



Rwanda

Language: The official languages of Rwanda are Kinyarwanda (a Bantu language) and French. Swahili is also used with neighboring countries, and English is increasingly used in urban areas.

Healthcare: The formal health system in Rwanda consisted of a hospitals and health centers, half of which were run by non-governmental organizations. During the 1994 civil war where over 800,000 lives were lost, many medical facilities were damaged or destroyed. Today, less than 50% of the population has access to health care facilities, but hospitals and clinics are gradually being reopened. Due to the war, many international relief organizations have worked in Rwanda to help in resettlement camps, where sanitary conditions are poor and epidemics are a constant danger. Some Rwandans consult an *umufumu* (witch doctor) when they become ill. The *umufumu* recommends herbal remedies or sacred charms to treat the illness.

Spirituality: The majority of Rwandans are Christians, most being Catholics, but there are also Protestant denominations. About 5% of the population is Muslim. Many people practice indigenous rituals in addition.

Useful Websites and Contact Information

<http://www.refugeehealth.com>

<http://www.cp-pc.ca>

<http://www.globalhealth.gov/refugee/>

<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/orr>

The International Institute

864 Delaware Ave
Buffalo, NY 14209
883-1900

Journey's End Refugee Services

184 Barton Street
Buffalo, NY 14213
882-4963

Jericho Road Family Health

184 Barton Street
Buffalo, NY 14213
881-6191

Niagara Family Health

300 Niagara St.
Buffalo, NY 14201
859-4104

Cultures at a Glance





Burma, officially the Union of Myanmar

Language: Burmese is the language most commonly spoken in Myanmar. However, many of the refugees here in Buffalo speak the Karen dialect.

Healthcare: People in Myanmar are entitled to free health care, but there are not enough doctors to treat all those who need medical attention, and equipment and drugs are in short supply. Many families also use traditional medicines to treat illness. *Yesah*, an herbal digestive powder found in every Myanmar household, is believed to be a common cure-all.

Spirituality: More than 85% of the population of Myanmar is Buddhist. Christianity and Islam are also practiced by a minority of the population.

History: In 1988 the military regime jailed and killed thousands of Burmese democracy activists. In 1990, the military government refused to recognize the results of an election that the opposition won. Major demonstrations by opposition activists occurred in 1996 and 1998. These incidents resulted in 1000s of refugees living in camps along the Burma-Thailand border with poor sanitary conditions leading to multiple health concerns.



Sudan

Language: Arabic is the official language spoken by a majority of the people, however there are also hundreds of tribal languages native to Sudan. Many Sudanese also speak English.

Healthcare: In the 1970s following the end of Sudan's first civil war, the Sudanese government began making medical care more available and in principle, free. Since then, Sudan has suffered from a second civil war and the conflict in Darfur continues still. This has resulted in scarce medical facilities, which are frequently controlled by military factions and without trained medical practitioners and basic supplies.

Spirituality: Most Sudanese are Muslim, however the Sudanese living in the south follow Christianity.



Iraq

Language: Iraq's official language is Arabic, which has numerous dialects. Most people speak either Modern Standard Arabic or Iraqi Arabic, a dialect also common to Syria, Lebanon and parts of Jordan. The second most common language in Iraq is Kurdish.

Healthcare: In the 1970s, the Iraqi government sponsored a health care system that provided Western-style treatment by doctors, hospitals and dispensaries free of charge. However, with the country currently in a war-torn state, medical care is difficult to obtain as facilities are destroyed on a daily basis and supplies, as well as qualified physicians, are scarce.

Spirituality: The official religion of Iraq is Islam, practiced by about 97% of the population. There are two types, Shi'ism and Sunni. The separation was due to a disagreement over the question of religious leadership. One major distinction is that Shi'ites depend upon an imam, religious leader, who is considered an intermediary between the people and Allah. For Sunni Muslims, an imam is one who leads others in prayer. There are also small minorities of the population who practice Christianity or Judaism.