



burundi water project

Project Report

Burundi Water Project

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Project Partner: Muhigo District Office
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OPEN HAND STUDIOS
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Project Summary

The Burundi Water project is an Open Hand initiative in partnership with the local government of the Muhigo village in eastern Burundi. The project will bring piped water for the first time to over 3,000 residents and replaces a dangerous and distant spring where water is currently collected and carried in jerry cans weighing up to 45 pounds. This work is often done by children, who carry the heavy loads on their heads on average 5 km to their homes.

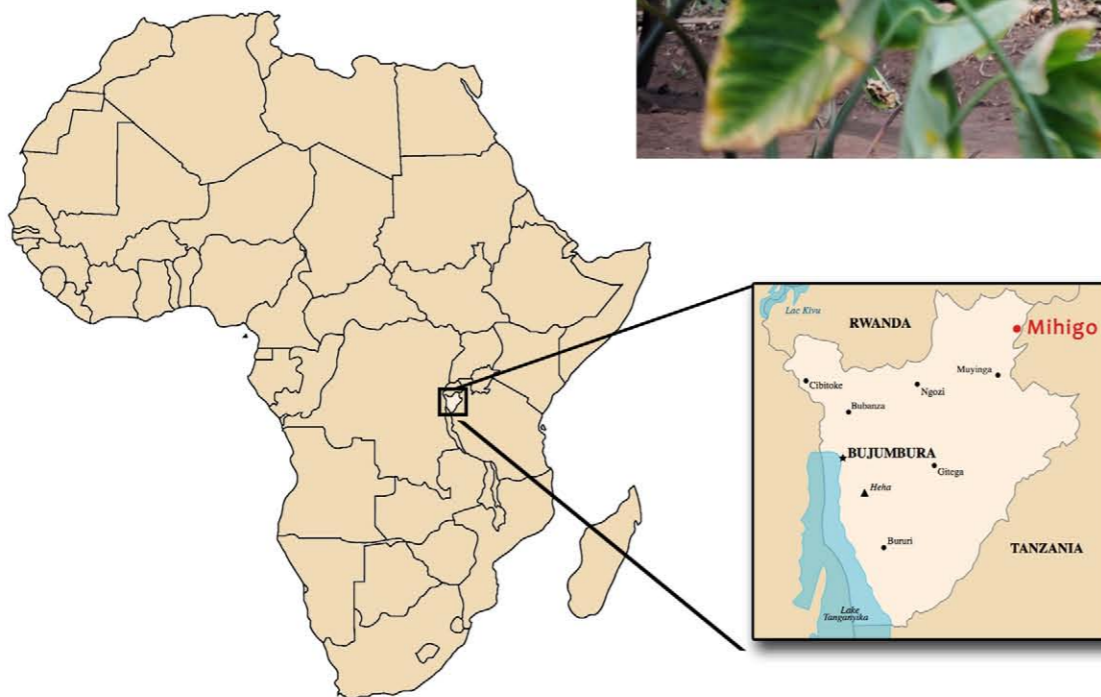


Project Location

Muhigo is a town of nearly 3,000 residents occupying the upper ridge of a large hill in eastern Burundi. Its residents are farmers and live almost entirely off of what they grow with their hands. The staple crop is bananas with some other fruits and vegetables as well as small animals available for food.

Here in the remote eastern corner the people survive on little more than what they grow in their fields. There is no electrical grid and only a few generators are used in the town. Access to health services is minimal and education levels are severely low.

The village extends the length of a dirt road that traverses the ridge of the hill. The vast majority of homes are traditional huts made of banana leaves and others of mud over basic wood structures.



Burundi at a Glance

Burundi is one of the smallest countries in Africa and has one of the highest population densities. It is one of the poorest countries on the planet. A common indicator used for poverty levels is GDP Per Capita (basically the earnings average of a citizen per year). For example, the World Bank estimates the US GDP Per Capita at \$48,500. Burundi ranks as the 4th poorest with the average earning at \$608 per person.

Water Problem

Residents currently collect their water from a spring on the side of the hill they live atop. This spring lies at a central point between three hills and is shared by residents of five different villages.

Locals, including many children, walk each morning and evening to the spring to collect water. They cover on average five miles round trip carrying between 20 and 45 pounds of water on their heads returning with the water uphill to their homes.

As one nears the spring there is a steep drop off that becomes especially slippery and dangerous in the rainy season. For as long as the elders can remember almost every year a child or young adult has broken an arm or a leg from a fall in this area.



Above: Residents squeeze in to gain access to the spring.
Across: Children carrying their jerry cans to the spring.
Next Page: Residents waiting their turn above the spring.





Project Development

In early June of 2012 the local government office secured funding from a national water initiative. This grant of nearly \$20,000 is dedicated to purchasing a water storage and pumping system.

Later that month a spring 14 km from Mihugo was identified as a source for pumping and piping water to the village.

In early July, Open Hand Studios committed to adding piping and faucets to this system to assist in bringing running water nearer to each resident.

Late in July the community of Muhigo gathered to dig the trench where the water pipes will be placed. The trench had been marked by the OHS Local Coordinator Damien Ntahondi and District Officer Laurent Nduwimana. Each family was made responsible for a small section. In just two Saturdays of work the 14km (8.5 miles) trench was complete.

Our partner is covering the cost of the pumps and tanks, while Open Hand's contribution is for purchasing pipes and installing faucets at 9 points along the 14 km pipeline, bringing running water to within 1/2 kilometer (1/3 mile) of each resident.



Above from left to right: Project Coordinator Yves Niyirigira, Project Director Jeff DeKock, Local Coordinator: Damien Ntahondi, Project Partner Muhigo District Officer Laurent Nduwimana.

Right: A section of the 14km trench.

Across: The tapped spring that will provide water to the new system.



the spring in use, August 2012

Diagram of New Water System

Water will be tapped from a large spring 14 km to the west of Muhigo. The tapped water will be split, allowing residents to continue to collect water at the spot, with the rest pumped up the hill. A tank and pump will be installed and maintained by the local government office. Three additional tanks and pumps placed along the 14km pipe will complete the water system. Along this pipe, faucets will be installed at 8 locations, bringing water to within 1/2 km of each resident.

the pipe will be split in two, allowing for current water collection to continue, the other half will run up the hill to the tank and pump.



water is piped up the side of a mile long hill where mostly women and children currently carry loads of water up to 45 pounds.



the 14km water pipeline runs near the town's only road



Secondary spring



clinic

local government office

church

police station

grade school

high school

market and clinic

Open Hand is placing faucets at 8 points in the village, roughly a km apart, making the water easily accessible to both the major public buildings in towns but also easily in reach of the entire population.



Project Beneficiaries

At least 3,000 residents will benefit from the tapped water system. By piping the water up the hill and within half a kilometer of every home in the village the distance traveled while carrying the large loads will be significantly reduced. By reducing traffic to the Muhigo spring this will allow more water to be collected by the neighboring villages, as well as reduce the number of accidents at the site.



A Volunteer's Story



The Open Hand Cup

After learning about the amazing work Open Hand Studios was doing in Burundi I asked to come along to see what it was all about. Although the main focus of the trip to Burundi was to bring the local people water, Open Hand Studios also decided to organize a football tournament. I was amazed to see how the tournament brought nearly 3,000 residents together as a community. They came not only for the entertainment of the game, but also to celebrate that soon they would have piped water. It turned out to be a celebration of a kind I had never experienced before, sheer joy and happiness. I feel honored to have participated in these two events and to have met a community that was so giving, hard working, honest, caring, open and hospitable. This experience will stay with me for life and inspires future projects.

Watch a brief video clip of the winning goal: www.vimeo.com/51505076





Want to support this project or other work at Open Hand?

The water project that Open Hand is completing in Burundi was funded through personal donations to our General Fund. To support this project or any of our others, please consider donating.

For details on how to donate, please visit openhandstudios.org/donate

If you donate \$250 or more we will send you a handmade traditional Burundian weaved basket made in the village of Muhigo. The gift includes a photograph with the woman who made the basket.





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