



U.S. COMMITTEE  
FOR REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

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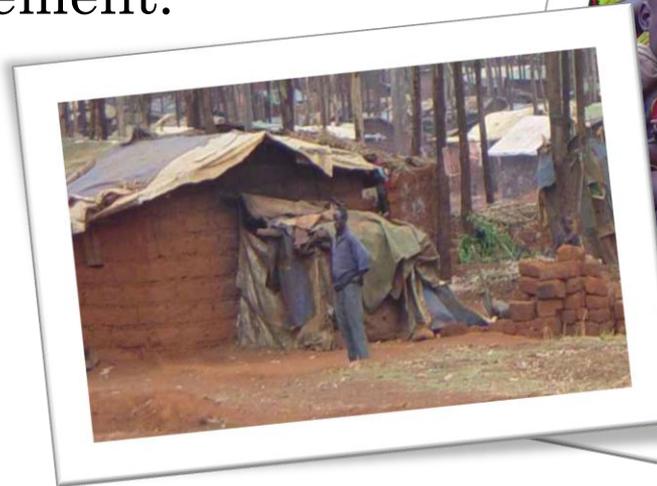
# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE 1972 BURUNDIAN REFUGEES





# 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.





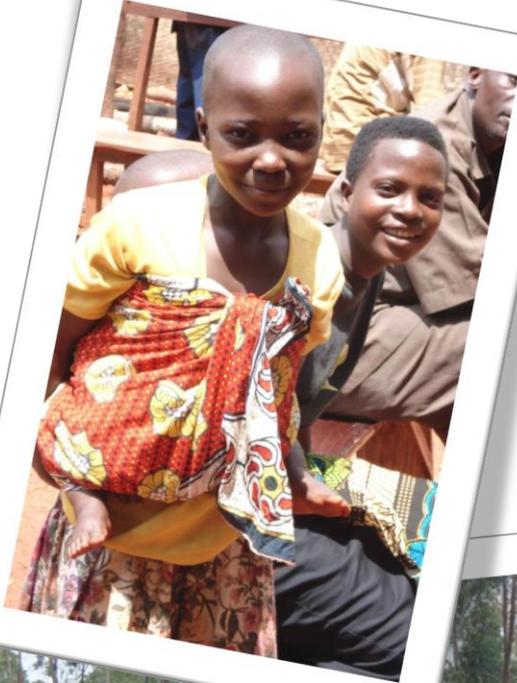
# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 1972 BURUNDIANS

- 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



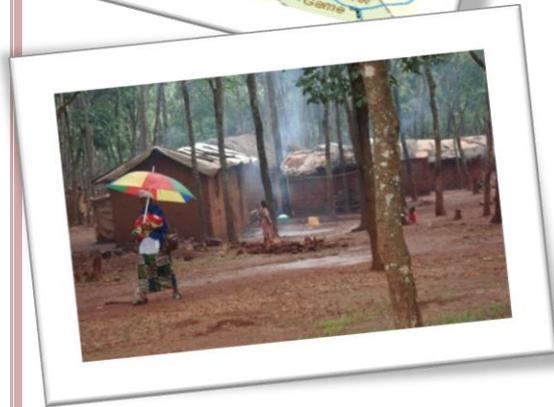
- Civil unrest continued in 1988, 1993 and 1996.
- Many Burundians were further displaced in 1994 due to the Rwandan genocide, and most were forced to flee several times during their displacement.
- Most have been located in three camps in Tanzania for over two to three decades.





# 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

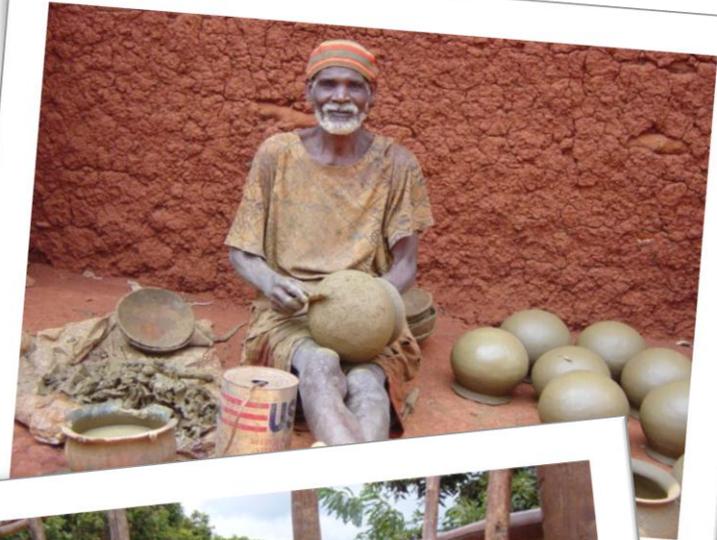
- Ethnicity: Primarily Hutu (85%)
- Religion: Christian 67% (Roman Catholic 62%, Protestant 5%), indigenous beliefs 23%, Muslim 10%
- Patriarchal society
- Average family size: 5
- Languages:
  - Kirundi (official)
  - French (official)
  - Kinyarwanda
  - Kiswahili
  - Swahili
  - English (very rare)
- 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

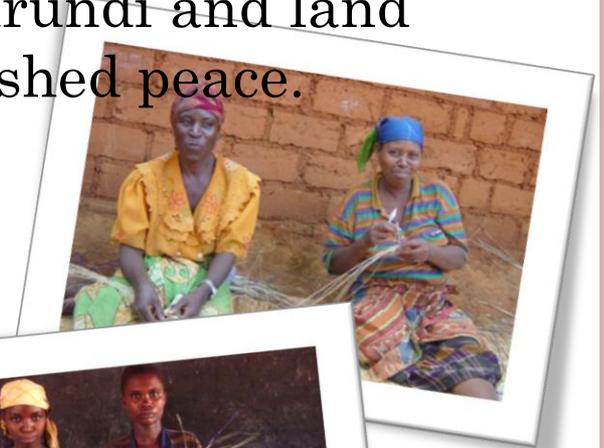
- The Burundi refugees as a whole exhibit:
  - Some mistrust of service providers and other Burundians.
  - Different traditional child rearing styles and perceptions of domestic violence than Americans.
  - A high rate of alcoholism.
  - Past trauma, psychosocial issues, and possible aversion to addressing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

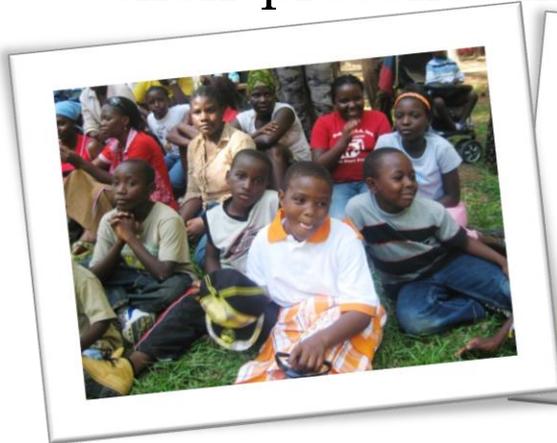
- Conducting educational outreach to resettlement communities to inform them about the Burundian refugees, and any special needs they may have or challenges they may face. This usually includes reaching out to local health care and social services providers, educators, potential employers, volunteers, 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.

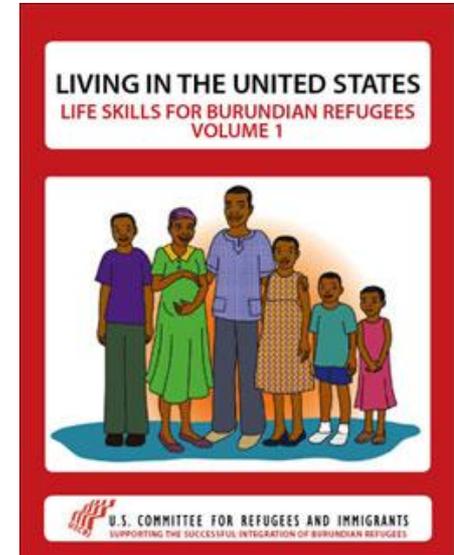


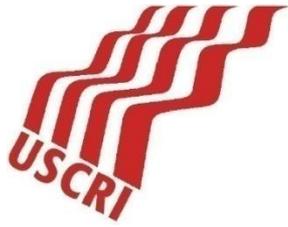


# ORIENTATION MATERIALS

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.

KATE 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 Burunidan 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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