

Sizeable challenges and innovative solutions



A country at the crossroads

Burundi is a country at a crossroads. As a post-conflict, fragile country with a history of cyclic violence, it now has the opportunity to embark on a path to sustainable development, but there is also a real risk of the country slipping back into instability.

One of the most assured ways of laying the foundation for the sustainable development of the country is to invest in its children, which represent 50% of the population and are incontestably the future of Burundi. UNICEF continues to advocate for child-relevant policies and roll out key programmes to reach the most vulnerable children in the country.

Results-driven interventions

Substantial progress is being made in building momentum in addressing malnutrition, one of the key issues affecting children in Burundi. At 58%, rates of chronic malnutrition stand among the highest in the world, and Burundi's admission to the Scaling up Nutrition movement in 2012 are important steps towards addressing this silent emergency.

Community-based interventions such as Community-Led Total Sanitation and Child Protection Committee structures are being strengthened in order to ensure long-term sustainability and local ownership of programmes in favour of children in Burundi.

Innovative solutions

UNICEF Burundi is developing innovative and cross-cutting strategies to deliver results for children, especially the most disadvantaged, in Burundi. An exciting development is the recent creation of our new Innovations Lab, a creative space that brings together children and young people, technologists, academics and policymakers to unlock some of the greatest challenges facing Burundi's children. One example is the introduction of **U-report**, a free SMS-based system that allows young people to speak out about issues in their communities. Other projects include **Project Lumiere** (a micro energy project which also creates income-generating opportunities for volunteer groups and youth), **Digital Drums** (solar-powered computer hubs pre-loaded with educational content) and several RapidPro projects.

Such developments are encouraging and promising. Nonetheless, to achieve the real and effective impact we seek for children in Burundi, UNICEF needs support from donors. Current programmes have the potential to be scaled up and have far-reaching, sustainable impact for not just the most deprived groups of children and women, but also the future of the country as a whole. With the support of donor funding, UNICEF and its partners can help make that impact happen.

Country overview

Burundi is a small landlocked country in the Great Lakes region with a population of over 10 million, half of which are children under 18. Nearly 90% of the population lives in rural areas.

The country is among the poorest in the world and ranks 180 out of 187 on the 2014 Human Development Index. In recent times, chronic high food and fuel prices have hit the country hard and reduced economic opportunities. 81% of the population currently lives with less than \$1.25 per day, making poverty a major challenge to the development of the country.

In addition to the issue of poverty, as a fragile state in a post-conflict context, Burundi also faces the challenge of the reintegration of returnees. Over 35,000 Former Burundian Refugees arrived in 2012 from Tanzania, the majority of which (57%) were children.

The returnee situation compounds existing challenges, placing additional pressure on land and services such as education and social protection, which are already under considerable strain due to the extremely high demographic growth rate and population density.

In this context, **hunger** and **malnutrition** are critical issues in Burundi. The 2014 Global Hunger Index indicates that Burundi, despite being potentially self-sufficient in food, has the highest level of hunger of all the countries it lists. The prevalence of stunting continues to surpass the critical threshold and stands among the highest in the world (58%), a rate that Burundi shares with Yemen and Timor-Leste and which is second only to Afghanistan.

While there is progress on **child mortality**, efforts need to be accelerated significantly to reach MDG 4. International estimates indicate that infant and under-five mortality rates far off the MDG targets of 37 and 68 per 1,000 live births.

Half of the population still lives without adequate sanitation, with significant disparities between provinces and communes within same province.

Net enrolment in primary school rose to nearly 95% in 2013/2014 and gender parity in primary school enrolment has been reached. Nevertheless, the education sector faces significant challenges: **overcrowded classrooms** (with classrooms of over 100 pupils in some locations); high grade repetition and dropout; limited vocational training opportunities, and limited preparation of youth for entrance into the labour market.

Commercial sexual exploitation has been identified as one of the worst forms of child labour in Burundi. 30% of children interviewed during a rapid assessment declared to be victims of this type of exploitation, and the remaining 70% declared to have witnessed cases of it.

The case of children in conflict with the law remains a concern, as the **juvenile justice system** still needs reinforcing.

Energy poverty is another challenge: despite being one of the most densely populated countries in the world, less than 3% of the population of Burundi is connected to the central electricity grid. This energy poverty casts its shadow over all aspects of daily life – limiting income-generating opportunities for households and communities, denying educational resources for children, and preventing the delivery of critical health services.

Key challenges facing children in Burundi

- Chronic malnutrition
- Child development and survival
- Social protection
- Educational opportunities
- Energy access



Key socio-economic indicators

Total population (UNSD 2015)	10.5 mio
Density (people per sq. km of land area; UNSD 2015)	388
Population under 18 years of age (UNSD 2014)	5.2 mio (50%)
Population growth rate (UNSD 2014)	3.3%
Rank on Human Development Index (2014)	180/187
Percentage of population living below US\$ 1.25 a day (WB 2014)	81%
Under-five mortality (per 1,000 live births) (IMEG 2014)	83
Maternal mortality per 100,000 live births (MMEIG 2014)	740
HIV prevalence among 15-49 age group (DHS 2010)	1.4%
Chronic malnutrition (stunting) among children under 5	58%
Rank on Global Hunger Index (2014)	1
Student/classroom ratio (MOE 2013/2014)	74
Net enrolment rate (MOE 2013/14)	94.6%
Grade repetition (MOE 2012/13)	29.4%
Percentage of population using adequate sanitation facilities (SOWC 2014)	47%

