

Focus on Burundi

Our partner in Burundi is ICRP (Initiatives Communautaires pour la Réduction de la Pauvreté) based in Bujumbura and working with small communities in Burundi. It is co-ordinated by Emile Sindharaye and it was a pleasure and a challenge to receive an e-mail from him the other day.

He explains the current political situation - *'following the controversial Burundi 2015 democratic elections, the Country has been living a tense social and political situation . . . the Constitutional Referendum happened this Thursday, May 17, 2018'.*

The adoption of the new constitution will result in major changes such as the presidential term increasing from 5 years to 7 years. So the current president may run for another two terms until 2034. Also the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accords will no longer be taken into account in the establishment of the government. The accord ended Burundi's 1993-2006 civil war and put in place measures to ensure power would not be concentrated in either the hands of the majority Hutu or minority Tutsi, after decades of violence between the communities. Now ministers will not necessarily be elected members from political parties and the ethnic quotas within the government will not be mandatory. The majority of the international community was also opposed to the revision of the constitution, and some countries have taken economic sanctions against Burundi.

During the period leading up to the referendum there were human rights violations (intimidations, hate speeches, limited freedom of expression, etc.) related to political intolerance and the fear and panic of insecurity from external armed attacks. These included 26 people (old women, elderly men, and children) being killed in their homes during the night of Friday, 11 May 2018 in the province of CIBITOKÉ (on the border between Burundi and DRC) by an armed group from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Emile continues, *'The suspension of aid by donors has deeply affected the Burundian communities, especially the rural ones who have seen themselves in increased poverty, deteriorating their living conditions, while subsistence agriculture dominates Burundi economy, and well over half of the population lives below the poverty line. The ICRP communities are in that kind of situation, as rural groups who live on agriculture and livestock, with some attempts to undertake some agribusiness initiatives. But they are trying day to day to make profitable efforts, with difficulties, to hold on the mission of ICRP to promote peace and reduce poverty. Of course, ICRP members are always encouraged by thoughts and prayers of friends and partners in order to pursue their mission, no matter the tough situations. Thank you . . . to CfR for your continual prayers and thoughts, in God's Love. Best regards, Emile'*

You can check news websites for further information on the political situation in Burundi, and I would like to encourage you to continue praying for Emile and his team. If you would like to contribute to his work, please send a cheque to Community for Reconciliation, with 'Burundi' on the back, to Ian at Barnes Close. Or contact him for details of bank transfers.
Many thanks.

Jan Scott