

PROFILE: BURUNDI



Overshadowed by genocide in neighbouring Rwanda, Burundi's people are still paying a devastating price for years of ethnic-based conflict.

Enmity between Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups has fuelled conflict since independence in 1962. But the 1993 assassination of a first-ever Hutu president plunged Burundi into full-scale civil war.

Around 300,000 people died and nearly 1.5 million were displaced. Although a ceasefire has held since 2008, the conflict is having an ongoing impact, especially for women.

Both Hutu and Tutsi used rape as a weapon of war, while the proliferation of small arms has fuelled violent crime. Taboos about rape and the subservient cultural role of Burundian women mean victims are often castigated, banished or abandoned by their families.

Such attitudes inhibit women from seeking medical help or reporting attackers, as well as fostering the spread of HIV.

Many widowed mothers face desperate poverty, and some turn to prostitution – seen as a safer option than living alone.

Meanwhile, women's suffering is compounded by lack of reproductive healthcare and sources of safe water.

Population growth is putting huge pressure on Burundi's agricultural land – causing deforestation and soil erosion. Some 100,000 people still live in camps for the displaced.

TEARFUND'S WORK IN BURUNDI

Tearfund has been working in Burundi since 1990. From 1993 to 2007, our Disaster Management Team (DMT) provided emergency feeding and healthcare. As civil conflict subsided, the emphasis switched to helping war-affected communities become food self-sufficient.

As part of this approach, DMT held local cookery demonstrations showing villagers how to make nutritious porridge from locally available ingredients.

We currently work with five Burundian partners.

Scripture Union uses a network of churches, schools and colleges to raise awareness of HIV, challenge stigma and care for people living with the virus.

In Bururi Province, the Diocese of Matana is helping families meet their food needs and avoid malnutrition. Small business projects are also boosting incomes.

The Diocese of Gitega works across two provinces to improve health and farming techniques. Orphans and conflict-displaced people are helped to establish sustainable livelihoods. Meanwhile, 'peace and reconciliation' training for community leaders and 'human rights and peace clubs' in schools are transforming relationships.

In the Kirundo and Gitega provinces, FECABU works with indigenous communities to improve food security and engage in advocacy and longer-term poverty alleviation.

The Diocese of Bujumbura also focuses on food security in Muramvya and Bujumbura provinces. Working through the church, it helps rural communities to make the transition from post-conflict response to long-term development.

➤ **Pray for people living in poverty in Burundi.**

➤ **Please pray for our Burundian partners as they seek to help others.**

➤ **And pray for Burundi: for justice, peace, health and hope for everyone.**