



solution to one of the most protracted refugee situations in the world. While some Burundian refugees have returned to Burundi, this refugee group being resettled is either unable or unwilling to return home. After being in exile for more than 35 years, they would not be able to reclaim their land that was seized and redistributed years ago. They fear they would be viewed as outsiders if they returned to Burundi and that they would face problems reintegrating.

Many refugees would like to stay in Tanzania, however that is not an option either as the Tanzanian government has placed limitations on refugees settling there permanently. The Tanzanian government limits Burundian refugees' freedom of movement, employment opportunities, and access to naturalization. The government is also in the process of closing refugee camps where Burundian refugees have been living.

4. Where are the Burundian refugees being resettled to in the United States?

The Burundian refugees are resettling in communities all across the United States. The states receiving the highest number of arrivals, as of December 2007, include Texas, Arizona, Tennessee, Illinois, and New York. The cities with the highest number of arrivals include Houston, Phoenix, Boise, Salt Lake City, and Decatur.

5. What is life like in refugee camps in Tanzania?

The locations of the refugee camps in Tanzania are isolated. The housing consists of plastic sheeting, mud, sticks, and mud bricks for those who are able to afford them. They have limited exposure to modern amenities, such as electricity, appliances, and flush toilets. Water distribution is also limited. There are two seasons, rainy from November to May and dry from June to October.

The Burundian refugees face limitations on movement outside of the camp, farming, and employment. Burundian refugees have had to rely almost solely on humanitarian aid. They also face security issues, particularly women who face the risk of sexual violence while collecting firewood.



A refugee camp in Tanzania where Burundians lived for several years. Photo: UNHCR/O. Smith

In the camps, the Burundian refugees have a strong sense of community and religious beliefs. They elect representatives and practice a traditional form of conflict mediation known as “abashingantahe.” This is a group composed of elders, respected people in the community, and religious leaders who Burundians seek assistance from to resolve conflicts.

6. What languages do they speak?

The official languages of Burundi are Kirundi and French. Burundian refugees speak and understand Kirundi, however only a small number of well-educated Burundian refugees speak French. Many Burundians have also learned Kiswahili or Kinyarwanda, depending on the countries where they were displaced. Very few speak or understand English.

7. What skills do they have?

Before they fled Burundi, Burundian refugees were primarily farmers. In the camps, some have picked up trades including carpentry, tailoring, weaving, bike repair, masonry, and vending.

8. What are some challenges they face in integrating in the United States?

Some challenges for this refugee population are language, low literacy skills, lack of exposure to modern amenities, availability of Kirundi-speaking caseworkers and interpreters, past trauma, and large family sizes.



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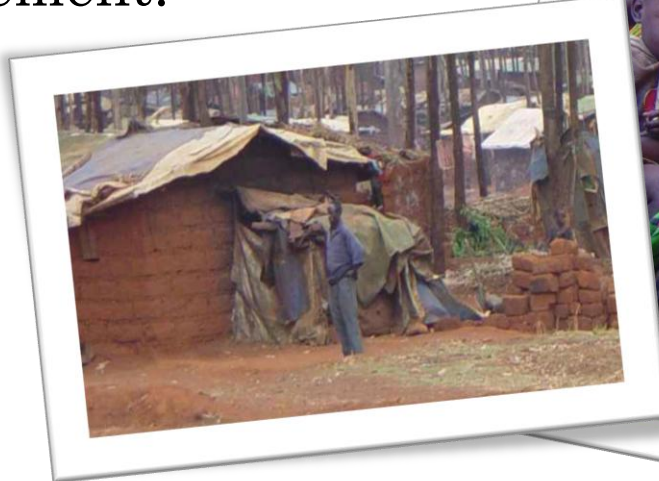
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE 1972 BURUNDIAN REFUGEES





OVERVIEW

- Since 2006, the U.S. government has resettled over 8,000 Burundian refugees from western Tanzania to the United States.
- This particular group of Burundians was displaced in 1972 and remained in camps for 34-37 years.
- Due to their experience in extended refugee situations, they face unique challenges in addition to the normal difficulties of resettlement.
- They are strong and resilient with a wealth of culture and a fascinating history to share.





A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 1972 BURUNDIANS

- Burundi is roughly the size of Maryland and has a population of almost 9 million people.
- Due to ethnic conflict led by the Tutsi-dominated government in Burundi in 1972, approximately 150,000 refugees fled to neighboring Rwanda, Tanzania, and Zaire (now known as the Democratic Republic of Congo).
- 90,000-250,000 people were killed during the conflict.





A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 1972 BURUNDIANS



- Civil unrest continued in 1988, 1993 and 1996.
- Many Burundians were further displaced in 1994 due to the Rwandan genocide, and most were forced to flee several times during their displacement.
- Most have been located in three camps in Tanzania for over two to three decades.





ABOUT THE CAMPS

- Most refugees lived in three camps in Tanzania:
 - Ngara in the northwestern region
 - Kibondo and Kasulu in the western region
- Camp conditions were isolated and relatively harsh, and some physical and sexual violence existed.
- There were security issues and restrictions on mobility and freedom.
- Refugees spent decades relying almost solely on humanitarian aid.
- There was limited exposure to electricity, flush toilets, and other modern amenities.
- Housing was made of plastic sheeting, mud, sticks, or mud bricks.





ABOUT THE 1972 BURUNDIANS

- Ethnicity: Primarily Hutu (85%)
- Religion: Christian 67% (Roman Catholic 62%, Protestant 5%), indigenous beliefs 23%, Muslim 10%
- Patriarchal society
- Average family size: 5
- Languages:
 - Kirundi (official)
 - French (official)
 - Kinyarwanda
 - Kiswahili
 - Swahili
 - English (very rare)
- 80% illiteracy rate in Kirundi; almost no English or French skills.





MORE ABOUT THE 1972 BURUNDIANS

- In the camps, there was no access to farmland or a labor market.
- Many Burundians were farmers in the past but also have skills in carpentry, weaving, tailoring, masonry, and cooking.
- Most who are resettling in the US lived for decades with limited or no education or employment.





MORE ABOUT THE 1972 BURUNDIANS

- The Burundi refugees as a whole exhibit:
 - Some mistrust of service providers and other Burundians.
 - Different traditional child rearing styles and perceptions of domestic violence than Americans.
 - A high rate of alcoholism.
 - Past trauma, psychosocial issues, and possible aversion to addressing mental health issues.
 - Some belief in witchcraft, curses, etc.





THE NEED FOR RESETTLEMENT

- The Tanzanian government made it difficult for most Burundian refugees to reside permanently in Tanzania.
- Many who are returning to Burundi now, after over 35 years of exile, will not be able to claim their land.
- Land is an important commodity in Burundi and land disputes could threaten a newly established peace.
- Burundian refugees also feared being viewed as outsiders if they returned.
- Resettlement provides a durable solution to one of the world's most protracted refugee situations.
- 8,321 have been resettled to the United States (2006 – present).





WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

- Top 5 cities in the U.S. for Burundian resettlement as of May 2009 are:
 - Houston: 476
 - Phoenix: 430
 - Dallas: 322
 - Decatur: 291
 - Salt Lake City: 265





SUPPORTING THE SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION OF BURUNDIAN REFUGEES

- USCRI's approach
 - National Scope
 - Four Main Components:
 - Educational Outreach
 - Community Gatherings
 - Orientation Materials
 - Technical Assistance





EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

In order to ease the transition of Burundians refugees resettling in the U.S. and to ensure access to the greatest resources possible, USCRI engages in a number of pre-arrival activities to help prepare the resettlement community, including:

- Conducting educational outreach to resettlement communities to inform them about the Burundian refugees, and any special needs they may have or challenges they may face. This usually includes reaching out to local health care and social services providers, educators, potential employers, volunteers, and more.
- Creating and providing easily accessible materials that an individual, group, or resettlement agency can use to conduct educational outreach independently.





COMMUNITY GATHERINGS

USCRI also partners with local agencies in areas with large Burundian populations to hold community gatherings, which connect Burundians to one another, local resources, and support. The gatherings also serve as a venue to celebrate the culture and history of the Burundians and their presence in the U.S.

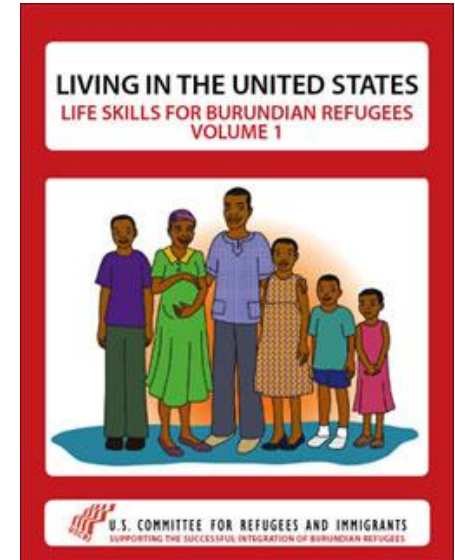




ORIENTATION MATERIALS

USCRI worked closely with Burundian refugees and service providers to develop orientation materials called *Living in the United States: Life Skills for Burundian Refugees*. They provide Burundian refugees with culturally and linguistically appropriate information to support them in their resettlement.

These materials are available in both English and Kirundi free of charge online and in DVD format. Each volume also has a facilitator's guide to help guide further discussion and enhance the learning experience. Volume 1 was also printed in book format and distributed to Burundians and local agencies throughout the U.S.





ORIENTATION MATERIALS

Volume 1 includes information on the role of the resettlement agency, personal care, nutrition, health, adjusting to a new home, safety and emergencies, housing, and employment.

Volume 2 contains information about laws and rights, managing money, using a bank, alcoholism, domestic violence, family communication skills, parenting, and child and adult education. A third volume will be released in 2010.





TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

USCRI provides on-going technical assistance to Burundian refugees and the service providers who work with them, including health centers, schools, vocational centers, and refugee and immigrant support facilities. This technical assistance helps to enhance the knowledge, skills, and capacity of service providers to provide appropriate services to Burundian refugees, and also helps to ensure that the Burundians have access to tools and resources to help them be successful in their new home.





Holy Cross student wins national essay contest

Fifth-grader Alain Niyungeko wins a \$500 savings bond and a bicycle for essay about his move to America from war-torn Africa.

KATIE BAHR | CATHOLIC HERALD
2/10/09



Katie Bahr | Cat



Katie Bahr | Catholic Herald

What Does Freedom Mean to Me?

By Alain Niyungeko

When we were in Africa there was no freedom. Lots of people in Africa keep fighting. When I was little there was a war in Tanzania everyday. At night my mom and dad hid us so the soldiers could not kill us. There was no freedom. My sister, mom, and I would all hide in the bushes. When we were in Africa my uncle died in a hospital. After that the soldiers came at night and killed my friend's family. They killed their mom, their dad, and they killed the baby that was only two months old. They also killed their kids except for two girls. People were sad, others were crying. Now it is different because we live in America. Now there are no bad soldiers like soldiers in Africa. It is fun to be in America with my friends. But, I will never forget my friends in Africa.

Alain Niyungeko is a resettled Burundian refugee who is in fifth grade in Fredricksburg, VA. He won first place in a national essay contest on what freedom means.





WRAP-UP

- The 1972 Burundians provide great examples of challenges and successes in refugee resettlement.
- Refugees being resettled after long-term displacement will have special needs and require more extensive case management.
- 60-75% of all refugees live in protracted refugee situations.
- Information gathering and critical thinking about existing and possible issues and cases will help plan for incoming populations from PRSs.





THANK YOU!



PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

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Supporting the Successful Integration of Burundian Refugees Program

Since 2006, the U.S. government has resettled over 8,000 Burundian refugees from western Tanzania to the United States. This refugee group fled conflict in Burundi in 1972 and many were also affected by subsequent conflicts in the region occurring in 1988, 1993, and 1996. The 1972 Burundians face significant barriers to successful integration due to the protracted nature of their refugee experience with limited access to education, employment, or language training. However for the first time in over three decades, they will have access to new opportunities and resources.

Program Goal:

Through funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) provides support and resources to Burundian refugees, resettlement agencies, and receiving communities to effectively assist refugees in overcoming barriers to integration and becoming self-sufficient.

Program Activities:

- 1. Creation and Provision of Orientation Materials:** USCRI researches, develops, and disseminates culturally and linguistically appropriate and accessible orientation materials for Burundian refugees. The materials serve as an effective means of educating the Burundian population about practices and services in the U.S. Audiovisual versions of the material will be available in Kirundi through the USCRI website and in DVD format upon request. Topics addressed in *Living in the United States: Life Skills for Burundian Refugees, Volume 1* include the role of the resettlement agency, personal care, nutrition, health, adjusting to a new home, safety and emergencies, housing, and employment. Topics addressed in the second volume of the series include laws and rights, managing money, using a bank, education, domestic violence, alcoholism, parenting, and strengthening families. A third volume will also be produced. The topics will be selected according to the needs of the resettlement agencies and Burundian refugee community.
- 2. Educational Outreach to Resettlement Communities:** USCRI provides resources and on-site outreach to help educate communities about the Burundian refugee population. Outreach includes giving presentations to resettlement agencies, teachers, health care providers, and state social services staff to increase understanding of the population and ensure the delivery of appropriate services.
- 3. Community Gatherings:** USCRI arranges community gatherings with the Burundian population and service providers at resettlement sites. USCRI selects areas that have received a significant number of Burundian arrivals and coordinates with local partners in order for Burundians to share their resettlement experiences and link to mainstream service providers.
- 4. Technical Assistance:** USCRI provides technical assistance to refugee service providers on the provision of appropriate services to Burundian refugees. It helps service providers access relevant materials, connects refugees to appropriate services, and compiles best practices in working with the Burundian population. USCRI offers on-going technical assistance to all resettlement agencies, regardless of whether they are part of the USCRI network.

USCRI Contact:

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U.S. COMMITTEE FOR REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

Supporting the Successful Integration of Burundian Refugees

BURUNDIAN REFUGEE STORIES

Profile: FK

FK* is now a resident of North Chicago. He is a man who wears bright blue pants and vividly colored shirts and is generally cheerful. As we talked, he thoughtfully struggled to explain what it means to grow up in a refugee camp. FK never knew childhood outside the Fizi camp, the place where he was born. His parents were Burundian nationals who fled in 1972 to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). They fled to escape the violence and civil war which tore through their homeland from 1970-71 as a result of a Tutsi military coup. Fizi is one of the first and oldest camps in DRC; for FK it was home.

As a child, FK explained, “you don’t know much about the camp...you feel you are okay. Once you are old, you understand life is hard. As a child, as long as you can eat, you are like anybody.” As he got older he found that, “life in a camp is not that easy; life in a camp is hard... you can’t leave like nationals, you are not free. Sometimes you go to Kinshasha, you have to ask permission. Sometimes you have to leave illegally.” For FK, the lack of identity associated with one’s homeland and home culture was unsettling. To the question: “What was life in the camps like?” I received an answer not of physical pain, hunger, or the like, but a more personal, more intrinsic and emotional response. FK answered, “I grew up in that area [the camps], more than 10 years. Thus, I felt like a national. I wasn’t a national, but I felt like one. I adopted the culture. At home, my parents teach me Burundian culture.” At home, his parents told him that even if he was born in the Congo, “We are not from here, it is temporary.” Still, FK did not feel Burundian. His identity was further jeopardized in 2000 when the government of Burundi stated, “You are not Burundian if gone for more than 15 years.” Anyone who could not claim Burundian nationality (FK included) was thus stuck in Fizi, a citizen of nowhere. “Where will we go?” he asked.

The United Nations ruled that FK and others in his situation would be settled in a third-party nation. FK and his family (his wife and two children, 2 years old and 7 months old) were resettled to America in 2007. He was “very, very happy.” In Chicago it was raining and cold when they arrived, but their apartment was ready with food and clothes. He remembered that the staff at Heartland Human Care Services was nice enough to prepare food that they knew from their home country. His apartment building is “very impressive...in the camp there were no buildings,” he explained. He said that the language is difficult, but he is learning. Other than that, he explained, “the culture is not that hard to adjust, I just adopt behavior...I think, if they [Americans] sleep standing, I sleep standing too, its okay!” He is just content that he and his family are somewhere safe.

Interview by: Maryann Cairns

* Full name withheld

Profile: John Peter

“War” was all John Peter said about why he had to leave the orphanage. When asked about who took him to the camps, his succinct answer explained the situation in his country. He kindly laughed at the question and replied, “When the machine guns started to fire, everyone ran. No one told me “Let’s go.” No one took me.” His flight to Tanzania at ten years old was fared alone. He followed strangers during the two week journey. “Many others were fleeing,” he said. When he arrived in Tanzania he was greeted with a little food and then processed into the camps. The ten year old was grouped with five other people and they were given a shared tent and a cooking pot.

Every day John Peter was alone and filled with fear for his future. “How is my life going to be in the future?” he would ask himself. “What can I do?” Soon John Peter had the opportunity to attend carpentry school. He was lucky. The school noticed he was smart and he was able to attend school and work for pay at the same time. John Peter was employed building furniture for Kartumb, one of the oldest camps in the region. He said, “Actually, life over there wasn’t that bad [then].” He was a tradesman making money. He met his wife, who is also Burundian, and they married. Together they applied for resettlement and one year later they were given the chance to come to America. He smiled talking about his two daughters and then recounted his family’s resettlement experience so far.

The flight was long, over two days of travel in all. “I do not get scared, and my child did not get scared, like me,” he says proudly. He had expected that his family would be going to Atlanta, but they were sent to Chicago instead. “You have to like it,” he said. In January 2008, he and his family arrived in Chicago wearing flip flops. Heartland Human Care Services staff picked them up at the airport. Their apartment was ready and there was food. They were given coats and cold weather clothing. “So far nothing is disliked,” he explained, but “everything is different.” The architecture impresses him the most. He spends much of his time exploring the city, but his wife, he said smiling, “[She] can’t go to the market. Every time she goes she gets lost! She can’t get back home.” A month after resettling to Chicago, the time change still keeps his family hungry for lunch at 4 a.m., but they are quickly adjusting. He said it helps that “people are nice.” He likes everything in America. He is happy to be here.

Interview by: Maryann Cairns

Profile: Feliki Kabura

Feliki Kabura was born in Burundi in 1964. In 1972, to escape the civil war in his homeland, he and his brothers (orphaned years earlier) fled to Tanzania. When they arrived, they lived with Tanzanian nationals. However, as the civil war continued and more refugees came to Tanzania for asylum, the boys were relocated to the Gatumba camp. Gatumba is one of the oldest camps for Burundian refugees in Tanzania. Opened in 1974, it is still in use today.

When they arrived in the camps, Feliki explained, “life kind of okay, we were happy....” However, that does not mean life was easy. The shelters they built were “made of mud, tree, and grass...they were always leaking,” he said. The food assistance would sometimes be late. “You may have corn, but no money for the mill,” he said. Also, sometimes the corn “was very hard to chew, to swallow, you would grill it and eat it just to survive. “Sometimes even the corn was gone and people would die of hunger,” Feliki continued. The problem in Gatumba, he explained, was that “we [the refugees] could not go out of the camp; we could not work for money.”

He is now very glad to be in Chicago with his family of ten. He said he was “very, very happy to find a lot of food here.” He likes everything “apples, beef, chicken, eggs, we have everything,” he said. Feliki also appreciates the United States for its tolerance, its diversity. He explained, “This country, [the U.S.] has many cultures and tribes...each groups respects the other, you are not worried about it.” He is most of all very proud and happy that his children “attend school as if they are in their own country.” Feliki has recently gotten a job with a butcher and is very glad to have work.

Still, caring for such a large family in a new country is not an easy task. Money is always a concern for him. Even so, Feliki ended our interview with the following question: “I’m just asking if I can help the orphans...they count on me. Can I help them?” His dreams are no more than this: to have his children grow up proudly as Americans and to help others have the same opportunity.

Interview by: Maryann Cairns

Profile: Maria

Maria fled Burundi in 1972 when she was 10 years old because of the war between the Hutus and Tutsis. At that time, people were fighting for power, and rapes and killings were occurring especially of those who were associated with the government. Maria remembers military soldiers coming to her home looking for her father because he was a soldier in the military. There were accusations that her father was abusing government money, but Maria thinks it was because her father was a Hutu.

When the military came looking for Maria's dad, Maria's mom gathered the family and fled to Tanzania. Since her father was working in Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi, they could not get in touch with him and had to flee without him. He later found them and after nine months in Tanzania, her family decided to go to Rwanda. There were rumors that Tanzania was forcing Burundians out and those who returned were being killed. UNHCR brought them to Rwanda with many other Burundian refugees, but this was not a good time for them. They lacked clean water, enough food, and adequate living conditions. Her family spent one year there; Maria was only 12 years old.

Maria's family was chosen to go to another part of Rwanda where there was land to grow food and a permanent place to settle. Everyone had 50 to 300 meters of land and could build their own houses. This was not a camp and it was different than where they had previously lived. Maria lived here for 20 years, briefly fleeing when war broke out in their area in 1990.

In February 1993, Maria had to return to life in the camp, a time she remembers very well. In April 1994, the Rwandan president was killed and they fled again, this time to a camp in Tanzania. They walked for two weeks carrying food and children. Wherever they found water they made camp, cooked, and moved again in the morning. It was unsafe travel with many roadblocks because of the genocide and they were forced to show their identification at each one. Luckily, their identification said they had fled Burundi in 1972 and they were allowed through. No one was killed along the way, however some died of exhaustion. Others returned to Rwanda and were killed by RDF soldiers from the North.

When they arrived in Tanzania, they found the camp by following those ahead of them. Maria was pregnant with her fifth child at this time. They stayed at a second camp for more than one year, but life was not good there. There were illnesses and disease, and many people died. In 1997, they moved to Rukure where life was better and they had a small amount of money from selling wood.

Maria and her family stayed at Rukure until they applied to the U.S. Refugee Program. They went through the application process and in June 2007 Maria, her husband, and their eight children arrived in Manchester, New Hampshire with assistance from the International Institute of New Hampshire. Six months later, Maria is working at a linen service and learning English and her husband is working at the airport. The eldest children have also found jobs and the rest of their children are attending school.