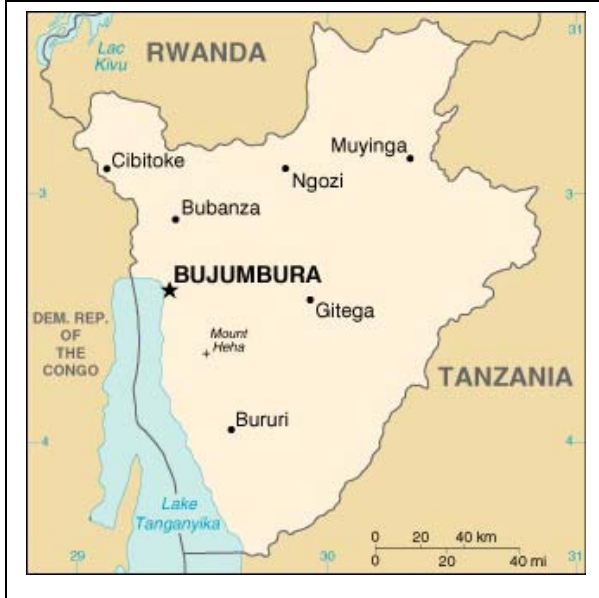


Burundi History



The first inhabitants of Burundi were probably ethnic Twa, who today comprise only a small percentage of the population. Migrations of Hutu peoples to the area took place during the first millennium AD while the Tutsi peoples arrived by the 1300's.

Belgium took control of the Burundi government in 1916 and ruled vicariously through the Tutsi tribe. As a result, the other major tribe in Burundi, the Hutu tribe, was marginalized and tensions between the two tribes intensified. In 1962, Burundi gained independence from Belgium. The Tutsi tribe maintained control of the

government which became a monarchy under a Tutsi King. The Tutsi government continued to discriminate against the Hutu people who became even greater targets of hate and violence. In 1966 an independent Tutsi militia group overthrew the monarchy and gained ruling power. This same militia group used violence to expel all Hutu peoples from Burundi in an attempt to "cleanse" the country. Between 1976 and 1987, there were two exchanges of power among the Tutsi peoples-- one an attempt of a democracy and the other a militia ruling which ultimately won. In 1988 the internal tension among the Tutsi peoples themselves, as well as ethnic divisions with the Hutu's that remained, led to violence and a death total of over 150,000.

In 1993 there was another attempt to establish democracy and an election was held. When a Hutu leader won this election many Tutsi were angered and assassinated the president within six months. His death sparked a civil war between the Tutsi government forces, Tutsi militia groups and the Hutu militia groups, all of whom hoped to rule Burundi.

Various peace talks led to the creation of a "transitional government" which shared power between the two tribes, ending the violence and civil war. In 2003, a peace treaty was signed between the head of the Tutsi and Hutu groups and in 2005 there was a new presidential election. By this time the 12 year civil war had cost more than 300,000 lives. UN forces and international aid assisted the Burundi government in disarming various militia groups and helped to restore political stability. Burundi remains one of the world's most impoverished countries due to their devastating civil war.

Language:

The nation's official languages are Kirundi and French. Kirundi, a Bantu language, is an everyday conversation language while French is generally used in government and business settings.

Religion:

Christianity, about 62%, is the religion of the majority of Burundians. Other religions are Protestant, Muslim and traditional indigenous beliefs. Many people who consider themselves Christian or Muslim also incorporate indigenous beliefs and practices into their worship.

Mental Health:

Traditional healers are common in Burundi and many people turn to them to solve and alleviate issues of mental and physical health. Many times mental health related issues are minimized and access to support and treatment is limited. It is common for Burundi people to stigmatize others in their community with mental health issues.

According to a study by the World Bank Human Development Network on Health, Nutrition and Population from 2004 many Burundi's have experienced symptoms of depression, post traumatic stress disorder and generalized anxiety disorder. Burundi people have experienced traumas due to both low and high intensity conflict from the civil war which often leads to "pervasive fear and anxiety, which can be long lasting. Other symptoms include pain, loss, grief, guilt, hatred, sadness and dissolution of everyday forms of social contact, language and experience."

**"Mental Health and Socio economic outcomes in Burundi" World Bank Human Development Network on Health, Nutrition and Population, 2004, Florence Baingana, Andrew Dabalen, Essimi Menye, Menahem Prywes, & Michael Rosholm.*