

Country Background Notes

RWANDA:



FLAG OF RWANDA: Three horizontal bands of sky blue (top, double width), yellow, and green, with a golden sun with 24 rays near the fly end of the blue band.

BACKGROUND: In 1959, three years before independence from Belgium, the majority ethnic group, the Hutus, overthrew the ruling Tutsi king. Over the next several years, thousands of Tutsis were killed, and some 150,000 driven into exile in neighboring countries. The children of these exiles later formed a rebel group, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), and began a civil war in 1990. The war, along with several political and economic upheavals, exacerbated ethnic tensions, culminating in April 1994 in the genocide of roughly 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus. The Tutsi rebels defeated the Hutu regime and ended the killing in July 1994, but approximately 2 million Hutu refugees – many fearing Tutsi retribution – fled to neighboring Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda, and the former Zaire. Since then, most of the refugees have returned to Rwanda, but about 10,000 that remain in the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo have formed an extremist insurgency bent on retaking Rwanda, much as the RPF tried in 1990. Despite substantial international assistance and political reforms – including Rwanda's first local elections in March 1999 and its first post-genocide presidential and legislative elections in August and September 2003, respectively – the country continues to struggle to boost investment and agricultural output, and ethnic reconciliation is complicated by the real and perceived Tutsi political dominance. Kigali's increasing centralization and intolerance of dissent, the nagging Hutu extremist insurgency across the border, and Rwandan involvement in two wars in recent years in the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo continue to hinder Rwanda's efforts to escape its bloody legacy.

GEOGRAPHY: Area: *total:* 26,338 sq km

Capital: Kigali

Terrain: Mostly grassy uplands and hills; relief is mountainous with altitude declining from west to east

Climate: Temperate; two rainy seasons (February to April, November to January); mild in mountains with frost and snow possible.

PEOPLE: Nationality: *noun:* Rwandan(s), *adjective:* Rwandan

Population: 8,440,820

Religions: Roman Catholic 56.5%, Protestant 26%, Adventist 11.1%, Muslim 4.6%, indigenous beliefs 0.1%, none 1.7%

Literacy: *Total population:* 70.4%

Health: Infant mortality rate 91.23 deaths/1,000 live births, Life expectancy: 46.96 years

Work force: Agriculture 90%

Ethnic groups: Hutu 84%, Tutsi 15%

GOVERNMENT: Type: republic; presidential, multiparty system

Independence: 1 July 1962 (from Belgium-administered UN trusteeship)

Constitution: New constitution adopted 4 June 2003

ECONOMY: Currency: Rwandan franc (RWF), US dollar – 574.62 (2004)

Per capita income: \$1,300 (2004 est.)

Trade: Exports: Coffee, tea, hides, tin ore.

AGRICULTURE: Coffee, tea, pyrethrum (insecticide made from chrysanthemums), bananas, beans, sorghum, potatoes; livestock.

LANGUAGE: Kinyarwanda (official) universal Bantu vernacular, French (official), English (official), Kiswahili (Swahili) used in commercial centers.

