

## Ngozi, Busiga, Burundi

 <b>VARIETY:</b> Bourbon	 <b>PROCESS:</b> Washed	 <b>HARVEST TIME:</b> March-July	 <b>FLOWER SEASON:</b> September
		 <b>WET MILLING:</b> Depulped and washed in channels at Karehe washing station	
 <b>ELEVATION:</b> 1760 MASL	 <b>PRODUCER:</b> Karehe Washing Station, IWCA	 <b>DRYING:</b> Dried on raised African beds for 28-30 days	
		 <b>DRY MILLING:</b> Dry milled at SVICA in Kayanza	

**CUP SCORE:**  
86

**PARTNER SINCE:**  
2020

*The Atlas Collection seeks to highlight our coffee sourcing values—quality, ethics, collaboration, and integrity—which act as our tools for exploring the complex world of coffee. This microlot from the Karehe washing station in Burundi perfectly embodies the value of ethics.*

Jeanine Niyonzima-Aroian, founder of importer JNP Coffee, didn't jump right into coffee—she originally started a nonprofit called Burundi Friends International, whose focus was on youth development and eradicating poverty. It was through this non-profit work that she met the president of the International Women's Coffee Alliance (IWCA) chapter in Burundi, and they began to collaborate. The IWCA was founded in 2003 by a group of women in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and the US who decided to come together as a group to change the coffee industry for the better by focusing on female empowerment and connection. There is strong research to suggest that investing in women increases the sustainability of coffee everywhere. Women are proven to reinvest almost all of their income back into their families, their coffee business, and their communities<sup>1</sup>. The work of the IWCA all over the globe fosters leadership, economic development, and sustainability for women and the industry as a whole.



The organized group of female producers in Burundi at the time they met Jeanine was small but still growing, and sought to bring together the female workforce—a group that makes up about 70% of all labor in coffee in the country. However, most female producers aren't landowners or in a position to contribute to their family's economic growth, like being able to open a bank account. Their first project with JNP wasn't, in fact, to import coffee, it was to provide female producers with goats. Diversification of income in this joint effort was profoundly successful, and it led to many future projects focused on economic empowerment and financial literacy—and, of course, trading coffee was interwoven through all of it.

Clockwise L-R: Jeanine Niyonzima-Aroian, founder of importer JNP Coffee; women sorting cherry at Karehe washing station; Jeanine visiting the raised drying beds at Karehe washing station



Since their first meeting, the IWCA chapter in Burundi has grown by 20 times its original size and has begun to include men, both male partners of female members and others who are beginning to see the power of coming together as a group to prioritize gender equity. JNP sponsors this chapter and underwrites every purchase of a lot separated out to be women's coffees—this means JNP purchases, markets, and imports the coffee on behalf of this group of female producers no matter what washing station they work with.

Last year, JNP Coffee purchased and traded about 95% of all coffee produced by members of the IWCA chapter in Burundi. Karehe washing station, which has often placed in the Burundi Cup of Excellence in the past few years, was one of the mini-washing stations that has collaborated with JNP and the IWCA chapter in this way.

Karehe washing station is located in the northeastern Busiga region of Ngozi, one of the northernmost provinces of Burundi. "Ngozi" means "blessing" in Kirundi, the national language of Burundi, which is just another detail to add to the special character of this offering. The province is very close to the border with Rwanda, and, like its neighboring countries, also shares a position in East Africa in the Great Rift Valley where it meets the African Great Lakes Region. The great majority of coffee producers in Burundi are smallholders. And, instead of talking about the area of land owned by a coffee grower, as is done in other producing countries (i.e. hectares), in Burundi a grower measures how many trees are owned. On average, producers own about 25-50 trees each, so it takes the harvest of many to make up a large enough lot to market.



Smallholder coffee growers will grow and harvest the coffee from their allotment of trees, then sell the ripe cherry to the washing station, which will then process, dry, and mill the coffee in preparation for export. In this instance, with Karehe, JNP underwrites the premium paid to the female producers who sell the coffee to the washing station, and in doing so they separate the coffees produced by those women so it can be sold as an IWCA product. JNP commits to paying a premium, which is a second payment based on the price at which Jeanine is able to sell it in the specialty market, to all female producers after they receive the initial base payment for cherry.

Through a collaboration with Project Concern International (PCI), JNP began a financial literacy course called the Village Savings and Loan initiative in order to teach women how to save money as a group from what they earn, and also how to work together to offer microloans to other women. This is an aspect of economic development and has offered a life-changing, forward-thinking perspective to sustain their coffee businesses. Through interviews JNP has conducted, they have been able to gather information on how individual women have benefited from this training and the premiums they've earned through working within their IWCA chapter. In addition to being able to fund their children's education, uniforms, and school supplies, they are able to buy more trees, fertilizer, and even diversify their income by buying animals like cows and goats.

In her own words, Jeanine says: "In fact, 2nd payment or premiums to growers is the only way you can guarantee that they are recognized for their quality. Other than the CoE where very few farmers get to participate and win for their micro-lots to be auctioned internationally, there is no other form of additional or special compensation for farmers in Burundi. [...] We use 3rd parties to assure successful payments. In the case of women farmers, the IWCA BURUNDI manages our premium distribution to all farmers at their respective participating wet mills. We are able to trace each farmer who contributes to making each lot; hence our ability to pay each farmer proportionally her deserving premium. Because we believe that paying good money for their coffees is not enough, we have added on an educational program in financial literacy and helped farmers build their 1st wet mill, completed in 2019."

We asked Jeanine about what the current situation is like with the harvest in Burundi during the global pandemic. Because the harvest is from March to July, it was just beginning when the pandemic began to spread around the world at an alarming rate. Her nonprofit, Burundi Friends International (BFI) has built handwashing stations, translated and distributed information on COVID and personal hygiene practices, and has been working with local groups to encourage further dissemination to remote communities. More than 50,000 people in their network received these educational and precautionary materials, and BFI hopes that they, in turn, can continue educating their families and peers. Jeanine is optimistic, not least because quality is consistent with previous years. She remains grateful, and continues to "celebrate the ways coffee can support so many families in Burundi who seek a path out of poverty."



A female producer  
collects her premium