

## Country Profile – Rwanda

### Geography

Rwanda is a landlocked country in central Africa, and is less than half the area of Tasmania. It has a predominantly mountainous terrain and is known as “The Land of a Thousand Hills”. There are small tracts of rainforest on the western and north-eastern borders of the country and tropical savannah in the east. Deforestation is widespread.

### People

Rwanda is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa. The population of 11.3 million is predominantly rural, with a steady increase in urbanisation. There are three groups living in Rwanda – Hutu (84 percent), Tutsi (15 percent), and Twa (1 percent). The majority of Rwandans are Christian, but small numbers are also Muslim or have traditional beliefs. Kinyarwanda, English and French are the three official languages.

### History

Rwanda has had a turbulent history of tension between the Tutsi minority and the majority Hutus. Historically the Tutsi held political and economic control of Rwanda under German and later Belgian colonial administration. In 1962 Rwanda became an independent nation under Hutu leadership.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the Tutsi people were persecuted and over 700,000 fled Rwanda, becoming exiles in neighbouring countries. Some of these Tutsi refugees formed the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). In 1990, civil war began when the RPF invaded Rwanda. While an initial cease-fire was agreed to in 1991, ethnic violence between the Tutsi and Hutu continued.

In April 1994 the Rwandan President was killed, and genocide in Rwanda began. It is estimated that over 800,000 Tutsi and up to 30,000 moderate Hutu were massacred by Hutu armies and civilian militia. The killings lasted for 100 days until RPF soldiers took over the country, ending the war in July. Throughout the crisis almost three million Rwandans, both Hutu and Tutsi, fled to neighbouring countries. Most of these refugees have since returned to Rwanda. In 2003 the first presidential elections since the 1994 genocide were held. Rwanda has experienced relative stability since then, and continues to work on peace-building and reconciliation.

### Economy

Rwanda is one of the poorest countries in the world. After 1994, the country’s economic base was severely impoverished. Rwanda has made substantial progress in stabilising its predominantly agricultural economy. It is estimated that 90 percent of the population works in agriculture, mostly in subsistence farming. Most farms are only small plots of land, often on steep slopes with poor soil fertility. Coffee and tea are grown for export, while grain, vegetables and rice are grown as food crops. Poverty and seasonal variations in the price of food crops limit the ability of people to buy extra food.

### Living Conditions

63.2 percent of Rwandans live on less than US\$1.25 per day. Since the genocide, approximately half of all households have been headed by women, and many children grew up in child-headed households. The Rwandan diet consists mainly of sweet potatoes and beans, with bananas, corn, peas, millet (a type of grain) and fruit added when in season. Protein deficiency is a problem as many Rwandans usually only consume meat once or twice a month. Fish is eaten by those living near lakes. Malaria, HIV and AIDS and malnutrition are major health issues in Rwanda, as is a lack of doctors and nurses. Life expectancy at birth is 55.7 years.



Map courtesy of The General Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin



## How does life compare?

Living conditions in Rwanda vary greatly to those in Australia. The table below compares some of the development statistics for Australia and Rwanda. Remember, these statistics are often estimates only, and may be about the average – some individuals will be better off and others will be worse off.

Indicator	Australia	Rwanda
Population	22.9 million	
Urban population (% of total)	89.4%	19.4%
Gross National Income per capita (\$US PPP)	\$34,340	\$1,147
Population living below US\$1.25 (PPP) per day	no data	
Percentage of workforce in agriculture sector <sup>3</sup>	3.6%	
Average years of schooling	12.0 years	3.3years
Population with access to an improved water source <sup>2</sup>	100%	65%
Under five mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)	5	91
Stunting (low height for age; moderate and severe) <sup>2</sup>	no data	44%
Life expectancy at birth	82 years	
Human Development Index rank (out of 186 countries)	2nd	167th

Sources: UNDP Human Development Report 2013 at [hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-2013](http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-2013); <sup>2</sup> UNICEF at [www.unicef.org/infobycountry/](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/); <sup>3</sup> CIA World Factbook at [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/) [accessed January 2014]

## For you to do

1. Using the information provided about Rwanda on the previous pages, fill in the four blank spaces on the table of statistics. What does this table tell you about life in Rwanda compared to life in Australia?

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2. Good nutrition requires people to have consistent access to sufficient, well-balanced food. Based on the information provided, give two reasons that might explain why malnutrition is a problem in Rwanda.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Stunting is an indicator of chronic malnutrition. When a young child has not had access to enough nutritious food over an extended period of time one of the physical impacts can be stunted growth. This is measured by assessing their height for their age. In the table, compare the information on stunting for Rwanda with Australia. Give a reason that could explain why there is “no data” on stunting for Australia.

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