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BDI 102641.E

Burundi: Situation of Hutu women born abroad to Burundian parents (2005-2007)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Specific information on the situation of Hutu women born abroad to Burundian parents could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, the following information may be relevant.

Approximately 85 percent of Burundi's population belongs to the Hutu ethnic group (AFP 30 Aug. 2005; US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 5). According to *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006*, discrimination against Hutus by Tutsis, who have traditionally held disproportionate economic and military power, is decreasing, and the presence of Hutus in government is increasing (ibid.). However, despite the election of a Hutu-led government in 2005, ethnic tensions persist (AP 31 Aug. 2007).

In November 2005, the United Nations (UN) published its *Fifth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Burundi*, in which it explained that large numbers of people who had fled Burundi due to conflict, were returning, only to find their properties destroyed, damaged or occupied (UN 21 Nov. 2005, 7). The UN goes on to state:

The situation of women returnees, particularly widows, is further exacerbated by the lack of adequate legislation to address their inheritance and land access rights. UNHCR [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees], the World Food Programme (WFP) and other members of the United Nations country team are continuing to provide basic assistance to the returnees, especially in the areas of food, shelter, education and health. (ibid.)

In 2005, the Burundian government reportedly planned to expel thousands of Rwandan asylum seekers, the majority of whom were women and children (AP 13 June 2005; HRW 27 May 2005). According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), the asylum seekers who are Hutu (ibid.) feared being victims of violence as local people's courts (*gacaca*) were being set up to try perpetrators of Rwanda's 1994 Tutsi genocide (ibid.; AP 13 June 2005).

A 12 July 2007 report published by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicated that since 2002, 300,000 Burundians had returned home, of which 256,000 had been living in neighbouring Tanzania. The majority of Burundian returnees are ethnic Hutus (AP 31 Aug. 2007). The report stated that the UNHCR, along with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the World Food Programme, is helping the Burundian returnees with reintegration by providing six months of free healthcare (ibid.) and two years of free education for children, in addition to food rations, cash grants (ibid.; UN 12 July 2007), farming tools and basic household items (ibid.).

Several media and human rights sources reported that violence against women, including domestic violence, was a major problem in Burundi (ITEKA May 2007, 109; US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 5). Human rights organizations point to sexual assaults as particularly widespread, with limited possibility of redress (ibid.; AI

Oct. 2007, 1; ITEKA May 2007, 110). The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) cites UN data which indicates that 19 percent of Burundian teenagers and women have been subjected to sexual violence (23 Feb. 2007, 66). According to Amnesty International (AI), before 2006 cases of sexual violence were often related to warfare, since 2006, the rate of sexual violence has remained high (ITEKA May 2007, 113; Peacewomen Mar. 2007; AI Oct. 2007, 11) although it now most often occurs in community- or family-related contexts (ibid.). AI notes that "[t]he state's response was characterized by inaction, and the criminal justice system provided scant protection" (AI 2007).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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United Nations (UN). 12 July 2007. Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). "UNHCR and Partners in New Initiatives to Boost Repatriation to Burundi." <<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/print?tbl=NEWS&id=46964d034>> [Accessed 26 Oct. 2007]

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United States (US). 6 March 2007. Department of State. "Burundi." *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006*. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78722.htm>> [Accessed 18 Oct. 2007]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The Bujumbura-based Association pour la solidarité des femmes burundaises ASF Burundi, the Collectif des associations et ONG féminines du Burundi (CAFOB), the Ligue burundaise des droits de l'homme (ITEKA), Women for Peace Association, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) office in Burundi, as well as the Kigali-based Ligue des droits de la personne dans la région des Grands Lacs and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) - Central Africa Regional Office, did not respond to requests for information within the time constraints of this Response.

Attempts to reach the Bujumbura-based Association burundaise d'action pour la promotion de la femme (ABAPF), the Association des femmes burundaises pour la paix (AFBP) and the Women for Peace Association were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including: Abarundi, Afrique Centrale.info, Afrol News, Agence burundaise de presse (ABP), Agence burundaise d'information Net Press, Association pour la protection des droits humains et des personnes détenues (Bujumbura), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Burundi réalités, European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme (FIDH), Freedom House, Info-Burundi, International Crisis Group (ICG), *Jeune Afrique*, Ligue burundaise des droits de l'homme (ITEKA), Ligue des droits de la personne dans la region des grands lacs (LDGL), Peacewomen.org, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN).

[▲
Top of Page](#)

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