

# Burundi



The Republic of Burundi is a landlocked country located in central Africa, east of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It covers an area that is just a bit smaller than the state of Maryland; its population is a little less than double that state's. The capital city is Bujumbura.



Burundian children are cared for by missionaries at an orphanage supported by the sacrifices of MCA members.

Most people who live in Burundi are Christian (about 86%). Of those people who call themselves Christian, almost 75% are Roman Catholic. Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world—the average Burundian lives on

only \$650 per year. Approximately 80% of the population live in poverty. Less than 2% of the population have electricity in their homes. Burundi's lands are mostly used for agriculture as people grow their own food. Even this is becoming more difficult in the country due to a dense population even in the rural areas, leading to deforestation, soil erosion and habitat loss. Because the country's main exports are coffee and tea, they are at the mercy of the weather conditions and international market prices for their main source of national income. Famines and food shortages have occurred, especially in the 20th century. The diet of the average Burundian is made up of sweet potatoes, peas and corn. In 2015, Burundi was rated as the world's leading nation affected by hunger with 67.3% of its population rated as 'malnourished' on the Global Hunger Index (GHI) a score calculated by the International Food Policy Institute. The organization has labelled this situation 'extremely alarming'. Food costs continue to rise—in the last few years, the cost of beans alone has risen 50%

## MCA Helping Orphans in Burundi

Health care is also a problem for the average Burundian. There are only three doctors for every 10,000 citizens. Water borne diseases due to lack of improved sanitation continues to be a major problem.

There are two main tribes of people in Burundi—the Hutus and the Tutsis. They have been at war with each other for many years and violent battles have taken many lives. Both groups have been accused of recruiting child soldiers. They have also used land mines as one of their major tools of war. The small devices are very easy to put into the ground but very difficult—and expensive—to dig up. As an unsteady peace settled over the country in the early 21st century and internally displaced people returned to their farms, land mines were killing and maiming farmers and their children.

As if this picture isn't bleak enough for the children of Burundi, according to the CIA World Fact site, children there are at high risk of exploitation as well. They are coerced into forced labor and promised educational opportunities. What they end up with is slave labor in farming, mining, or construction. Worse still, family members are known to sell their own children into these same situations to make extra money for the rest of the family.

In the last two decades, Burundi found itself with a huge orphan problem. Children were left without parents from the civil war, the accidental triggering of leftover landmines, and the rising rate of HIV/AIDS in the country. If they themselves had been hurt

by the landmine, these orphans also were now physically disabled and in need medical care.

While he was still Secretary General of the Missionary Childhood Association, Father Patrick Byrne, SVD, visited one of these orphanages in the Archdiocese of Bujumbura which is supported by MCA.



He was greeted by the students and faculty who performed native dances accompanied by drummers playing the *karyenda*, a traditional African



drum and a very important part of Burundian heritage. Students at the orphanage are taught their faith, their culture, and given a solid educational foundation for the future.

At last report, Missionary Children around the world sent \$326,000.00 to Burundian children. Much of it was disbursed in grants of \$3,000—\$10,000 each to support orphanages across the country. Missionary Childhood Association members in Burundi sacrificed \$11,000 of their own funds so that other children of the world could receive loving care from missionaries as well.

**Missionary Childhood Association**

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