. Although the number of teachers in Burundi had returned to pre-1993 levels by 1997, it was 13 years before primary enrollment returned to pre-conflict levels.

The most significant post-conflict change took place at the secondary and tertiary levels. Prior to 1993, secondary schools provided places for only about 10% of primary school graduates. By 2002, the government had opened over 350 new secondary schools, including over 250 junior secondary schools called ***collèges communaux*** or ***cocos***. Several private universities and institutes also opened during this time.

Modern Education System

Most Burundians today regard education as the primary mechanism to lift their children out of poverty. In addition, the government is attempting to install a more equitable educational system that promotes societal equality. Since 2005, school has been compulsory for all children between the ages of 6 and 12. About 93% of eligible children are enrolled in primary school.

Primary: Students usually enter primary school at age 7, where Kirundi is the initial medium of instruction for the first 4 grades and French thereafter. Upon completion of the 6 years of primary school, students receive the *Certificat d'Etudes Primaires* (Primary School Leaving Certificate). Despite high enrollment rates, primary school completion rates still average only about 63%. Similarly, only 76% of primary school graduates transition to lower secondary school. For the most

part, Burundi's primary schools continue to suffer from a lack of qualified teachers, classrooms, and supplies. Burundi aims to radically improve both primary school completion rates and lower secondary school enrollment rates over the next decade through various projects intended to foster greater accountability in the provision of basic education (Photo a courtesy of CultureGrams, ProQuest 2014).

Secondary: The next level consists of 4 grades of lower and 3 years of upper secondary, usually conducted in French. Upon completion of lower secondary school, students receive the *Certificat du Tronc Commun* (Common Track Certificate) and may enter upper secondary school. Upon its successful completion, students receive the *Diplome d'Etat* (State Diploma) and may continue their education at the tertiary level. While about 76% of primary school graduates enter secondary school, only about 29% of males and 36% of females completed lower secondary school in 2018. Many students must drop out because their families cannot afford the school fees or they must work to help support their families.

Tertiary: Higher education in Burundi remains underdeveloped. The only public university, Bujumbura's University of Burundi, opened in 1960. Several private universities and institutes also offer various courses of study. Since tertiary education was severely hampered during Burundi's years of conflict, most institutes are still rebuilding the programs that were lost during those years.

Vocational Education: Vocational educational programs are available at both the secondary and tertiary levels and typically culminate with certification to work in a particular profession. Technical and professional training programs are underfinanced (less than 2% of the education budget); two polls conducted in 2016 disclose that Burundian youth are requesting more employment opportunities and the necessary training to perform well in the working environment.

8. TIME AND SPACE

Concept of Time

As is common throughout much of Africa, Burundians generally exhibit a relaxed attitude toward time, although they tend to be more punctual in the workplace than people from many other African countries.

Time and Work

Burundi's work week extends from Monday-Friday. Banks and offices are open from 7:30am-12:00pm and 2:00pm-5:00pm with a midday lunch break. Shops generally have similar hours as banks and offices, although they may remain open longer in the afternoons or open for reduced hours on Saturdays. Burundi is in the Central Africa Time Zone (CAT), 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and 7 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST). Burundi does not participate in daylight savings time.

Punctuality and Deadlines

In professional settings, Burundians appreciate punctuality and adherence to deadlines but also value establishing interpersonal relationships with colleagues and business partners. Consequently, Burundians in work settings often strive to balance the need for creating personal rapport with the requirement to stay on schedule. Personal and family obligations, such as funerals, may take precedence over professional arrangements (see p5 of *Family and Kinship*).

In social settings, Burundians consider time more fluid and often arrive late for social engagements. They tend to focus on the present situation and sustaining good relations with those in attendance. A Burundian would consider it a gesture of politeness to commit to a deadline, even if he knows he will be unable to fulfill the promise (see p3 of Language and Communication) (Photo: Burundi's Land Forces Chief discusses peacekeeping with a US military official).

Concept of Space

Burundians' concept of appropriate personal space during interactions varies depending on familiarity, relationship, and social rank. While new acquaintances usually keep about an arm's length of distance when conversing, close friends and family members may stand much closer. As the gap in social rank increases so does the distance between individuals. Only the higher ranked individual may initiate a move to reduce this gap. Conversational touching demonstrates that speakers know each other well. Foreign nationals should avoid touching unless a Burundian initiates contact (Photo: US Ambassador and President Nkurunziza shaking hands).

In public spaces, Burundians may manage and occupy space in ways that may be unfamiliar to foreign nationals. For example, litter is common in most public areas. In addition, many Burundians have no running water in their homes and typically wash themselves and their clothes in drainage ditches (see p3-4 of *Sustenance and Health*). When seeking attention or service at a shop or office, Burundians do not typically form lines but instead jostle for position. Burundians tend to be private and stoic in public and consider public displays of affection or other strong emotions as inappropriate.

Eye Contact

Burundians consider overt, constant, and direct eye contact as aggressive or flirtatious. Thus, they tend to make eye contact during greetings and then shift their gaze during subsequent conversation. As a sign of respect, Burundians typically look away or downward when speaking to superiors or elders.

Physical Taboos

Like many Africans, Burundians use the left hand for personal hygiene and therefore consider it unclear. Thus, foreign nationals are advised to use the right hand or both hands when eating, shaking hands, passing objects, and gesturing to avoid causing offense.

Photographs

Burundians in general are willing to be photographed and may appreciate the opportunity to view their picture. Foreign nationals are advised to request permission before photographing Burundians. Taking pictures of public infrastructure, such as military establishments and airports, or of uniformed military and police personnel is prohibited.

Holidays

Fixed-Date National Holidays

- January 1: New Year's Day
- February 5: Unity Day
- May 1: Labor Day
- July 1: Independence Day
- August 15: Assumption Day
- October 13: Rwagasore Day*
- October 21: Ndadaye Day*
- November 1: All Saints' Day
- December 25: Christmas Day

*These holidays commemorate the assassinations of Prince Rwagasore and Melchior Ndadaye's (see p5 & 8 of *History and Myth*).

Variable Religious Holidays

Christian holidays are set according to the church calendar, while Muslim holidays follow the Islamic lunar calendar:

- **Easter Sunday**: Celebration of Jesus Christ's resurrection
- **Ascension Day**: The Thursday 40 days after Easter Sunday
- **Eid al-Fitr**: End of ***Ramadan***

9. AESTHETICS AND RECREATION

Overview

Burundian dress, recreation, and arts represent a blending of indigenous traditions and Western influences. In many cases, they also reflect Burundi's widespread poverty and a pervasive desire to overcome past ethnic division.

Dress

Burundian dress varies greatly depending on the wearer's income and status level and place of residence. Many poor Burundians, especially subsistence farmers in the countryside, cannot afford new clothes or shoes. Instead, they walk barefoot and wear secondhand clothing donated from other countries. By contrast, many urban Burundians can afford to be fashion-conscious. Western style clothing is common in Bujumbura and other urban areas where many young Burundians from well-off families wear designer t-shirts and blue jeans.

In professional settings, men typically wear Western-style suits and ties, while women wear Western-style dresses, skirts, blouses, and suits. Despite warm temperatures, foreign nationals should dress in a similar manner so as to convey their own competence and to express their respect for their Burundian hosts.

Traditional Clothing: The traditional everyday garment for males and females of all ages is the ***pagne***, a one-piece, usually colorful wraparound garment. While only elderly men wear the ***pagne*** for everyday wear, many women of all ages regularly dress in ***pagnes*** along with a head wrap known as an ***igitambara***. For formal occasions, women wear the ***imvutano*** (pictured), a 3-piece dress worn over one shoulder. The traditional formal outfit for men, the ***imgega***, is also worn over one shoulder. Burundian mothers often carry their infants in a goatskin sling around their backs.

Recreation

Because most Burundians work as subsistence farmers (see p2 of *Economics and Resources*), they have relatively little spare time and consequently seek ways to incorporate recreation into their everyday tasks. For example, women often sing traditional songs together while working around the house or washing clothes. Men may supplement the family diet by hunting or fishing with friends. Herders participate in a popular poetry contest called ***kivivuga amazina*** as they tend their livestock (see p1 of *Sex and Gender*). When they do have free time, Burundians enjoy being with friends and family, playing sports or games, reciting poetry, or telling riddles and stories, often in the form of chants known as ***igitito***.

Sports and Games

Soccer: Played in professional stadiums, city streets, and rural fields throughout the country, soccer (known as football in Burundi and throughout Africa) is the most popular sport. Burundians avidly watch the country's top soccer league, the Amstel Ligue. Children and teenagers engage in pick-up games across the country, even if the ball is simply a bundle of rags. Although the Burundian national team, ***Les Hirondelles*** (The Sparrows), has never qualified for the World Cup or Africa Cup of Nations, multiple Burundi-born players have gone on to play professional soccer around the world (Photo: US Embassy Chargé d'Affaires presenting new soccer balls to the Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture).

Other Sports: Other popular sports include basketball, volleyball, track and field, handball, and rugby. Many Burundians also participate in walking clubs that meet on Sunday mornings. Burundi has achieved only one Olympic medal, gold for the 5,000-meter race in 1996. Under former soccer coach and sports enthusiast President Nkuruziza, Burundi's government has used sports as a tool to promote peace (see p9 of *History and Myth*).

Toys and Games: Because many Burundian families cannot afford to purchase toys, children often play simple games with homemade toys. Popular games include ***gusimba ikibariko***, jumping with a ball; ***gukina amabuye***, throwing stones into the air and catching them before they hit the ground; and ***horo***, a girls' game that involves throwing a ball. Burundian boys favor games that involve homemade spears, knives, and bows and arrows, which allow them to develop their fighting and hunting skills. Burundi also has its own version (***Urubugu***) of the traditional African board game known as *mancala* in several other countries. This game involves strategically moving seeds or pebbles around a board with multiple holes or "pits" with the goal of capturing the other player's seeds.

Music

Music is an integral part of both daily life and special occasions. As noted earlier, women enjoy singing while doing their chores. Most social and religious gatherings also involve singing. During celebratory gatherings, Burundians often accompany their songs with clapping and dancing. Although many Burundian musical expressions are exuberant and joyful, others express sadness, longing, and hopes for peace. ***Ururirimbo***, for example, are calming songs with poetic lyrics that are performed by one person or small group with instrumental accompaniment.

The most common instruments are the ***inanga***, a bowl-like stringed wooden instrument, and ***ingoma drums*** (pictured) which were traditionally reserved for Burundian royals (see p10 of *History and Myth*). Drumming is Burundi's most celebrated art form, and the Master Drummers of Burundi regularly perform to international acclaim.

Dance

Burundian dances vary by region, ethnicity, gender, and occasion. For example, the ***urwedengwe*** is an energetic jumping dance typically performed by a group of women, while men perform the ***intore,*** an acrobatic warriors' dance.

Folklore and Literature

Prior to the development of written literature, Burundi's history and traditions were transmitted orally through the generations as stories, legends, fables, poetry, riddles, and songs. Burundian elders traditionally told stories and myths about historical Burundian kings, farmers, herders, and cattle to the younger generations (see p10 of *History and Myth*). Oral storytelling continues to be an important part of Burundian culture.

Burundi has produced relatively few works of literature compared to other French-speaking African countries. Its low literacy rates, history of political instability, and lack of publishing support have hampered Burundi's modern literary output. Nevertheless, some contemporary authors are using their craft to try to help heal their country's wounds (see *History and Myth*). Notable Burundian writers include Seraphin Sese, Louis Katamari, and Richard Ndayizigamiye.

Theater

Before contact with Europeans, Burundian theatrical performances typically supplemented storytelling. Although organized, Western-style theatrical productions first came to Burundi during the colonial era, they were limited to Bujumbura and a few other settlements and did not become widely popular. Today, cost and inaccessibility continue to keep most Burundians from enjoying live theater. Nevertheless, several amateur or semi-professional acting troupes are active, such as the nationally renowned radio theater group called Ni Nde.

Arts and Crafts

Handicrafts in Burundi are typically both functional and decorative. Baskets made from papyrus root, banana leaves, bamboo, and other fibers are common and used for a variety of practical purposes, such as food storage and toting other items (Photo: Burundian basket made of natural fibers). Many Burundian men traditionally produce leather goods and ironwork. The Twa in particular are known for their pottery.

10. SUSTENANCE AND HEALTH

Sustenance Overview

Burundi's traditional cuisine centers on a small number of typically bland ingredients which the locals supplement with spices. Burundians' limited diet and pervasive poverty have resulted in widespread malnutrition and protein deficiencies.

Dining Customs

Most Burundians eat 2 daily meals, a large lunch and a smaller dinner, usually at home with their families. Rural Burundians customarily eat from a communal bowl, using the right hand (the left hand is considered unsanitary) to take food from the portion of the dish directly in front of them. Burundians consider it impolite to eat from another's designated portion or to overindulge. Females are generally expected to eat much less than their male family members who usually dine first. Urban Burundians generally eat with utensils while sitting at a table. Although only wealthier Burundians typically dine at restaurants, many Burundians enjoy outings to modest bars called ***kabares*** that also serve small meals (Photo: Burundian women working their field).

Diet

Most Burundians receive most of their calories from starches, vegetables, and fruits. Common foods include maize, cassava, plantains, bananas, sweet potatoes, sorghum, beans, peanuts, and cabbage. Urban Burundians also have access to white rice. Burundians often season their dishes with spicy and flavorful additions like red chili powder, cumin, turmeric, garlic, parsley, or an African hot sauce called ***Piri Piri***. Fruits such as oranges, mandarins, papayas, avocados, and passion fruit are common snacks.

Starches*:* Common forms of starch are ***ugali***, a thick paste or porridge made from cornmeal or cassava, and ***fufu*** made from cassava or another starchy root vegetable that has been boiled and pounded into a paste.

Burundians traditionally scoop the ***ugali*** or ***fufu*** into a ball then dip it into an accompanying stew or sauce, such as red kidney beans cooked with red palm oil and onion.

Protein: Beans are primary source of protein for most Burundians. Because meat is prohibitively expensive, Burundians typically eat it only on special occasions, usually in the form of ***brochettes***, or shish kebabs. Many Burundians favor pork and lamb because they are typically better quality and cheaper than beef and poultry. Burundians also eat goat and fish, particularly ***ndagala*** and ***mukéké*** from Lake Tanganyika. Since their meat consumption is so low, many people suffer from ***kwashiorkor***, a disease caused by protein deficiency.

Beverages

Although much of Burundi's coffee and tea production is exported abroad (see p3 of *Economics and Resources*), Burundians enjoy locally harvested tea at most meals. Fewer Burundians regularly drink coffee (Photo: A Burundian woman prepares cups of coffee). Carbonated soft drinks, collectively called Fanta regardless of the actual brand, are also widely available. Burundians often make their own ***impeke***, sorghum beer, and ***urwarwa***, banana wine, which are the most common alcoholic drinks. Commercial breweries produce 2 local beers (***ikiyeri***), Primus and Amstel. Many Burundians prefer warm or room temperature beer to cold, although most servers offer their customers a choice.

Health Overview

Facing major health challenges, Burundi lacks the ability to provide preventative, emergency, and long-term care for its people. The country's inadequate healthcare infrastructure reflects its status as one of the world's poorest countries (see p1 of *Economics and Resources*). Although the government spent 6.19% of GDP on healthcare in 2016, the healthcare system remains severely underfunded, underdeveloped, and understaffed.

As of 2016, physician density was 5 per 100,000 people, well below the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommendation of 20 physicians per 100,000 people. At 67 years, life expectancy at birth is the 16th highest in Africa and significantly below the US life expectancy of roughly 80 years. As of 2020, 40 out of 1,000 Burundian children died before their 5th birthday.

Burundi receives development assistance aimed at improving its healthcare system from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like the WHO, the United Nations, and foreign donors. In 2004, Burundi's Ministry of Health identified key goals for its national health policy through 2015—reducing the death rates for mothers and young children, combating certain diseases, and improving the existing healthcare system.

Modern Medicine

Burundi's healthcare system suffers from a severe lack of funding and shortage of medical professionals. In addition, its facilities are typically dilapidated, lacking electricity and running water. Although each of Burundi's 18 provinces has a central hospital and several auxiliary health centers, modern medicine is a luxury most Burundians cannot afford. Patients must pay an upfront fee for treatment and cover the full costs of their prescriptions. Although pregnant women and young children receive free treatment, they often cannot afford their medicines. Burundi's lack of transportation infrastructure places modern medical treatment even further out of reach for rural Burundians (see p1 of *Technology and Materials*).

Women's Health: Limited healthcare access disproportionately affects women's health. In 2006, President Nkurunziza extended free healthcare for pregnant women and children under age 5. Still, 5.84 in 1,000 live births resulted in the death of the mother as of 2017 as compared to the US rate of 0.19 maternal deaths per 1,000 live births. Due to overcrowding, Burundian medical facilities frequently must reject women and children who are entitled to free public care.

Traditional Medicine

Traditional medicine comprises the knowledge, skills, and remedies that are derived from the beliefs, theories, and experiences of indigenous populations. Because traditional medicine is cheaper and readily available, many Burundians consult local traditional healers about their ailments instead of modern medical professionals. While most traditional healers have advanced knowledge of natural remedies, some recommend improper treatments that cost lives.

Health Challenges

Malnutrition: Burundi reports the highest level of hunger among countries surveyed in the 2017 Global Hunger Index: 60% of the total population and 56% of children below age 5 suffer malnutrition. Of those children, 57% suffer stunted growth, while some suffer cognitive development issues. In addition, because their diets lack adequate proteins, many children suffer ***kwashiorkor***, a condition which causes swollen stomachs, decreased muscle mass, and changes in skin pigment.

Malaria: Malaria kills between 4,400-5,200 Burundians annually and is the country's leading cause of death. With help from foreign governments and NGOs, Burundi is taking steps to help prevent and treat malaria.

HIV/AIDS: The prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS was 1% in 2018, a decrease of over 50% from the 1990s and lower than sub-Saharan Africa's 3.9% rate. Nevertheless, HIV/AIDS is another leading cause of death and has wide-ranging societal consequences (see p1 of *Family and Kinship*). Burundi's National AIDS Council works to expand access to prevention, care, and treatment programs.

Water: While water is relatively abundant throughout the country, Burundi still struggles to meet the need for clean water and sanitation. As of 2017, 61% of Burundians had access to improved water sources, although only 46% had access to improved sanitation facilities (see p2 of *Time and Space*).

11. ECONOMICS AND RESOURCES

Overview

Burundi's years of strife (see p6-8 of *History and Myth*) have increased poverty and damaged the country's already limited economic infrastructure. While its gross domestic product (GDP) grew about 4.5% annually between 2006 and 2014, it declined in 2015 and exhibited no growth until 2018. The estimated $271 GDP per capita average makes Burundi the poorest country in the world—approximately 65-75% of Burundians live below the poverty line.

The country has not exploited its few natural resources, historically focusing its economy primarily on agriculture. This reliance on agriculture makes Burundi's economy sensitive to environmental conditions and fluctuations in international commodity prices.

Burundi faces several challenges to economic reform, including low educational levels (see p4-5 of *Learning and Knowledge*) and a crumbling physical infrastructure (see p1 of *Technology and Materials*). Widespread government corruption hinders development of a healthy private sector. Recent efforts to diversify the economy included projects to modernize public finance, provide basic services to all citizens, strengthen the agricultural sector, and support anti-corruption initiatives.

Services

Although the services sector encompasses the largest portion of the economy, accounting for 49% of GDP, it employs only about 6% of Burundi's labor force. The largest subsector is general government services followed by transport, storage, and communication.

Tourism: Presently an underdeveloped industry, the government has recently identified tourism as a potential pillar of the economy. Burundi's tourist attractions include Lake Tanganyika, mountainous landscapes, and rare wildlife such as the primates of the Kibira cloud forest and the Rusizi Delta's

bird populations. Due to Burundi's security issues, many foreign governments advise against traveling through its countryside (see p7 of *Political and Social Relations*). Consequently, the number of foreign visitors remains small, although the industry has shown an incline in recent years as violence has eased (see p9 of *History and Myth*).

Agriculture

While the agricultural sector accounts for about 29% of GDP, it employs more than 92% of Burundi's labor force. The majority are small-scale subsistence farmers, many of whom use traditional methods, handheld tools, and animal power to cultivate their land. Most subsistence farms produce only enough for the family's consumption. The major crops include maize, sorghum, sweet potatoes, bananas, and cassava. Burundi's primary cash crops are coffee and tea. As the main export, coffee provides income to almost 600 households (Photo: Fields near Ijenda, Burundi).

Livestock: Livestock husbandry, particularly cattle-raising, has a long history in Burundi. In traditional Burundian society, farmers (Hutu) and cattle herders (Tutsi) co-existed in a semi-feudal kingdom (see p2 of *History and Myth*). *A*lthough today Burundians also raise goats, sheep, pigs, and poultry, cattle remain the primary livestock. Some Burundians support themselves by selling beef, milk, and hides. Burundians consider cattle a symbol of happiness, health, and prosperity, a notion reflected in the greeting "***Amashyo***," which translates as "more herds of cattle to come."

Fishing: Fish from Lake Tanganyika are an important source of animal protein for Burundians (see p2 of *Sustenance and Health*). Although some fish is sold fresh within the country, most fishing occurs on a small scale for private consumption.

Industry

As the smallest sector, industry accounts for 11% of GDP and employs just 2% of the labor force. As the largest subsector, manufacturing includes the production of textiles, leather goods, and foodstuffs.

Despite potentially large deposits of coltan, copper, cobalt, and nickel, Burundi has no commercial mining industry.

China: China is a key emerging partner in Burundi's economic development. Having recently financed road and infrastructure development projects, experts surmise that China is potentially interested in exploiting Burundi's mineral holdings.

Currency

The official currency of Burundi is the Burundian Franc (FBu), which subdivides into 100 ***centimes*** and is issued in 9 banknotes (between 10 and 10000 FBu) and 3 coins (1, 5, 10 FBu). ***Centime*** coins are no longer issued. Although the value of the FBu varies, it recently averaged 1,891 FBu per US$1. Laws prohibit both Burundian citizens and foreign visitors from importing or exporting more than 2,000 FBu.

Foreign Trade

While Burundi's exports totaled about $169 million in 2018, coffee and tea comprised 90% of those earnings. The nation's most important export partners in 2018 were the UAE (30%), DRC (11%), Pakistan (75), Belgium (7%), and Switzerland (6%). Imports, which amounted to $794 million in 2018, consisted of capital goods, petroleum products, and foodstuffs. Burundi's largest import partners were Saudi Arabia (17%), China (13%), UAE (9%), India (7%), and Tanzania (6%). Burundi is a member of the East African Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (see p8 of *Political and Social Relations*).

Foreign Aid

Foreign aid represented 48% of Burundi's national income in 2015, one of the highest percentages in Sub-Saharan Africa, but decreased to 33.5% in 2016 due to political turmoil surrounding President Nkurunziza's bid for a third term. In 2018, Burundi netted $533.3 million in aid. Principal donors include the US, EU, Belgium, Global Fund, and World Bank. Burundi also participates in debt relief programs (Photo: US Trade Representatives visit a coffee bean washing station).

12. TECHNOLOGY AND MATERIAL

Overview

Despite the conflict and political instability that crippled infrastructure development for several decades, Burundi is seeking to improve its transit links and modernize and expand its electrical grid. Most of Burundi's infrastructure is located in and around the capital Bujumbura, with modern technology inaccessible to Burundi's majority rural population (see p1 of *Political and Social Relations*). Because Burundi has no ocean access or railroad, it must transport all exports by truck almost 900 miles to Tanzania's Indian Ocean ports.

Transportation

Few Burundians own private cars, generally travelling on foot or by bicycle for short trips. For longer trips, Burundians may hire a ***taxi vélo*** (or ***moto***)—a bicycle (or motorcycle) outfitted with a small passenger seat over the rear wheel. For trips between towns, Burundians typically travel by minibus or standard bus. Minibuses follow regular routes in Bujumbura, although when traveling between towns, they often only depart when fully loaded. Bujumbura also offers standard taxi service.

Roadways: Burundi has about 7,700 miles of roadways, of which only about 12% are paved. Although some regional roads have been paved with stones and lined with drainage ditches, travel by road remains extremely hazardous due to poorly-maintained roads and ongoing security issues (see *Political and Social Relations*). In addition, most of Burundi's roads, even in Bujumbura, have few functioning traffic signals, road markings, or streetlights. Further, roads are often crowded with cyclists, pedestrians, and livestock.

Railways: Although Burundi has no rail network, construction on a major railway project began in 2013, but is not yet complete. The new network will link both Burundi and Rwanda with Dar es Salaam's Indian Ocean port in Tanzania.

Funded by the African Development Bank, the project will increase the region's export capabilities and is estimated to cost around $5.2 billion.

Waterways and Ports: Burundi has several ports on Lake Tanganyika (pictured) that connect it with Tanzania, Zambia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Although Burundi exports little, its largest port, the Port of Bujumbura, imports a variety of products, including cement, sugar, wheat flour, maize, rice, salt, and construction materials. Although Burundi's rivers are not navigable by commercial crafts, they power several hydro-electric plants (see below).

Airways: Of Burundi's 7 airports and airstrips, only Bujumbura International Airport (BJM) has paved runways. Located about 8 miles north of the city center, BJM is home to government-owned Air Burundi whose fleet includes an MA60, acquired from the Chinese government, and a Beechcraft that together service Nairobi, Kenya, Entebbe, Uganda, and Kigali, Rwanda. Kenya Airways, South African Airways, Ethiopian Airways, Rwandair Express, and Brussels Airlines also service BJM.

Energy

With no known oil or natural gas reserves, Burundi produces electricity through hydropower plants. Its electrical production cannot meet even the small demand of only 10% of Burundi's population that has access to electricity. In late 2012, the government initiated a plan to increase available electricity to 20% of the population by 2020. The plan calls for increasing hydropower output and further investing in solar, wind, geothermal, and biomass projects. With the support of several non-governmental organizations, Burundi's government has installed solar energy collection systems in several rural communities and solar street lights in Bujumbura.

Media

Although Burundi's constitution guarantees freedom of speech and press, the government has proposed laws that limit free expression.

For example, in April 2013, the Senate approved a bill that would ban media from reporting on “sensitive issues,” such as public security, national defense, and the economy. In addition to attempting to change the legal code, the government uses arrests and court summons to intimidate private media representatives.

Print Media: The most widely-read newspapers include the state-owned *Le Renouveau du Burundi* and *Ubumwe* as well as the privately-owned *L’Avenir* and the Catholic Church-owned *Ndongozi y’Uburundi*. There are also several other weekly publications with smaller circulations. Perhaps due to Burundi’s low literacy rates, almost no print media is available beyond urban areas (see p1 of *Learning and Knowledge*).

Radio and TV: Due to its accessibility and low cost, most Burundians receive their news from the radio. In 2011 the government-owned *Radio Télévision Nationale du Burundi* (RTNB) was the only radio provider of 20 to broadcast nationwide. RTNB is also Burundi’s largest television broadcaster. In 2003, China donated audio-visual equipment to RTNB as a symbol of cultural cooperation. China announced plans to build an international conference center in the RTNB headquarters in 2010 (Photo: A journalist interviewing former US Ambassador Pamela Slutz).

Telecommunications

Mobile phone usage has increased dramatically in recent years. Although only about one per 100 persons owned a landline phone in 2018, 56 of 100 Burundians had a mobile phone. Providers of mobile telephone services in Burundi include the public ONATEL as well as the private U-Com Burundi (Leo), Tempo, Lacell, and Econet.

Internet: Only a small minority (about 3% in 2017) of Burundians access the Internet. Most Internet use occurs at Internet cafes in the urban areas around the capital, Bujumbura.

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