Burundi Fast Facts

-Tutsis make up 14% of the population, while the Hutu majority makes up 85% of the population.

-The median age of Burundians is 16.7 years and life expectancy is 51.29 years.

-The infant mortality rate is 61.93 deaths for every 1,000 live births. The US's infant mortality rate is 6.37 deaths per 1,000 live births.

-Burundians are at a high risk of contracting food and waterborne diseases. Other prevalent diseases are bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, typhoid fever, and malaria.

-Only one in two children go to school and approximately 1 out of every 15 adults has HIV/AIDS.

-Over 68% of the population is below the poverty line as of 2002.

-The economy is predominantly agricultural with more than 90% of the population dependent on subsistence agriculture. Economic growth depends on coffee and tea exports.

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Works Cited
www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/10/10/country_facts/main3351978.shtml

Photo Works Cited
All photos courtesy of Village Health Works.

ODW-USA
Thetford Academy's Web Site:
www.odwusa.org

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OPERATION: DAY'S WORK

Kigutu Community Health Center

Burundi, Africa

Youth Helping Youth
to Help Themselves

The Culture of Burundi

There are two distinct ethnic groups in Burundi, the Hutu and Tutsi, and two official languages, French and Kirundi.

Gender responsibilities in Burundi are very distinct. Traditionally, it is the duty of the father to find a first wife for his son. The bride will then leave her parents (who do not attend the wedding ceremony) to participate in the festivities at the husband's home. Fatherhood is considered an important responsibility; the man is in charge of the family. Children are highly valued. They are viewed partly as insurance for the future. Women's status is a little higher than that of children, and like them, women are expected to defer to the wishes of any adult male. Woman are respected particularly for their power as life bearers. Their role as mother is honored. Their duties are childcare, household chores, and agriculture in rural areas. Women have little decision-making authority in the family or society as a whole. They are almost entirely underrepresented in business and at all levels of government.

Each family generally has its own house. Houses are grouped together in compounds consisting of the homes of extended family members. Upon marriage, a woman becomes part of her husband's family. There are extremely poor health conditions in Burundi with few doctors to alleviate the problems. Malaria, influenza, diarrhea, measles, and HIV/AIDS are common illnesses.

Project Summary

This year's project is in the village of Kigutu, Burundi, Africa where many people are constantly being affected by HIV/AIDS and other life threatening diseases. Due to the fact that Kigutu is located so close to Lake Tanganyika, the residents are much more susceptible to water and insect related illnesses, like typhoid fever, malaria, pulmonary tuberculosis, intestinal parasites, gastric ulcer, and cholera.

In 2006, Village Health Works (VHW) started a new clinic to help treat those people affected by HIV/AIDS and other diseases common to this area. The Kigutu Community Health Center will start by providing basic health care to the women and children first. Their main goals are to provide HIV/AIDS treatment, tuberculosis prevention, provide bed nets to combat malaria, address and educate the people about malnutrition, and meet basic needs and payment requirements.

VHW will do all this by employing a small staff of health workers and two medical nurses. There will be HIV testing for children of HIV/AIDS positive adults. They already have a good start, with two buildings constructed, a newly refurbished dirt road leading to the site, and over 5,000 saplings planted as part of their agro-forestry and landscaping project.

History of Burundi

In 1962, Burundi became an independent kingdom run by Mwami (King) Mwambutsa IV. Burundi was previously under Belgian control. Since its conception as an independent country, the government of Burundi has been unstable. In 1966, Mwami Ntare V was overthrown by a military coup and Burundi was declared a republic. The leader of that coup, Michel Micombero, became president. Since then, there have been several changes in leadership resulting from military-led coups.

Burundi has a history of ethnic violence involving the Tutsi minority and the Hutu majority. The Tutsi were seen as superior to the Hutu by the Belgians, and that belief resulted in some major consequences. In 1988, ethnic violence erupted in response to rumors of the murder of prominent Tutsis. The military massacred between 5,000 and 25,000 Hutu because of this. Over 100,000 were left homeless. Another example of ethnic violence was in 1993 when the president, a Hutu, was assassinated by Tutsi soldiers. It is thought that 100,000 people may have been killed during the subsequent uprising. The following year, the new president was killed at the start of the Rwandan genocide in April 1994.

Between 2002 and the present day, several peace meetings and cease-fire agreements have taken place. Burundi continues to experience political turmoil today.