

Burundi

Country Overview

Politics

Burundi is a presidential republic in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa, with a political history characterized by “high political instability and violence.” A period of relative stability and peace following the Arusha Accords in 2000 and the official 2005 end to its 12-year long civil war, ended in 2015, when the decision of President Pierre Nkurunziza to seek an extra-constitutional third term sparked political violence.ⁱ The violence largely ended by 2016, but the political climate has remained unstable, and repression and persecution of those suspected of opposing the regime continued to be reported in 2018.ⁱⁱ In May 2020, President Evariste Ndayishimiye was elected under the National Council for the Defence of Democracy – Forces for the Defence of Democracy Party (CNDD-FDD), after an endorsement from former President Nkurunziza.ⁱⁱⁱ The opposition claimed election rigging, with pre-election violence leading to the deaths of dozens of opposition forces.^{iv}

Economy

Burundi is classified by the World Bank as a low-income economy. Post-conflict conditions, landlocked, and resource-scarce with a population that suffers from extreme poverty, Burundi has faced significant constraints on growth.^v Burundi’s main exports include gold, coffee, tea, and ores.^{vi} Around 80 percent of the population is engaged in agriculture.^{vii} Following two years of recession in 2015 and 2016, the country’s economy grew slightly from 2018 to 2020, with GDP growth of 1.8 percent in 2019 and 0.3 percent in 2020 due to the COVID-19 related downturn.^{viii} Many challenges continue to face the Burundian economy such as a weak financial sector, an insufficiency of capital to finance public investment, low-skilled labor, unreliable infrastructure, and constant foreign exchange shortages.^{ix} The gross national income (GNI) per capita for 2018 was USD 280, more than twice what it was in 2003 at USD 110 per capita, and per capita income growth was USD 276 in 2020.^x

Social/Human Development

Since its independence in 1962, Burundi has experienced several ethnic-based conflicts between the Hutu majority and the influential Tutsi minority. A 12-year-long civil war from 1993 to 2005 displaced hundreds of thousands of Burundians.^{xi} As of February 2020, over



336,650 Burundians were in Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).^{xii} Meanwhile, inside the country, the multidimensional poverty rate stood at 74.3 percent with 16.3 percent more of the country at risk of falling into multidimensional poverty in 2017.^{xiii} According to the CIA, 60 percent of Burundian children are chronically malnourished, and the COVID-19 pandemic as well as natural disasters such as floods and mudslides have rendered 1.33 million Burundians severely food insecure.^{xiv} Burundi ranks 185 out of 189 countries in terms of the Human Development Index with a score of 0.433.^{xv}

U.S. Department of State TIP Report Summary (2021)

U.S. Department of State TIP Ranking: Tier 2 Watch List

According to the 2021 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, trafficking risk may be found among Burundian children and young adults in export supply chains including agriculture, gold mining, and fishing, as well as in the recruitment of children for armed labor and sexual exploitation.

Read the full TIP Report at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/burundi/>.

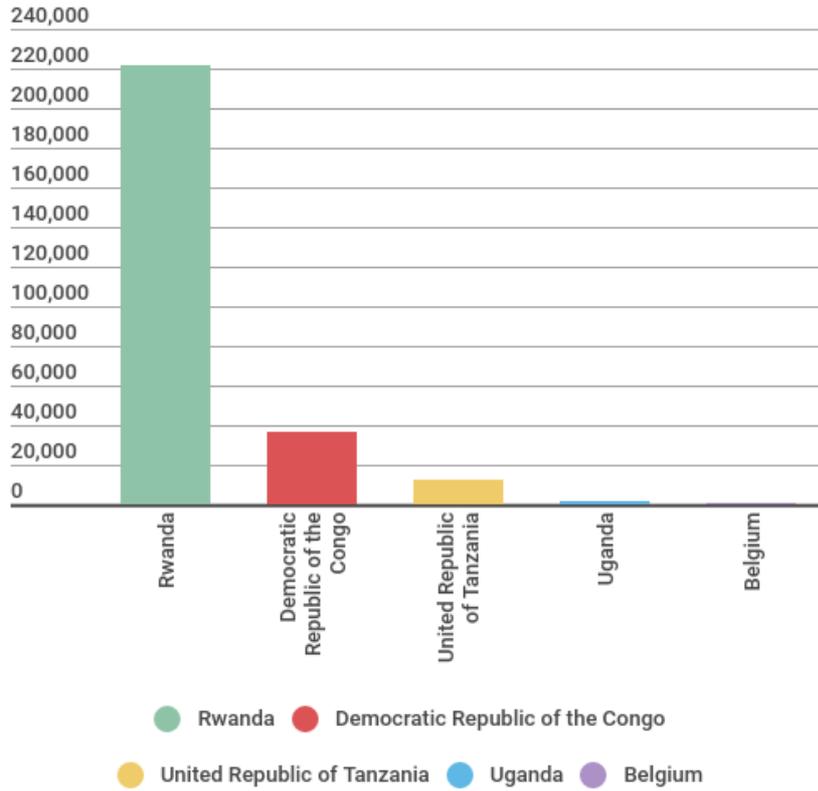
Migrant and Other Vulnerable Populations

Burundi has positive net migration.^{xvi} About 2.9 percent of the population are migrants.^{xvii} The largest source country for migrants is Rwanda. Other significant migrant source countries are the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Tanzania, with smaller migrant populations from Uganda, and Belgium.^{xviii} There are large populations of migrants in Burundi from unknown countries, numbering around 60,000. The United Nations broke those figures into 50,676 from other “South” countries, and 8,943 from other “North countries.”^{xix}

In 2019, an estimated 974 stateless persons were living in Burundi.^{xx} In 2020, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported 21,863 internally displaced persons of concern.^{xxi} The law provides for the freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, but the government has a history of restricting these rights.^{xxii} According to news sources, the government has repressed in-country movement using “cahiers de ménage,” or booklets, which list the residents and domestic workers of each household in some neighborhoods of the capital. Neighborhood searches have been conducted where unregistered persons are arrested. Persons who fled the country in search of refugee camps were sometimes detained by police, the National Intelligence Service (SNR), or members of the *Imbonerakure*, the youth wing of the CNDD-FDD party.^{xxiii}



Migrants to Burundi

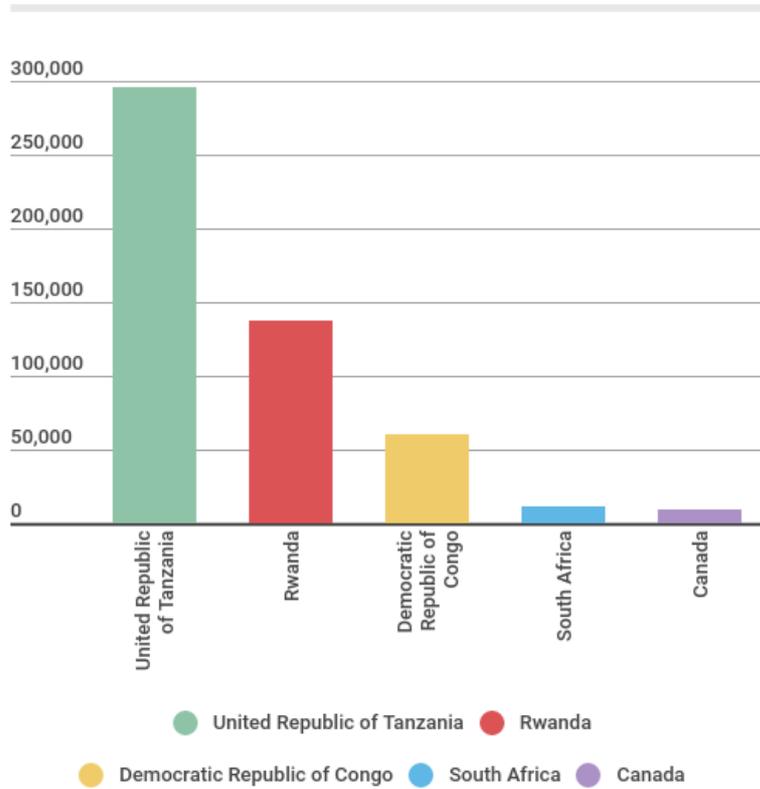


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The top destination countries for migrants from Burundi were Tanzania, Rwanda, the DRC, South Africa, and Canada.^{xxv} Remittances made up 1.4 percent of GDP in 2020.^{xxvi}



Migrants from Burundi



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Exports and Trade

The top exports of Burundi in 2020 were coffee, tea, precious stones (gold), ores, and lead.

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2020



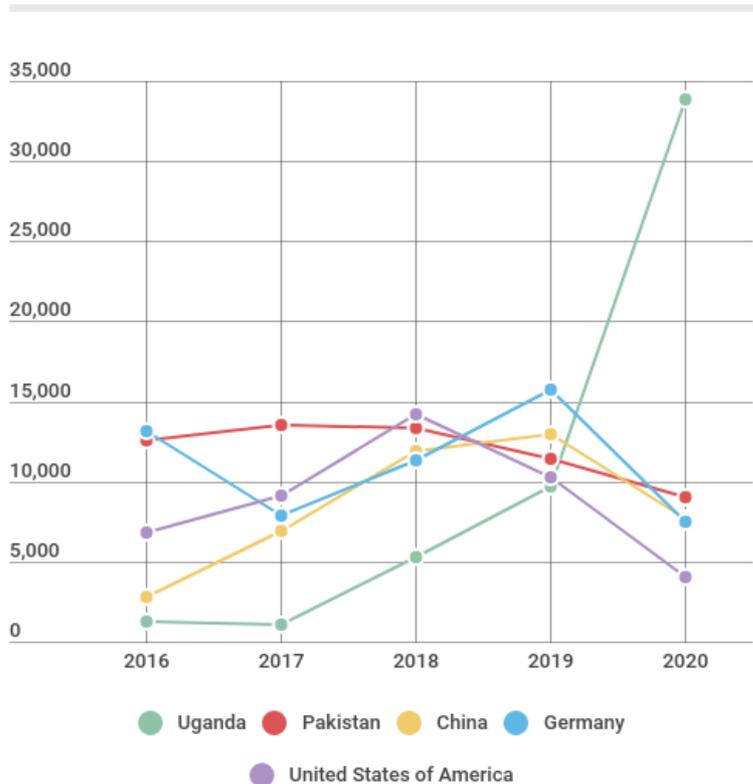
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The top importers of all goods from Burundi in 2020 were Uganda, Pakistan, China, Germany, and the United States of America.^{xxx}

Burundi has a bilateral investment treaty with Germany and trades with Uganda through the East Africa Community (EAC). It is not a participant in the United States African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) due to 2015 violence.^{xxxi}



Burundi Export Partners (USD)



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Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors Analysis

Legal/Policy Risk Factors

Level of Legal Protection for Civil Liberties and Workers' Rights

Freedom of Association

The constitution provides for freedom of association, but according to Freedom House, Burundi has a history of severely restricting this right.^{xxxiii} The law provides for the right of workers to form and join independent unions, but police, armed forces, magistrates, and foreigners working in the public sector are excluded.^{xxxiv} Civil servants may form unions, but under a strict registration process with the Ministry of Civil Service, Labor, and Social Security, and it is difficult for private workers to receive permission to form a union.^{xxxv} According to Freedom House, the political climate in Burundi discourages unions from practicing any sort of collective bargaining.^{xxxvi} Workers who wish to strike must comply with strict conditions, such as six days' notice to the employer and Ministry of Labor, but only



after all other avenues of discussion have failed.^{xxxvii} The law prohibits retribution against workers participating in a legal strike, but the law does not explicitly provide for reinstatement of workers who are dismissed.^{xxxviii} The International Trade Union Confederation gave Burundi a score of 5+ out of 5+, classifying it as a country with no guarantee of rights due to the breakdown of its laws in 2020.^{xxxix}

Working Conditions

More than 90 percent of the working population is employed in the informal economy.^{xi} According to the Confederation of Burundian Labor Unions, virtually no informal sector workers have written employment contracts.^{xii} Moreover, labor inspectors do not have authority outside of the formal sector, so the vast majority of Burundians in the labor force have limited protection.^{xiii} In 2018, in the capital city of Bujumbura, there was an informal minimum wage for unskilled workers of BIF 3,000 francs (USD 1.70) per day.^{xliii} However, in rural areas the minimum wage was BIF 2,000 (USD 1.13) per day.^{xliv}

The labor code provides an 8-hour workday and 40-hour workweek, but there are exceptions in the national security, residential security, and transport sectors, such as a 72-hour benchmark for security guards.^{xlv} Foreign and migrant workers are subject to the same working conditions as Burundians.^{xlvi}

Discrimination

The constitution recognizes workers' right to decent work and equal pay for equal work, but the law does not explicitly prohibit discrimination against specific groups, such as women and persons with disabilities.^{xlvii} Most of the country's economic activity occurs in the informal sector where legal protections do not apply. There are some reports suggesting that membership in the ruling party is a prerequisite to formal employment in the public and private sectors.^{xlviii} Some members of the Twa ethnic minority, who often lack documentation, have reported exclusion from the formal sector.^{xlix} Albinos also face discrimination in the workplace.^l

Under Article 55 of the Statute of Public Servants, women employed in the public sector are granted the right to maternity leave.^{li} However, the U.S. Department of State has reported that some employers have suspended the salaries of women on maternity leave, whereas others refuse medical coverage to married female employees.^{lii}

Forced Labor

According to the U.S. Department of State, the Burundi government reportedly has not effectively enforced laws that intend to ban most types of forced labor or compulsory labor.^{liii} A National Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Persons aimed to create new measures and structures to stop trafficking, especially of women and children, but as recently as 2020, there had not been sufficient allocation of resources to put the plan in place.^{liv}



Burundians are compelled by law to carry out community-level service work to promote the social and economic development of municipalities, and even to construct buildings for the ruling CNDD-FDD party.^{lv} Armed anti-government groups recruit children as young as fifteen who are attacked or harassed if they did not agree to join.^{lvi} According to the U.S. Department of State, children are recruited for sexual exploitation in restaurants and entertainment venues, and children and adults with disabilities are used for street begging schemes.^{lvii}

Child Labor

16 is the minimum legal age for employment, but there are exceptions permitted by the Ministry of Labor. Included among these exceptions are light work or apprenticeships that do not damage children's health or interfere with their normal development or schooling.^{lviii} Burundi law still permits some forms of hazardous work, especially in agriculture.^{lix} However, the Ministry does not effectively enforce the law due to insufficient labor inspectors and resources.^{lx}

In Burundi, education is free and compulsory from the age of seven through 12, leaving a gap between the minimum age a child can leave school and the minimum age for child employment at 16.^{lxi} Students are responsible for covering the costs of books and uniforms, and while tuition is free, there have been reports throughout the country of provincial officials who have charged parents fees for schooling.^{lxii} According to the Education Policy Data Center, 62 percent of 15–24-year-olds had not completed primary education in Burundi in 2014.^{lxiii} Most age regulations as well as the use of labor inspections do not apply to the large informal employment sector.^{lxiv}

According to the U.S. Department of State in 2020, child labor laws are not effectively enforced in practice as children are regularly engaged in agriculture or assisting family businesses in informal work as street vendors or in local brickworks.^{lxv} It has been reported that children work as domestic servants in urban areas.^{lxvi} There are also reports of children employed in gold mining. Children over the age of 15 *can* participate in the military.^{lxvii}

Civil Society Organizations

In Burundi, civil society organizations (CSOs) are required by law to register with the Ministry of Interior, yet the criteria are unclear and there is no legal recourse when authorities deny the registration.^{lxviii} According to Freedom House, there is little opportunity for members of NGOs to participate in government policymaking.^{lxix} Repeated government threats in 2015 pushed many civil society activists and journalists into exile for fear of arrest. In October 2016, the Interior Minister banned or suspended 10 civil society organizations that had spoken out against government abuses. Some restrictions have been lifted since 2015, but NGOs that continue to be critical of the government risk imprisonment of individuals, forced exiles, and disappearances, as the government fears organizations proposing a foreign agenda.^{lxx} In September 2018, the National Security Council declared a three-month suspension on foreign NGOs, hampering the operations of around 130 NGOs,



many of which provided lifesaving assistance.^{lxxi} According to the U.S. Department of State, in 2020 NGOs improved relations with the government, with new centers jointly run by the government and NGOs supporting Burundians with legal, financial, shelter, and medical assistance.^{lxxii}

Export Processing Zones (EPZs)

In 2020 the government of Burundi was in the process of creating the country’s first Special Economic Zone (ZESB) with collaboration between the government and private foreign investors to improve the Burundi exports market.^{lxxiii} The zone is to be located at Warubundo, near the capital city of Bujumbura and the border with the DRC.^{lxxiv}

Ratification of ILO Conventions Related to Human Trafficking or Rights of Workers and Migrants

Conventions	Status
ILO 29 Forced Labor	In force
ILO 87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize	In force
ILO 98 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining	In force
ILO 100 Equal Remuneration	In force
ILO 105 Abolition of Forced Labor	In force
ILO 111 Discrimination	In force
ILO 138 Minimum Age	In force
ILO 181 Private Employment Agencies	Not ratified
ILO 182 Worst Forms of Child Labor	In force
ILO 97 Migration for Employment	Not ratified

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Political Risk Factors

Political Instability or Conflict

Burundi scored 97.1 out of 120 on the 2021 Fragile States Index, which ranked it 16 out of 179.^{lxxvi} Opposition parties, politicians, and their supporters faced harassment, intimidation and violence throughout the course of 2015, most notably after a failed coup attempt of former President Nkurunziza that led to the increased surveillance of those suspected of involvement.^{lxxvii} During the 2020 election period of current President Ndayishimiye there was much less violence despite continued electoral irregularities.^{lxxviii} Some militant groups continue to practice the trafficking of children for smaller conflicts throughout the Great



Lakes region, while the dispossession of land of displaced persons continues to cause conflicts in rural areas.^{lxxix}

Level of Crime and Violence

The World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report scored Burundi at 4.8 out of 7 for business costs of organized crime in 2019.^{lxxx} A score of seven indicates that business costs are not affected at all, indicating a marked improvement from 3.8 in 2018.^{lxxxi} According to the U.S. Department of State, there continues to be crimes committed against minorities, such as refugees and those with albinism, as well as against ethnic Twa and Tutsi minorities. The government still conducts arbitrary arrests, forced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings, and gender-based violence continues to be an issue.^{lxxxii} Security forces and members of the *Imbonerakure* were responsible for killings, disappearances, abductions, rape, torture, and arbitrary arrests in 2020.^{lxxxiii} Violence between the ruling CNDD-FDD party and opposition parties started up again during the 2020 election period, and the opposition still faces violent repression under the new administration.^{lxxxiv}

State Persecution

Members of the *Imbonerakure* reportedly abused and robbed refugees.^{lxxxv} It was reported that police and military officials were also responsible for abuse.^{lxxxvi} Human Rights Watch reported that in 2016, police, military, and *Imbonerakure* forced their way into houses and demanded that residents turn over clandestine young men and combatants, which was often accompanied by ethnic slurs targeted at Tutsi residents.^{lxxxvii} In 2015, large-scale arbitrary arrests were committed, alongside mass killings in Nyakabiga and Musaga, which are evidenced by the discovery of mass graves.^{lxxxviii} A number of political opponents to the ruling party were arrested, intimidated, or held captive in unknown locations with no means to communicate with the outside world.^{lxxxix}

Level of Corruption

The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2020 scored Burundi 19 out of 100, where zero signals “Highly Corrupt” and a 100 indicates “Very Clean.” Burundi ranked 165 out of 180 countries on that same index.^{xc} Burundi has many legal provisions aimed at combating corrupt activities such as bribery, nepotism, preferential hiring, promotion, and embezzlement. According to the U.S. Department of State, these measures are rarely enforced, and many high-ranking officials consistently break the law.^{xcii} Investment from foreign private companies is often impeded by pervasive corruption.^{xciii} Corruption is allegedly most pervasive in the government procurement sector where the purchase and sale of government property takes place in a non-transparent.^{xciii}

Human Rights Watch has reported that the ruling party and intelligence officials manipulate the justice system, routinely causing judicial procedures to be contravened.^{xciv} In 2020,



President Ndayishimiye promised to address corruption in his first term, but the judiciary continues to lack autonomy due to executive corruption.^{xcv}

Socio-Economic Risk Factors

Level of National Economic Development

Burundi's Human Development Index value for 2020 was 0.433, which placed the country in the low human development category. When adjusted for inequality, the HDI falls to 0.303 — a loss of 30.0 percent due to inequality.^{xcvi} Burundi's HDI and IHDI are lower than its neighboring countries of Tanzania, Rwanda, and DRC.^{xcvii}

Level and Extent of Poverty

Poverty is pervasive in Burundi. Nearly 72 percent of the population lived below the poverty line in 2018, and in 2019, the rate was at 65 percent of the country's population.^{xcviii} The breadth of deprivation, which is the average deprivation score experienced by people in multidimensional poverty, was 54.3 percent in 2018.^{xcix} Burundians have limited access to necessities such as water and sanitation. The World Bank reported in 2019 that less than five percent of the population had access to electricity.^c

Degree of Gender Inequality

The UNDP Gender Inequality Index scored Burundi at 0.504 on the 2019 index.^{ci} Males have a slightly longer expected years in school, with 11.1 years for males and 11.0 years for females.^{cii} In reality, secondary school dropout rates can be slightly higher for women due to child marriage and early pregnancy.^{ciii} The vast majority of women work in agriculture, with 36 percent of the non-agricultural workforce women in low-skilled jobs.^{civ}

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has voiced concern over women's limited access to basic health care and sexual and reproductive health services, especially regarding the continued criminalization of abortion. In 2016, of all the women incarcerated in Burundi, 45 percent were serving sentences related to abortion and infanticide.^{cv} According to the U.S. Department of State, state-sponsored gender-based violence is rampant, with women facing sexual assault in detention.^{cvi}

Under customary law, rural women cannot inherit land or non-land assets from their fathers or their husbands. Although the Arusha Accords included reforms to alleviate discrimination against women in this respect, its implementation remains superficial.^{cvii} This occurrence of discrimination is intensified by the large number of men killed by conflict, and HIV/AIDS, both of which have led to the increased number of women-headed households. This is particularly problematic because women have limited access to non-agricultural resources.^{cviii}



Landlessness and Dispossession

Refugees returned to Burundi, following the long civil war and 2015 violence, to find the government and other citizens had seized their land.^{cxix} Beginning in 2012, there have been cases arbitrated by the National Commission for Land and Other Possessions that have resulted in the restoration of property to returning refugees, but without compensation to the current property owners whom the returning refugees displace.^{cx} Another issue is land registration, as over 90 percent of rural land is not registered, resulting in the majority of court litigations revolving around land ownership disputes.^{cxii} In 2008, CEDAW expressed concerns regarding the treatment of widows who face discrimination under customary inheritance practices. Widows are prohibited from inheriting land from their husbands and often their brothers are unwilling to welcome them back into their family homes, which leaves widows both landless and homeless.^{cxii}

Environmental Factors

In late 2020, floods and landslides, as well as COVID-19 pandemic-related hardships placed 1.33 million Burundians in severe food insecurity.^{cxiii} In April 2020, floods and landslides impacted 45,000 people with displacement and infrastructure damages.^{cxiv} Intense deforestation for household fuel and agricultural overgrazing have damaged the land.^{cxv}

Documented Trafficking Risk in Key Commodity Supply Chains

Coffee

Coffee Overview

Coffee and tea exports in Burundi account for more than half of the country's GDP from exports.^{cxvi} Coffee is a volatile crop. Yields are largely dependent upon weather conditions, and sale prices are determined by international markets.^{cxvii} According to a 2013 report, approximately 55 percent of Burundi's citizens earn their living from the growing and producing of Arabica coffee.^{cxviii} More recently, coffee production has fallen to 13,517 tons of green coffee from 2017 to 2018, down from 15,000 tons in 2011 to 2012, as environmental factors such as flooding, along with political violence have hindered increased production.^{cxix}

Documented TIP Risk in Coffee

The U.S. Department of Labor has reported that Burundian children are engaged in child labor within the agriculture sector, including in coffee production.^{cxix} The Government of Burundi and the ILO collaborated to publish a study, which found that child labor commonly occurs in cash crops like coffee.^{cxxi} Forced labor also occurs in agriculture in Burundi, sometimes due to trafficking in persons.^{cxvii}



Gold

Gold Overview

Gold is produced throughout the country at various sites in Bujumbura, Cankuzo, Cibitoke, Muyinga, and Ruyigi Provinces. The two forms of gold production are artisanal and small-scale mining.^{cxxiii} In 2015, the most recent year for which data is available, it was estimated that artisanal miners produced around 500 kg of gold each year. In the same year, it was estimated that the gold sector employed an estimated 7,000 workers.^{cxxiv} In 2014, 11 artisanal mining cooperatives were authorized by Burundi's government to mine gold.^{cxxv} In 2013, the first government supported refinery opened in Bujumbura.^{cxxvi}

Documented TIP Risk in Gold

The U.S Department of State has reported that children and young adults are coerced into forced labor in gold mines in Cibitoke,^{cxxvii} and that there are instances of child labor in artisanal gold mines.^{cxxviii}

Endnotes

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