



## The Deaf of Burundi The Burundi Sign Language Community

The deaf walk silently among us in every city, town, village and neighborhood of the world. In spite of its small size, the country of Burundi has nearly 60,000 people who are deaf and potentially speak Burundi Sign Language.

Deaf children with hearing parents are the only ones in the world who do not learn language from their parents. Those who cannot communicate with hearing parents are, by definition, born into a dysfunctional family. Because hearing parents usually cannot communicate with their deaf child, they are unable to transmit their values, convictions or beliefs.

The Deaf tend to congregate in areas where there are deaf schools, although only 1 deaf child in 5 is able to attend school. There are no deaf high schools or colleges. In those that do exist, the vast majority of teachers are hearing and do not know or understand true Sign Language. Hearing teachers, like hearing parents, are unable to transmit cultural values and beliefs to deaf children, therefore they receive an extremely limited and poor education.

The deaf child is left to try to visually determine his/her worldview. Many say they learn the “rules of life” by watching the action on TV or in movies. Hearing Sunday School teachers and pastors are not able to communicate truth or their beliefs to deaf children.

For this reason, the “Know God How?” series (the first set of sign language Bible stories on DVD) was translated by D.O.O.R. International (Deaf Opportunity OutReach) and launched November 14, 2011 in Burundi’s capital city of Bujumbura. More than one hundred deaf witnessed the celebration and were thrilled to receive even part of the Bible in their own language. Some broke into tears as they held the DVDs close to their chests, proclaiming it was “the gift of God” that they had been waiting for.

**Primary Religion:**

Christian

**Disciples (Matt 28:19):**

Perhaps > 50%

**Churches:**

7

**Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):**

Translation started

**Population (date):**

Potentially 60,000 (2014)  
 or 7 out of 1,000



## Burundi Sign Language Community

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### Group Description

#### Population

##### Comment

When we speak about Deaf people as opposed to deaf people, we're making the distinction of, among other things, their language of preference. Simply stated, Deaf people identify with the Deaf culture and use that signed language; deaf people do not and prefer to use the spoken language.

Estimating the population of a Deaf community is difficult. Quite honestly, no one knows how many Deaf there are in a given country. However, some generalities seem to hold true. In 1st world nations (like the US) 1-2 people in 1000 are Deaf; in those nations that are considered "2nd world", 3-4 people per 1000 are Deaf; in 3rd world nations, the numbers are much higher: 6-8 people per 1000 are Deaf. Again, this is an estimation only. There is absolutely no quantifiable documentation to support these numbers. But, they are the best we know.

As implied, the estimated number of deaf is always larger than the number of those who learn sign language and become part of the Deaf community. Some become deaf late in life. Some children's parents do not have the funds to send their child to a deaf school and some of these children never encounter others with whom to communicate. Almost all deaf children are born to hearing parents. Instead these children grow and work at home where they use gestures and sounds but do not have a true language. The number of these is unknown.