



## Making a difference in Burundi

Burundi is a very beautiful country with hills upon hills covered with greenery, banana trees, long grass, trees and many streams flowing from hills to valleys. At the same time this small country is densely populated with a population of 9 million and is one of the poorest nations in the world (GDP per capita 5th lowest). Average income per person is only \$138 per year.

Since Burundi's independence in 1962, there have been two genocides in the country. The first one was the 1972 mass killing of Hutus, who were by far in the majority, by the Tutsi-dominated army. The second genocide was the mass killing of Tutsis by the Hutu populace in 1994 after the aeroplane carrying the president of Burundi was shot down.

In spite of this history and in the midst of severe poverty, the people are generally extremely friendly and hospitable, with passersby greeting you with "Amahoro" which means peace, or I come in peace. People flock to churches with 90% of the population being Christian.

With 15,000 congregations and the number still growing, there is an enormous demand for pastors and church leaders to be trained. This is even more the case as the average life expectancy is 50.1 years. It is in this context that Veritas is helping to meet the need for training, especially in the neglected rural areas.

Since 2008, Tim van Aarde, Anton Van Schalkwyk and Ruben Safari have led the Veritas foundation courses and have also trained local leaders as facilitators in order to multiply the training. Collectively they have introduced the training to groups of pastors across 10 of the 17 provinces with 500 participants



Anton van Schalkwyk training facilitators who sacrificially train others in neglected rural areas in Burundi

already trained in Module 1. Modules 2 and 3 have also been started. Language is always a challenge and therefore most of the training material has been translated into the local language, Kirundi.

It is very encouraging that volunteer facilitators are willing to put effort into training others. They do this in spite of their own poverty-stricken circumstances.

## A facilitator's testimony

John Baptist was an imam who came to know the Lord. After his conversion he studied at a Bible college in Tanzania for four years. He then returned to Burundi and accepted to pastor a church.

However, John always felt that he lacked understanding of how to interpret the Bible, especially the Old Testament. In Burundi there is a saying that the Bible is like a forest, and if you enter this forest you will get lost.

In 2010 John Baptist joined a Veritas class of pastors in the very north of the country. John came week after week and at the end of Module 1 he volunteered to facilitate a group of 18 leaders from different churches in the rural area where he lives. He did the same after attending Module 2.

John says that he now receives many compliments from church members that he preaches so well and they are convinced he knows everything about the Bible!

A legalistic approach to teaching the Bible confuses many people, but John explains that the Veritas training has equipped him to interpret the different literature types and helps him find the correct absolutes of the biblical text. He testifies that he is now more confident to handle the Word correctly and explains to people that the forest can be known.



### Prayer points

1. Active facilitators – for their groups and livelihoods. That the Lord will help Veritas to know how best to support these faithful people.
2. Non-active facilitators – that the Lord will provide the means for them to train others.
3. Ruben Safari – the National coordinator. For God's guidance, protection and help to lead the facilitators in equipping many pastors and leaders.
4. Financial support – for books and training costs for facilitators.
5. Ongoing wisdom from God – how to address poverty in the context of the Church.

While we are grateful for fruit on the ministry in the past 22 years, we realise that there is still much to be done. Countless Christian leaders all over the world have to minister every day without having received adequate (or even any) training. Your prayers and financial contributions will help us to equip them for their service in the Kingdom.

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