



BURUNDI

Human development index: 180/187⁴¹

Climate change vulnerability index (2016): 54/186⁴²

Child population: 5.16 million (50.8 per cent of population)⁴³

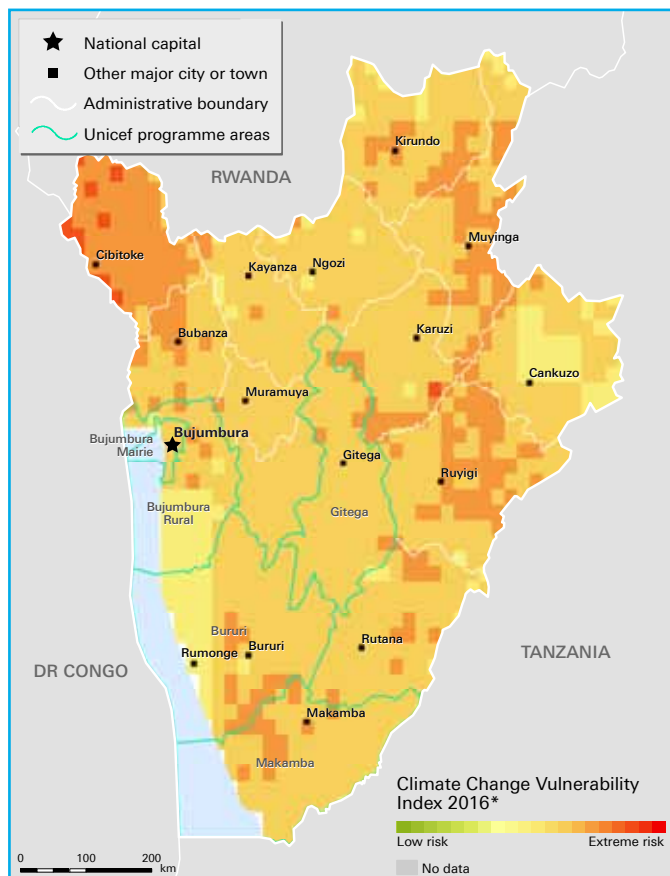
“Before we would use all types of firewood, including from young trees. It leads to the destruction of trees and that leads to dryness, which impacts our farming.”

Juliette Manirambona, 35, a mother of seven children and a farmer, Muzima, Burundi

CLIMATE CHANGE AND CHILDREN IN BURUNDI

Communities in Burundi are arguably among the least equipped in the world to respond to the impacts of climate change. The country is one of Africa’s most densely populated nations. It is also one of the youngest and poorest – half of the population is under the age of 18, 81.3 per cent of its people live on less than \$1.25 a day, and it ranks first on the Global Hunger Index. Following disputed elections in July 2015, children in Burundi have experienced civil unrest and political turmoil. Yet these children are also highly exposed to the dangers of climate change. They are already witnessing the loss of their families’ crops to desertification as wetlands, rivers and lakes dry up – or to the torrential rains that sweep through their communities. As temperatures rise and flooding increases, they also face a proliferating risk of malaria and waterborne disease such as diarrhoea and cholera.⁴⁴

Energy poverty in Burundi is responsible for further compounding the plight of children. Ninety-seven per cent of the population is unable to access electricity from the grid, meaning that communities have to rely on unsustainable resources such as wood and kerosene. Yet these practices further undermine communities’ resilience to the impacts of climate change, exacerbating the challenges of soil erosion, flooding and drought in the country. Recent estimates indicate that if current rates of deforestation continue, there will be no forests left in Burundi by 2040.⁴⁵



**CLIMATE CHANGE
VULNERABILITY*
BURUNDI**

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

UNICEF'S WORK

UNICEF is providing a climate-sensitive solution to meeting Burundi's energy needs through a programme that helps communities to develop sustainably, while keeping children safe from danger. 'Project Lumière', launched in 2013, is a micro-enterprise rural energy scheme that enables community groups – predominantly women – to purchase a pedal-powered generator and fast-charging LED lights to sell. The low up-front costs of the equipment guarantees access to safe, affordable lighting for even the poorest families. A small fee is charged by the community groups to users wishing to recharge their lamps, creating a constant revenue stream. At least 10 per cent of these profits are reinvested into the community, to strengthen safety networks and keep vulnerable children safe from violence and abuse.

In partnership with a local non-governmental organisation, a national social enterprise has been created to manage, procure and distribute the rechargeable lights, and to oversee the introduction of other affordable micro-energy technologies in future, such as solar power. The lights provide a cleaner, safer and cheaper source of energy for children's homes than traditional kerosene lamps or firewood candles and protect children from indoor pollution, responsible for the death of almost 9,500 Burundian children under the age of five each year.⁴⁶ They free up extra income for households, and enable children to study for longer, improving learning outcomes. At night, when villages were previously plunged into darkness, women and children can now identify noises, and use the bathroom more safely.

OUR PROGRAMME

Location: Gitega, Makamba, Bururi, and Bujumbura provinces in Burundi

Funding: US\$60,000 from September 2013 to January 2015; US\$297,500 from February 2015 to present (covering the broader electrification strategy)

Partners: FVS Amade, CPES (national social enterprise), and Nawe Nuze (local credit and savings associations), and Nuru Energy (supplier)

Number of children helped: Approximately 26,000

RESULTS

- 54 community groups comprising 16,000 households and 26,000 children have been provided with access to safe, clean, and affordable energy solutions.
- Reduction in the use of kerosene and firewood candles in homes, decreasing emissions and deforestation rates, as well as indoor air pollution responsible for deadly respiratory diseases.
- An 80 per cent reduction in monthly household expenditure on energy for lighting, contributing to poverty alleviation, even in the poorest and most vulnerable families.
- Improved safety for women and girls at night, enabling them to identify noises and threats and to use the bathroom when it is dark outside.
- An increase in children's quality time for study in the evening, improving learning outcomes and decreasing eye problems as a result of better lighting.
- Longer working hours for families, leading to increased household revenue.

A child uses an LED lamp to study.

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“IT IS EASY NOW TO SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING”

Perched on top of one of Burundi’s thousand hills, in a landscape dotted by the occasional coffee bush, lies Muzima, a tiny village with a handful of homes, 12 kilometres away from the nearest town. This is a land of landslides and soil erosion, where farmers venture out on to the steepest slopes to plant staple crops like bananas, and where the scent of eucalyptus perfumes the air. For communities here, energy poverty permeates every aspect of life: children study at night using kerosene lamps, women give birth in the dark by candlelight, and women and girls are afraid to leave their homes after nightfall.

Yet for Diane, a teenager in Muzima, the days of struggling to read her notes from maths class already seem like a distant memory.

“Before I used a kerosene lamp to study,” she explains. “There was a lot of smoke – you can see the stains on the ceiling. The smoke would get in my nose and lead to coughing. When I got the new lamp, I no longer had pain in my eyes and felt much better. I study until late, and when I wake up at four in the morning to continue studying, it is easy to find and turn on the lamp again. It is also easy now to go out at night and see what is happening outside.”