



Migration Profile

BURUNDI

A. Executive Summary

Burundi is densely populated, even though it is the least urbanized country in Sub-Saharan Africaⁱ, with a 13.7% urban populationⁱⁱ. It is a young and mostly rural country, with almost half of the population below 15 years old and 64% under the age of 25ⁱⁱⁱ. Its Human Development Index (HDI) is 0.433, and it is ranked at 185 out of 189 countries.

Agriculture is the backbone of Burundi's economy and more than 90% of the population depends on it for livelihood. The country is often experiencing food shortages, and this is a major issue in Burundi, with 53% of children under 5 stunted by higher levels of malnutrition^{iv}. Some of the causes of food scarcity are rapid population growth, vulnerability to climate-related shocks, poor access to clean water and other basic services, putting the country in an extremely difficult position by thwarting any economic growth and increasing its dependence on humanitarian assistance^v. Since April 2021, 14% of the population (1.61 million) has faced a real emergency and crisis levels of food insecurity^{vi}.

Despite its stretched resources, Burundi is a host to about 80,000 refugees mostly from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Many former Burundian refugees are also returning home (about 60,000 already did it in 2021)^{vii}, adding more pressure to the already unstable situation of the country because of poor resources.

B. Country Profile

I. Basic Information

Burundi is a landlocked country in East Africa, surrounded by Rwanda to the North, Tanzania to the East, the Democratic Republic of Congo to the West, and Lake Tanganyika to the Southwest. It has a total surface area of 27,830 sq km, with a population of 11.8 million, of which 50.4% are women^{viii}. It is one of the most densely populated countries in the Great Lakes region. In 2019, the Burundian parliament voted to make Gitega the political capital of the country, moving it from Bujumbura. It has two official languages – Kirundi (29.7%) and French (0.3%)^{ix}. Other languages include Swahili and English. The country has three main ethnic groups – Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa. Burundi has a large Christian population. The religious demographics are as follows, Roman Catholic 62.1%, Protestants 23.9%, Muslim 2.5%, other 3.6%, and unspecified 7.9%^x.

II. International and Internal Migrants

Current internal migration in Burundi consists mainly of rural-urban movements. Even though it is the least urbanised country in the Horn, Eastern, and Central Africa region, it is one of two countries with the fastest-growing rural-urban population (5.7% urbanisation rate)^{xi}. Rural-urban migration in Burundi is primarily determined by young people looking for employment opportunities in urban areas. The majority of the urban dwellers (58%) lives in under-resourced and unplanned urban areas, often lacking basic services like affordable and adequate health care, education, water sanitation and waste management, and mobility and transportation options^{xii}. The under-resourced nature of the unplanned areas has exacerbated poverty of the people residing in them.

Burundi has a positive net migration rate of 2.6%^{xiii}. International migrants in Burundi come predominantly from the Democratic Republic of Congo (167,768), followed by Rwanda (64,363) and Tanzania (28,008). Other international migrants come from Kenya (1,032) and Uganda (891)^{xiv}.

III. Emigration and Skilled Migration

The primary destination countries for Burundi emigrants are Tanzania (87,099), Rwanda (64,501), Uganda (45,345), DRC (39,062) and Canada (7,474)^{xv}.

Regarding the number of skilled Burundians living abroad, there is no clear data. Burundian emigrants are viable partners in nation-building, and, as individuals and collectively (diaspora organisation), they offer much in terms of monetary support and in sharing their knowledge and skills, especially in the health and education departments^{xvi}. For example, the Burundian Diaspora in Denmark (DBD) supports development efforts in Burundi through projects for children, education, health, poverty reduction, and protection for human rights^{xvii}. There is also IZERE-Hollande that, among other things, provides surgical services, that meet Dutch standards to correct cleft lips and palates, sports development, and social investment through MURYANGO Brickyard^{xviii}. They send money to their families and finance the construction of important infrastructures like hospitals, schools, and hotels. However, there is no record of how large this cash flow is. In 2017, for instance, the World Bank reported that there was an estimated inward remittances flow of \$33.51 million^{xix}.

IV. Forced Migrants (internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, and refugees, climate displaced people)

Burundi is more of a refugee sending country than a receiving one. By October 2021, there were 266,351 Burundian refugees living in Tanzania (126,534), Uganda (51,410), Rwanda (47,806), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (40,601)^{xx}. Since 2017, when the assisted returnee programme began, more than 180,000 Burundian refugees have voluntarily returned home from Tanzania, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, and Uganda.

Most of the refugees hosted in Burundi come from the Democratic Republic of Congo (about 80,000 registered urban and camp-based refugees)^{xxi}. Burundi has an encampment policy

concerning refugees and asylum seekers, placed in 5 refugee camps and 8 transit facilities. Among different services provided for them, refugees have access to primary health care.

There were 115,981 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Burundi identified by the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), and their displacement was determined by natural disasters (83%), especially flooding, and 17% for other reasons, such as conflict or violence^{xxii}. Bujumbura Mairie and Bujumbura Rural recorded the highest number of displacements – 26,891 and 17,079 respectively, and Gitega and Mwaro recorded the lowest, 390 and 84 respectively^{xxiii}. Most IDPs live in host communities (94%), while a small fraction lives in sites (5%) and collective centers (1%)^{xxiv}. The vast majority is younger than 18 years old and 54% is female.^{xxv}

V. Victims of Human Trafficking

The government of Burundi and other international organisations are at the forefront of fighting human trafficking. Because of the high unemployment rate and with 65% of Burundians living below the poverty line, victims of human trafficking are mostly children and young adults, as they are easily misled and exploited for monetary gains. Burundi is a Tier 2 country and does not entirely meet the minimum standards for the eradication of human trafficking despite its efforts to do so^{xxvi}. According to the 2021 US State Department TIP report, the government identified 174 victims of trafficking, of whom 45 were located in China, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Tanzania; 133 instead were on route to the Middle East, and 16 on the way to Tanzania^{xxvii}. All 174 victims were referred to governmental or NGOs shelters, while child victims were sometimes placed into foster care where they were provided with psychosocial assistance and care^{xxviii}. The Burundian government in collaboration with foreign countries also repatriated 134 victims from abroad and provided legal and consular assistance to them, including facilitating their return and reintegration into their host communities^{xxix}. The government identified 101 female victims during a raid in 2020. In 2020, an international organisation and its partner identified 25 victims of human trafficking, 6 children – all victims of labour exploitation repatriated from abroad, and 17 children identified on route to Tanzania^{xxx}. Another international organisation identified an additional 403 child victims including, 361 boys and 42 girls^{xxxi}.

VI. National Legal Framework

At national level, the Government of Burundi in collaboration with IOM is working towards the establishment of a National Labour Migration Policy, aiming at providing longer-term protection and good governance for migrant workers^{xxxii}. Ordinance no. 530-443 (July 4, 2009) - on the implementation of Law no. 1/32 (November 13, 2008) on asylum and refugee protection in Burundi and on the composition, organization and functioning of the Consultative Commission for Foreigners and Refugees and the Appeal Committee - among other things, seeks to ensure the physical, material, legal, and administrative protection of asylum seekers and refugees^{xxxiii}. There is also the Protocol for the creation of a permanent framework for the consultation on the protection of displaced persons, which among other things seeks to share information on the protection of displaced persons and determines

preventative measures^{xxxiv}. There is also Law no. 1/28 (October 29, 2014) on the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and the Protection of Victims of Trafficking^{xxxv}.

Burundi is a member of several regional organisations, for example, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (CMESA), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries, and International Conference on the Great Lakes Countries (ICGLR), which has as one of its priorities to facilitate the movement of people within the region.

At continental level, Burundi is a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 protocol, the 1969 AU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugees Problems in Africa. In January 2020, during a Regional Ministerial Forum organised by IOM in Nairobi, the Government of Burundi signed an agreement to harmonise labour migration policies from the East and Horn of Africa, making it harder for human traffickers to exploit young people looking for work in the Great Lakes Countries^{xxxvi}.

Also at international level, Burundi is a signatory of the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

VII. Main Actors

The State

The two ministries responsible for migration issues in Burundi are the Ministry of Interior, which determines the patterns and trends of migration, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation, which engages with the diaspora for development in Burundi. Within the Ministry of Interior, there is the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (*Office National de Protection des Réfugiés et des Apatrides - ONPRA*) that is responsible for the determination of the refugee status.

Under the supervision of the Ministry of External Relations and International Cooperation, there is Burundi's Diaspora Organisation overseeing relations between the diaspora and Burundi. Both - the Ministry of External Relations and International Cooperation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - emphasize the contributions of the diaspora in the development of projects of Burundi.

International Organisations

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) are the most important international agencies dealing with migration-related issues in Burundi. The UNHCR works with the government of Burundi (Ministry of Interior, Patriotic training and local Development, Ministry of Public Security and collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and other partners - World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Food and Agricultural Programme (FAO), World Health Organisation (WHO), the joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAID) - to provide security, social, legal, health, and livelihood

assistance to people in need including refugees in Burundi^{xxxvii}. Other UNHCR regional partners include the International Conference on the Great Lakes Countries (ICGLR) and African Union (AU), helping to develop the policy framework to facilitate the movement of people within the region. UNHCR implementing partners include the *Office National et de Protection des Refugies Apatride* (ONPRA), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Caritas Burundi, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Refugee Education Trust (RET), Red Cross, and *Gruppo di Volontariato Civile*^{xxxviii}. IOM focuses, instead, on refugee resettlement and reintegration, and works with the government in areas of migration policies and research.

Other organisations

The Ubuntu Centre, in partnership with the Catholic Church through research and other activities (drama, psychosocial counselling, peace education, and media programmes), promotes peace and reconciliation in Burundi. Recently, they included socio-economic development projects like housing, goat farming, and training in project management.

The Association of Female Lawyers of Burundi (AFJB) offers counselling, legal advice, information on rights, drafting of legal documents, legal support, and legal assistance.

The Association for the Defence of Refugee Rights (ADR), *Ligue Burundaise des Droits de l'Homme*, Nibitegeka & Co. Advocates, and *Avocats Sans Frontieres* in partnership with other human rights organisations, provide representation for and advocate on behalf of refugees safeguarding the protection of their fundamental human rights (civil, political, economic, and social).

Using human rights and good governance education, the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights (ipeace) provides assistance to communities and individuals in Africa's Great Lakes Region to achieve sustainable peaceful coexistence.

Solidarite d'Action Pour la Paix/Grands Lacs (SAP/GL) identifies refugee and returnee victims of torture and provides counselling, psychosocial assistance, and medical treatment in its clinic in Bujumbura. SAP also promotes vocational, technical, and basic micro-business skill training. Rema Ministries provides social support through community sensitization programmes to refugees, returnees, and disadvantaged people in Burundi.

The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church is widespread in all over Burundi and has a number of organisations, assisting migrants, refugees, internally displaced people, and returnees.

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) provides psychosocial, educational, and livelihood support to the vulnerable population. For example, in the provinces of Bujumbura, Ruyigi, and Muyinga, JRS facilitates formal and informal education in the camps of Kinama and Musasa in Muyinga, and Bwagiriza in Ruyigi where more than 32,000 Congolese families are settled^{xxxix}. In Bujumbura, with the support of Fund For Women, some 300 urban refugees (mostly girls) have access to public education and livelihood training, promoting their integration within the local communities. Also, JRS implements early childhood development,

sports, and leisure activities to enhance psychosocial welfare for refugee children living in camps^{xl}.

Caritas Burundi - in its move to bring about a reunited society in which human dignity is paramount, and the rights of everyone are respected, especially the poorest, the most vulnerable, the excluded, and the oppressed - together with its partners provides support for agricultural growth, health, and nutrition, career development, and psycho-social accompaniment to refugees with mental health-related problems. Caritas partners include The Global Fund to Fight Aids, Malaria and Tuberculosis, UNHCR, FAO, WFP, UNICEF, GAVI, CRS, The World Bank, Caritas Netherland (Cordaid), Trocaire (Caritas Ireland) Caritas Austria, Caritas Italy, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health and the Fight Against Aids, the French Embassy, and USAID^{xli}. In the health domain, Caritas supports people affected by AIDS through psychosocial counselling, and has implemented a Prevention of Transmission from Mother to Child (PTMC) programme in 11 hospitals, 2 maternity wards, and 87 health centers of the Catholic Church in Burundi^{xlii}. Caritas also provides nutritional resources for people at special risk to over 3,000 individuals^{xliii}.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Burundi serves vulnerable people, by coordinating complex and multi-sectoral emergency and development programmes. Together with its partners, CRS projects focus on youth empowerment and social cohesion^{xliv}. For example, CRS Dukire Tubane Project which implements the People-to-people (P2P) programme draws diverse youth from across Burundi's political, social, and ethnic divides to break down divisions by emphasising commonalities, developing a shared vision for the future to attain social cohesion^{xlv}. The project also works along with local authorities in addressing development challenges including unemployment; for example, through its *Ikawa Yacu* Project which complements the *Amashiga* Programme, in the area of coffee production in Muyinga, engages and encourages youth to be involved in the coffee production business for sustainable development^{xlvi}. At the verge of abandonment before the launch of *Ikawa Yacu*, the 4,035 participating households are now farming 8,456 fields containing 994,147 coffee trees. There is also the *Amashiga* Programme and the Development Food Assistance Programme (DFAP), working in all 7 municipalities of Muyinga, across 809 different communities, with the aim of providing sustainable nationally replicable improvements in child nutrition designed for these three integrated purposes - nutrition, agriculture, and governance^{xlvii}.

Child protection and psychological support are provided by Malteser International together with local partners, especially in the areas of Rutana, Makamba, and Muyinga, where more refugees continue to return. Two homes have been funded by Malteser International in Bujumbura and Ngozi for children to receive protection and support.

Food insecurity in Burundi is a major issue, as 53% of children under the age of 5 suffers from stunted growth caused by poor infant feeding, inadequate food, and a low-quality diet. The Salesian Missions in Burundi provide access to nutrition to more than 800 youth in three different run programmes, funded by the Salesian Missions and Rise Against Hunger^{xlviii}. For example, 750 students in Don Bosco High School receive three balanced meals a day, Don Bosco Buterere Youth Centre provides food, shelter, and education for youth and orphans

once living on the street, and in the first, second, and third quarter of 2019, more than 1,200 students attending Lycee Don Bosco, located in Bujumbura, had better nutrition^{xlix}.

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xlviii **Salesian Missions, 2021**

xlix **Ibid**