



FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF 2021 UPR RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA

REPORT COMPILED BY RWANDA CIVIL SOCIETY COALITION ON UPR¹

1 Governance for Africa, Center for Human Rights and Development, Fight Illiteracy Youth Organisation, Akazi Kanoze, Hope Iwacu Initiative, National Union of Disability Organisations of Rwanda, Hope for Community Development Organisation, Ihorere Munyarwanda Organisation, Health Development Initiative, Faith Victory Association, Legal Aid Forum Secretariat and some of its members: Association des Jeunes Avocats du Rwanda, Action pour le Développement du Peuple, Association Rwandaise pour la Défense des Droits de la Personne et des Libertés Publiques, Association de la Jeunesse pour la Promotion des Droits de l'Homme et du développement, Association Rwandaise pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme, Communauté des Potiers du Rwanda, Human RightsFirst Rwanda Association, Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development, Ligue Rwandaise pour la Promotion et la Défense des Droits de l'Homme, The Network of Lawyers of Hope Rwanda, KANYARWANDA, Mouvement des Peuples pour l'Éducation aux Droits Humains and Non Crime Rwanda; Newspaper publications and Media Associations: UMUSANZU, IMPAMO, AMAHORU, PAX PRESS and Intego Media Group.

KIGALI, JUNE 2025

**FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT OF
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF 2021
UPR RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE
REPUBLIC OF RWANDA**



Foreword

On behalf of the Legal Aid Forum (LAF) and the Rwanda Civil Society Coalition on UPR, I am honored to present this Final Assessment Report on the Implementation of UPR Recommendations Given to Rwanda in 2021. This report reflects the collective efforts of civil society to monitor, document, and assess Rwanda's progress in fulfilling the commitments made during its 3rd Universal Periodic Review cycle.

UPR remains one of the most significant international mechanisms for advancing human rights globally. As a peer review process under the auspices of the Human Rights Council, it provides a unique opportunity for states to reflect on their human rights record, engage in dialogue, and commit to concrete actions to improve the protection and promotion of human rights for all. For Rwanda, UPR has served as a vital platform for reaffirming our country's commitment to human rights and for identifying areas that require further attention, reform, and investment.

This report comes at a critical moment as Rwanda approaches the conclusion of its third UPR cycle and prepares for the next review. It offers an independent, evidence-based assessment of Rwanda's progress in implementing the 160 recommendations accepted in 2021.

The report highlights achievements Rwanda can be proud of, including significant legal and policy reforms, strengthened institutional frameworks, and notable initiatives in areas such as gender equality, social protection, and access to justice. Importantly, it also identifies gaps, challenges, and areas where further action is

required to ensure that no one is left behind in the country's human rights journey.

Civil society organisations play a crucial role in this process. In Rwanda, they serve as a bridge between communities and duty-bearers, helping to amplify the voices of the most vulnerable and ensuring that the promises made under the UPR result in tangible improvements in people's lives. Through research, advocacy, public education, and service delivery, CSOs help strengthen accountability, promote transparency, and foster a culture of human rights within our society.

This report reflects the dedication, expertise, and collaborative spirit of the Coalition members who have worked tirelessly to monitor and report on Rwanda's progress.

As we present this report to the Human Rights Council, the Government of Rwanda, our development partners, and fellow Rwandans, we do so with the hope that it will function as a constructive tool for dialogue, action, and collaboration. We invite all stakeholders to consider its findings and recommendations and to reaffirm their commitment to working together to build a fair, inclusive, and rights-respecting Rwanda for everyone.

I extend my deepest gratitude to all members of the Rwanda UPR Coalition, our researchers, and partners who contributed to this important endeavour. Together, we reaffirm our shared commitment to advancing human rights in Rwanda.

Me Andrews Kananga

Executive Director of LAF & Convener of CSO Coalition on UPR

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	4
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	9
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	14
METHODOLOGY	17
PART I: ASSESSMENT OF BROAD CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK, POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS UNDERPINNING HUMAN RIGHTS IN RWANDA	18
1.1. Analysis of the constitutional framework	19
1.2. Analysis of the Policy and Legal Framework	19
1.2.1. Policy and Legal Framework	20
1.2.2. Legal Framework	22
1.3. Analysis of Institutional Framework	26
1.3.1. National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)	26
1.3.2. The Office of the Ombudsman	32
1.3.3. Entrenching the culture of human rights respect	36
1.3.4. Cooperation with International mechanisms of human rights and funding Partnerships	42
1.3.5. Awareness of ratified regional and international human rights conventions and instruments	44

PART II: ASSESSMENT OF SPECIFIC RIGHTS WITHIN SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS CLUSTERS48

CLUSTER 1: RIGHTS OF WOMEN, CHILDREN, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND OTHER SPECIFIC GROUPS49

- 1.1. Rights of Women49
- 1.2. Rights of a Child61
- 1.3. Rights of Persons With Disabilities56
- 1.4. Rights of older persons81
- 1.5. Rights of Refugees, Asylum seekers, Internally
displaced persons, Stateless persons84

CLUSTER 2: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS92

- 2.1. Right to an adequate standard of living
(food, housing and safe drinking water)92
- 2.2. Right to health101
- 2.3. Right to education115
- 2.4. Right to work126
- 2.5. Climate change and land rights130

CLUSTER 3: CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS141

- 3.1. Freedom of association and peaceful assembly,
Freedom of expression and opinion141

3.2. Right to life, liberty and security of the person, Prohibition of Torture, inhuman and degrading treatment	156
3.3. Access to justice	168
CLUSTER 4: CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES	175
4.1. Human trafficking	175
4.2. Genocide prevention	182
CONCLUSION	185
REFERENCES	186



ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Source	Meaning
12YBE	Twelve Years Basic Education
4G LTE	4 th Generation Long Term Evolution
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
AEPs	Agro Ecological Practices
Am	“Ante-Meridiem”; 12-hour clock system before Noon
APT	Association for the Prevention of Torture
ARJ	Association Rwandaise des Journalistes
Art.	Article
CCOAIB	Conseil de Concertation des Organisations d’Appui aux Initiatives de Base
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CFSVA	Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis
CHWs	Community Health Workers
COP27	Conference of the Parties of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
COPORWA	Communauté des Potiers du Rwanda
CoPs	Communities of Practices
CPCs	Community Policing Committees
COVID-19	CoronaVirus Disease of 2019
CRC	Child Rights Committee
CROs	Child Rights Observers
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DAC	Day of the African Child

DASSO	District Administration Security Support Organ
DIDIMAC	District Disaster Management Committee
DPEM	District Plans to Eliminate Malnutrition
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EDUFAM	Girls' Education Project for a Better Future in the African Great Lakes region
EGDDS	Enhanced General Data Dissemination Standards
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ERF	Economic Recovery Fund
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
ETM	Emergency Transit Mechanism
FBF	Fortified Blended Food
FONERWA	Fund for environment and natural resources for Rwanda
G2B	Government to business services
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGCRS	Green Growth Climate Resilience Strategy
GHGs	Greenhouse gases
GMO	Gender Monitoring Office
GoR	Government of Rwanda
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired immunodeficiency Syndrome
HMP	Historically marginalized people
HSSP IV	Rwanda fourth Health Sector Strategic Plan
ICPD25	International Conference on Population and Development 25
ICT	Information Communication Technologies
IECMS	Integrated Electronic Case Management System

IFMIS	Integrated Financial Management System
IGAs	Income Generation Activities
IHLs	Institutions of Higher Learning
ILAS	Integrated Labor Administration System
IOSCs	Isange One Stop Centers
IPAR	Institute of Policy Analysis and Research
ITL	Income Tax Law
IZU	Inshuti z'Umuryango / Friends of Family
JRLOS	Justice, Reconciliation, Law and Order Sector
JSR	Joint Sector Review
JTF	Joint Task Force
KIFC	Kigali International Financial Center
LAF	The Legal Aid Forum
LODA	Local Administrative Entities Development Agency
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MECS	Modern Energy Cooking Services
MEMMS	Medical Equipment Management and Maintenance System
MIDMAR	Ministry of Disaster Management and Refugee Affairs
MIFOTRA	Ministry of Public Service and Labor
MIGEPROF	Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion
MINALOC	Ministry of Local Governance
MINECOFIN	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MINEDUC	Ministry of Education
MINEMA	Ministry of Emergency Management
MINIJUST	Ministry of Justice
MINISANTE	Ministry of Health

MIS	Management of Information System
MVT	Massive Vocational Training
MWG	Media Working Group
NAP	National Agriculture Policy
NCDA	National Child Development Agency
NCHR	National Commission for Human Rights
NCPD	National Council of Persons with Disabilities
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NFPO	National Forum of Political Organisations
NGFC	National Gender and Family Cluster
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NHRIs	National Human Rights Institutions
NISR	National Institute of Statistics in Rwanda
NLUDMP	National Land Use & Development Master plan
NPM	National Preventive Mechanism
NSDI	National Spatial Data Infrastructure
NST1	National Strategy for Transformation1
NWC	National Women Council
NYC	National Youth Council
OLPC	One Laptop Per Child
OPCAT	Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture
PAC	Poverty Alleviation Coalition
PDOP	Per-Discharge Orientation Program
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PWDs	Persons With Disabilities
RBC	Rwanda Biomedical Centre

RCS	Rwanda Correctional Services
RDRC	Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration commission
REB	Rwanda Education Board
REMA	Rwanda Environment Management Authority
RGB	Rwanda Governance Board
RIB	Rwanda Investigation Bureau
RISA	Rwanda Information Society Authority
RLMUA	Rwanda Land Management and Use Authority
RLRC	Rwanda Law Reform Commission
RMC	Rwanda Media Commission
RNP	Rwanda National Police
RSSB	Rwanda Social Security Board
RWLN	Rwanda Women Leaders Network
SAT	Strategy for Agriculture Transformation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
TBRTF	Treaty Body Reporting Task Force
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNABU	Umuryango Nyarwanda w'Abagore Bafite Ubumuga
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNFPA	The United Nations Population Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WICBT	Women in informal cross border trade
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organisation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This final assessment report on the implementation of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations given to Rwanda in 2021 was developed by Rwanda Civil Society Coalition on UPR (the Coalition), convened by the Legal Aid Forum (LAF). It presents a comprehensive, evidence-based review of Rwanda's progress in implementing recommendations from its 3rd UPR cycle, providing valuable insights for the Human Rights Council, the Government of Rwanda, and all stakeholders working to advance human rights in the country.

In its 3rd UPR review in 2021, Rwanda received 284 recommendations from 99 states, of which 160 were supported, 75 were noted, and 49 were not supported. This report evaluates the extent to which the supported recommendations, and where relevant, noted recommendations have been implemented. It also highlights new developments in Rwanda's human rights landscape since the review.

The assessment adopted a purely qualitative approach. Data was collected from 58 institutions: 34 government institutions as named in the government roadmap of implementation of UPR recommendations and 24 CSOs during the 2023 mid-term review. A follow-up assessment was conducted between March and June in 2025 with 27 institutions with an aim of verifying the status of data provided in 2023. Data was also gathered through a desk review and analysis of relevant laws, policies, strategies, official reports, and other documentation. The analysis, interpretation, and drafting of the assessment report were conducted by UPR expert consultants, working closely with a team of trained researchers and the Coalition steering committee. The Coalition extends its sincere appreciation to the consultants, research team, and all participating institutions for their dedication, expertise, and invaluable contributions to assessment.

Overall, Rwanda has made significant progress in strengthening its constitutional and legal frameworks for human rights. Key developments include the adoption and implementation of the National Strategy for Transformation (NST2), the National Gender Policy (2021), the National Policy of Persons with Disabilities (2021), and reforms in areas such as taxation, correctional services, and nationality. Despite these achievements, challenges remain in ensuring inclusive participation in policymaking, securing sufficient resources for implementation, and establishing clear roadmaps for reforms.

The report praises the efforts of institutions like the National Commission for Human Rights and the Office of the Ombudsman in advancing human rights and combating corruption. However, capacity constraints, inadequate funding, and lack of binding authority limit their full effectiveness. Furthermore, there is a need for increased inspections of detention facilities and improved coordination across institutions.

Significant progress has been made in gender equality initiatives, support for girls' education, and services for vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, issues such as gender stereotypes, underrepresentation of women in certain sectors, ongoing gender-based violence, and limited awareness of rights in rural areas continue to pose obstacles.

Enhancements have been observed in access to health, education, and housing, but gaps remain in poverty alleviation, land rights, and responses to climate change impacts.

Efforts to improve access to justice and legal reforms are recognised, but concerns persist regarding freedom of expression, assembly, and safeguards for due process in detention. Rwanda has improved its frameworks for genocide prevention, anti-human trafficking, and pandemic preparedness. Nonetheless, further steps are needed to strengthen cooperation with regional and international mechanisms and to meet remaining international commitments.

The Coalition recommends that the Government of Rwanda:

- ▶ Allocate sufficient financial and human resources to implement laws, policies, and human rights programs.
- ▶ Strengthen citizen participation in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of laws and policies.
- ▶ Empower national human rights institutions with greater authority to ensure their decisions are binding and enforceable.
- ▶ Accelerate ratification and implementation of key international human rights instruments, including those related to labour rights, enforced disappearance, and domestic workers.
- ▶ Intensify efforts to combat gender-based violence, eliminate discriminatory practices, and address the root causes of inequality.
- ▶ Recommit to direct individual and NGO access to the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and renew cooperation with the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT).
- ▶ Enhance human rights education and awareness, including through inclusive communication channels accessible to persons with disabilities and those without digital access.

This report reflects the collective voice of Rwandan civil society and provides a constructive and independent evaluation of Rwanda's UPR commitments. The Coalition reaffirms its commitment to working collaboratively with the Government of Rwanda, the Human Rights Council, and all stakeholders to promote the full realization of human rights for all Rwandans.

METHODOLOGY

The assessment adopted a purely qualitative approach. Data was collected from 58 institutions: 34 government institutions as named in the government roadmap of implementation of UPR recommendations and 24 CSOs during the 2023 mid-term review. A follow-up assessment was conducted between March and June in 2025 with 27 institutions with an aim of verifying the status and accuracy of data provided in 2023. Data was also gathered through a desk review and analysis of relevant laws, policies, strategies, official reports, and other documentation. The analysis, interpretation, and drafting of the assessment report were conducted by UPR expert consultants, working closely with a team of trained researchers and the Coalition steering committee. The Coalition extends its sincere appreciation to the consultants, research team, and all participating institutions for their dedication, expertise, and invaluable contributions to assessment.

The report is structured around two major parts: part one is on the overall constitutional and legislative framework, alongside the policy and institutional arrangements underpinning human rights in Rwanda since the last review. Part two covers specific human rights within four main thematic areas/clusters (i) Rights of Women, children, Persons with Disabilities and other specific groups; (ii) Civil and Political Rights; (iii) Social and Economic Rights; and (iv) Cross Cutting Issues.

PART I

**ASSESSMENT OF BROAD CONSTITUTIONAL
AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK, POLICY
AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS
UNDERPINNING HUMAN RIGHTS IN RWANDA**



1.1. Analysis of the constitutional framework

With satisfaction, the Coalition notes that Rwanda's constitutional framework enables the promotion, protection, and fulfilment of Human Rights. Below is a highlight of key progress:

- 1) The Government of Rwanda has continued efforts to advance its legal framework to improve the enjoyment of human rights.
- 2) The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda devotes a chapter to human rights and freedoms, provides for the right to life and the inviolable nature of the human being. It also provides, amongst others, the right to physical and mental integrity, equality before the law, protection from discrimination, to marry and start a family, protection of children, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable people.
- 3) The country continues to honor its commitments as a signatory to the core human rights conventions at a regional and international level.

1.2. Analysis of the policy and legal framework

Rwanda received and accepted 3 recommendations related to the policy framework and included them in the roadmap for implementation. A series of policy and law reforms have taken place in Rwanda from 2021 to 2025. Some policies have been adopted or revised; laws have been enacted, revised, and repealed.

1.2.1. Policy framework

Rwanda received and accepted 3 recommendations on national policies and laws and put them in the roadmap for implementation. The Coalition commends the following efforts:

- 1) Rwanda is strongly committed to improving the welfare of its population through sound and comprehensive policies, strategies, and programmes. The Government of Rwanda has made achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) central to its policy framework. National Strategy for Transformation (NST1), which is the plan for 7 years running from 2017 to 2024, streamlines the country's development around 3 key pillars, namely Economy, Social welfare, and Governance, in which Justice, human rights, and citizen participation are included. NST1 notably shows youth empowerment as one of the priority areas. NST2 was also approved in August 2024 by the cabinet building on the progress of NST1. Vision 2035 and Vision 2050 should drive Rwanda from a low-income to a middle- and upper-income country. During the reporting period (2021-2025), Rwanda put in place the following policies:
 - a. The Risk Management Policy and Procedures Framework (2021) provides guidance for the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) for the management of risk to support the achievement of its objectives. Among others, it provides guidance for the protection of government funds and properties and safeguarding the value for money.
 - b. The Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Policy (2022) contributes to ease access to justice (justice at decentralized level, within the community and by the community members); instill peaceful settlement of disputes free of cost, increase community participation and its role in the country's governance, strengthening the use of Home-Grown Initiatives and self-reliance.

- c. The Criminal Justice Policy (2022) provides guidelines for rehabilitation that were not part of the Justice Sector’s formal policies. It includes education, training or therapy to assist an offender’s re-entry into society. Through that policy, alternative sentences to imprisonment are recommended.
 - d. The National Policy of Persons With Disabilities (2021) streamlines how PWDs access services and their full inclusion and participation.
 - e. The National Gender Policy (2021) seeks to better align with new national policy priorities and international commitments. It focuses, among others, on promoting effective engagement of men and boys programs, strategies in gender promotion and strengthening gender mainstreaming across the sectors.
 - f. The Rwanda National AI Policy approved and adopted in 2023, aims to position the country as a leader in AI innovation and development in Africa, focusing on six key areas: AI literacy, infrastructure, data strategy, public and private sector adoption, and ethical implementation. The policy envisions Rwanda becoming an African hub for AI research and a center of excellence.
- 2) Policies under review include the Girls’ Education Policy of 2008 and the Education Sector Policy of 2003 which are to be updated to embrace inclusiveness and new developments in the education sector such as for persons with disability and the Legal Aid policy of 2014.

1.2.2. Legal framework

- 1) The Income Tax Law No 027/2022 was enacted in 2022 and repealed Law No 016/2018 of 13/04/2018 establishing taxes on income and Law No29/2012 of 27/07/2012 establishing tax on gaming activities. The new law aligns the income tax law with the new developments within the Kigali International Financial Center (KIFC) initiative. It introduces and defines new terms and provides clarity on existing definitions. ¹Basis of taxation was moved from RWF 30,000 to RWF 60,000 with impact on take-home and withholding tax to improve the wellbeing of citizens.
- 2) Enactment of the Tax Procedures Law No 020/2023 (TPL 2023) on 31 March 2023 addresses issues of communication, tax rulings, tax representatives, taxpayer registration, electronic invoicing, assessments, audits, voluntary compliance, dispute settlement, and tax recovery.²
- 3) Law N° 021/2022 of 29/09/2022 governing Rwanda Correctional Service was adopted in 2022. It mainly determines the management of correctional facilities and correctional services. This includes the management of a person in custody and their rights in order to improve the rights and well-being of persons in detention facilities.
- 4) Law N° 024/2021 of 27/04/2021 governing cooperatives in Rwanda was enacted in 202. It notably requires cooperatives to pay dividends on share capital to members, and to pay half of any net surplus to members, with the ultimate end to improve the well-being of cooperative members.

¹ Global Tax News, Rwanda gazettes new Income Tax Law, <https://globaltaxnews.ey.com/news/2022-614>

² Global Tax News, Rwanda Gazettes new Tax Procedures Law, https://www.ey.com/en_gl/tax-alerts

- 5) Law N° 040/2021 of 28/07/2021 amending Law N° 005/2021 of 05/02/2021 governing mutual legal assistance in criminal matters specifies in its Article 9 processes involved for Customer Due Diligence (CDD) for countering and reporting money laundering and provides amended definitions.
- 6) Law N° 002/2021 of 16/07/2021 was enacted in 2021 and governs issues on Rwandan nationality. This law determines in its Article 19 the conditions for personal or third-party application for Rwandan nationality by acquisition on the grounds of statelessness or being an immigrant. This evidences the fact that Rwanda has become an open and cosmopolitan country that supports the rights of its native citizens and fights against statelessness.
- 7) A series of Ministerial orders have been published to promote and protect several rights. They include:
 - a. Ministerial Order N° 003/MINEDUC/2021 of 20/10/2021 that determines the Rwanda Qualifications Framework and specifically contributes to the inclusion of PWDs in the education system.
 - b. Ministerial Order N° 001/MINEDUC/2021 of 20/10/2021 Determining Standards in Education. It provides norms and standards in education and modalities for inspection of their implementation in public, government-subsidised and private educational institutions at all levels.
 - c. Ministerial Order No 004/2021 of 12/02/2021 governing the use of substances that deplete the ozone layer or may cause climate change. It applies to products and equipment that contain or rely on controlled substances for example, Automobile and truck air conditioning units (whether incorporated in vehicles or not); Domestic and commercial refrigeration and air conditioning/ heat pump equipment

- d. Presidential Order n° 022/01 of 31/03/2023 determining modalities for the execution of the penalty of community service. It specifies among others, rights in the course of serving the penalty of community service (Article 10) and precises that works to be performed must be in harmony with public interest and with the Government programmes; capacity of a person sentenced to the penalty of community service, either intellectual or physical (Article 8).
- e. Ministerial Order N° 01/MIFOTRA/22 of 30/08/2022 on public servants governed by an employment contract and weekly working hours for public servants. This order provides modalities and conditions for the recruitment and management of public servants governed by an employment contract in public service, and weekly working hours for public servants and modalities for their application. One of the stated advantages brought by this order is the shift of the work starting time from 7:00 am to 9:00 am, notably to enable parents to sufficiently take care of their children and provide children enough rest before going to school.

However, the Coalition notes the following concerns:

- 1) Preparation of policies predominantly follows a top-down approach, which limits citizens' participation in their preparation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and learning.
- 2) There is a limited budget for the implementation of policies including for the enactment of subsequent laws, law review and other implementation initiatives.
- 3) There is no clear roadmap for implementation of various law and policy reforms which outlines the necessary resources and timelines.

- 4) There is limited capacity building for the implementers, and poor coordination, monitoring, evaluation and learning from the implementation of policies.
- 5) Presidential Order n° 022/01 of 31/03/2023, determining modalities for the execution of the penalty of community service, is largely unimplemented.
- 6) Rwanda has not ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.
- 7) There is lack of a clear roadmap to accede to key international human rights conventions and ILO conventions despite being supported but considered as implemented or under process during the last review such as International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; Convention 156 on workers with family responsibilities; Convention 183 on Maternity Protection; Convention 189 on Domestic Workers; Convention 131 on Minimum Wage Fixing; P089- Protocol of 1990 to the Convention concerning Night Work of Women Employed in Industry.

The Coalition thus recommends the following:

- 1) That the government of Rwanda allocate sufficient budget for the development and roll out of an implementation plan/ roadmap for adopted policies.
- 2) The government should strengthen capacity building efforts for the policy implementing institutions and agencies.
- 3) The government should create strategies for improved coordination of the implementation of laws, policies and associated programs and put in place strong measures for policy monitoring, evaluation, and learning.
- 4) The government should strengthen citizen involvement and participation in the preparation, implementation, and evaluation

of laws, policies and associated programs.

- 5) The government should review key laws, including the penal code, to comply with the newly introduced policies.
- 6) Accelerate ratification or accession to the following International Conventions: International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; Convention 156 on workers with family responsibilities; Convention 183 on Maternity Protection; Convention 189 on Domestic Workers; Convention 131 on Minimum Wage Fixing; P089- Protocol of 1990 to the Convention concerning Night Work of Women Employed in Industry.

1.3. Analysis of institutional framework

The Coalition is satisfied by Rwanda's efforts to put in place and strengthen institutions in charge of promoting, protecting, and fulfilling human rights. These include the National Commission for Human Rights, the Office of the Ombudsman. Other institutions are entrusted with responsibilities for the respect of specific rights, including the Gender Monitoring Office and the Rwanda Governance Board. Rwanda also has specialized commissions that promote and protect specific interests for specific groups. They include the National Youth Council, the National Child Development Agency, the National Women's Council, and the National Council of Persons with Disabilities. The Judiciary has the mandate as the guarantor of human rights. These institutions have been involved in the implementation of 160 recommendations given to Rwanda in 2021 and have achieved the following:

1.3.1. National Human Rights Commission

NHRC efforts in delivering its mandate on human rights promotion, protection, and fulfilment:

- 1) To improve on its mandate on the promotion of human rights, NHRC Law N° 61/2018 of 24/08/2018 modifying Law No 19/2013 of 25/03/2013 has been modified by Law No 61/2018 of 24/08/2020, determining the mission, organization, and functioning of the National Commission for Human Rights. The commission is thus entrusted with the special mission of promoting, protecting human rights and takes preventive measures against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. This mandate gives the commission overall oversight of the implementation of all UPR recommendations given to Rwanda and requires its collaboration with other institutions involved in the process.
- 2) The implementation of the first National Human Rights Action Plan (2017 - 2020) was evaluated in 2021 by the National Commission for Human Rights. The plan aimed to consolidate and harmonize government policies and programs to improve human rights protection and promotion. It focused on areas like participation and leadership of women, preventing violence against women, and ensuring equal access to resources, with a specific emphasis on the rights of women and children. The plan also included a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess its effectiveness, as well as a commitment to disseminate human rights knowledge and apply a human rights-based approach across government development agendas.³ An updated NHRAP (2023-2027) was validated.⁴
- 3) A National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) has been established within the National Commission for Human Rights to monitor and safeguard human rights. Since 17 September 2018, the commission has had the mandate to report on cases of torture

³ Ministry of Justice, The National Human Rights Action Plan of Rwanda : 2017-2020 available at <https://www.humanrights.dk/files/media/document/Rwanda%20NHRAP%202017-2020.pdf>

⁴ <https://x.com/HumanRightsRW/status/1933474310678609964>

as required under NPM guidelines. NCHR is mandated to carry out, with or without notice, regular visits to all places where people may be detained, as well as to issue recommendations to relevant authorities to improve conditions of detention and prevent torture and other ill-treatment.

- 4) Regular training sessions are organized to provide relevant knowledge and skills to law enforcement agencies on various pertinent topics. These measures contribute to ensuring a just and rights-respecting society in Rwanda. The NCHR has also built the capacity of judicial officers on fair trial principles and monitoring their implementation. The commission has also established child rights observers from the grassroots to the national level to monitor the protection of children from any inhuman and degrading treatment.
- 5) Rwanda is a State party to the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture (OPCAT), signed on 30 June 2015. The country has designated the National Commission for Human Rights as a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) to comply with this Protocol. Since 2015, the Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT) has accompanied the implementation process by preparing the ground with the NCHR to integrate the NPM's preventive approach into its work. In April 2023, APT, in partnership with the NCHR and The Legal Aid Forum Rwanda (LAF), organized a meeting that gathered participants from law enforcement institutions and Civil Society organizations operating in justice. It was an opportunity to discuss practical measures to strengthen safeguards in Rwanda's criminal justice system.⁵

⁵ ATP, Rwanda, Moving forward on implementation of the Mendez Principles, https://www.apr.ch/en/news_on_prevention/rwanda-moving-forward-implementation-mendez-principles.

- 6) NHRC has other initiatives such as conducting regular public awareness, uses toll-free lines, hosting weekly radio talk shows, convening focal points to gather information at the level of the administrative sector and assigned 5 districts to each of the commissioners for coordination, supported by two technical staff. Members and staff of the Commission have been trained in Human Rights Monitoring and Reporting.
- 7) NHRC collaborated with national institutions, including the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Justice (MINIJUST), the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), the Ministry of Local Governance (MINALOC), the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN), the Ministry of Health (MINISANTE), the Ministry of Emergency Management (MINEMA), to discuss and find solutions to issues raised during the commission's inspections, monitoring, and research conducted in respect of Human rights.
- 8) The Commission continues to receive and investigate cases of human rights abuse. During the year 2023/2024, the Commission followed up on 573 complaints, including 55 that were still under investigation during the year 2022/2023 and 518 complaints that were received in the year 2023/2024. Of these 432 (75.4%) have been resolved, 68 (11.8%) have been referred to the relevant authorities and are currently being addressed, while 73 (12.7%) are still under investigation.⁶
- 9) The most common complaints among those investigated by the Commission relate to the right to justice, with 164 cases (28.6%), followed by those concerning the right to property with 147 cases (25.6%). Complaints related to children's rights such as the right to know and be raised by their parents, the right to be free from harsh punishments, the right to protection

⁶ NCHR, Annual report for the year 2022/2023, September 2024 available at <https://www.cndp.org.rw/index.php?elD=dumpFile&t=f&f=118111&token=54037038f4141ec93ce58fbb21a76ed53b026af1>

from physical violence, unsuitable child labour, and the right to be registered in civil status records account for 69 cases (12%).

- 10) Regarding the mission to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the Commission monitored the respect of the rights of people detained in 14 correctional facilities, 72 RIB stations, and the respect of rights in 28 transit centres and 3 rehabilitation centres. The monitored rights were the right to adequate standards of living, the right to health, and the right to justice. The Commission found progress in respecting the rights of individuals incarcerated in correctional facilities, particularly through strategies to reduce overcrowding. However, it identified significant concerns, including the inability of many indigent defendants to secure legal representation due to financial constraints or delays in assigning counsel, the detention of individuals based on expired 30-day provisional detention orders without their case files being referred to court, and persistent delays in court hearings for those provisionally detained, often due to the limited number of judges.⁷
- 11) The Commission advocates for legal reforms to improve detention conditions and pushes for legal and policy reforms to align national detention standards with international human rights norms such as the Mandela Rules (UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners). It also advocates for alternatives to imprisonment for minor offences to reduce overcrowding. This includes promoting the use of alternative dispute resolution and plea bargaining to reduce the number of detainees and alleviate overcrowding in correctional facilities.

⁷ ATP, Rwanda, Moving forward on implementation of the Mendez Principles, https://www.apt.ch/en/news_on_prevention/rwanda-moving-forward-implementation-mendez-principles.

12)The Commission organizes training programs for law enforcement agencies, correctional services officials and other relevant stakeholders on human rights, especially regarding the treatment of detainees.

13)The NCHR also collaborates with international organizations like the Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT) to enhance its capacity in monitoring places of deprivation and liberty. They conduct countrywide campaigns on human rights targeting various groups, including women students, teachers, religious leaders, law enforcement, local authorities and people living with disabilities. These campaigns aim to raise awareness about human rights and encourage respect for the law. They also publish reports on human rights issues and present them to parliament, thus contributing to the oversight of government action by holding authorities accountable for their obligation to protect human rights. The NCHR also advocates for the ratification of human rights treaties to ensure Rwanda is fully compliant with international obligations.

However, the Coalition notes the following concerns:

- 1) The budget allocation is not sufficient to carry out capacity building for all the stakeholders involved to be educated on human rights including all Rwandan citizens.
- 2) Since its designation as the NPM in 2018, the NCHR has never published its annual report(s) on Torture as required under the NPM guidelines.
- 3) The reports provided by the Commission contradict various reports published by foreign organizations, for example relating to torture and ill treatment. In such conditions, the reader of the reports may be confused about where the truth is.
- 4) NCHR does not have powers to ensure that its decisions are binding and enforced.

- 5) The number of NCHR inspections are not sufficient to cover all the prisons, RNP/RIB custodial centers, rehabilitation and transit centers.

The Coalition thus recommends the following:

- 1) NHRC should publish annually the number of torture cases and those litigated on behalf of the citizens, and the outcome of the Commission's interventions.
- 2) The Government should proportionately increase the budget allocated to capacity building for NCHR Staff.
- 3) Increase the number of NHRC inspections to reach out to all the prisons, RNP/RIB custodies, and rehabilitation and transit centers.
- 4) Empower NCHR with enforcement powers to ensure that its decisions are binding and legally enforceable.

1.3.2. The Office of the Ombudsman

The Office of the Ombudsman was established as a leading institution in the fight against corruption by the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda. This office is regulated, among others, by Law N° 54/2021 of 29/08/2021 and is entrusted, among others, with the mission to prevent and fight injustice and corruption (Art. 4). The Coalition commends different initiatives undertaken since the last review to strengthen the institutional framework and capacity of the Office of the Ombudsman, namely:

- 1) Law N° 54/2021 of 29/08/2021 governing the Office of the Ombudsman was enacted to outline the responsibilities of the Office of the Ombudsman exempting the Office from implementation of Law N° 04/2013 of 08/02/2013 on access to information and enabling them to focus on the core mission of the prevention and the fight against injustice.

- 2) The Strategic Plan 2020/2021 -2023/2024 was prepared and validated in September 2020 aligns with NST1 and the JRLO Sector Strategic Plan 2018-2024. It considers regional and global commitments, namely the East African Vision 2050, the African Union Agenda 2063, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It highlighted the Office of the Ombudsman commitments and priorities for 4 years and set a framework within which the Office defined its development goals and targets for prevention and fighting corruption and injustice.
- 3) According to the most recent data, from 2022 until May 2025, the Office of Ombudsman received 1,633 complaints to be reviewed on the grounds of injustice, in addition to the 19 cases which were pending in the year 2021-2022, totaling to 1,652 complaints had to be analyzed. Among which 1,236 were analyzed whereas 416 are still under analysis. Among the cases analyzed for potential injustice, 63 (5%) were found to be unjust and subsequently submitted to the Supreme Court for review, 29 (2.5%) were resolved through mediation whereas 1,144 (92.5%) were found with no grounds of injustice.
- 4) In those 63 cases submitted to the Supreme Court for review, 42 have been analyzed. In 24 (57%) of these cases, the Chief Justice approved the grounds of injustice and referred them to the relevant courts for retrial. In the remaining 18 (43%) cases, the Chief Justice found no grounds of injustice and communicated this decision to the Office of the Ombudsman.
- 5) The Office of the Ombudsman established anti-corruption committees in public institutions, private institutions, Civil society and non-governmental organizations both local and international which is provided for in article 3 of Law n° 54/2018 of 13/08/2018 on fighting against corruption. According to the latest available data, it also provided training to 115,932 people for 3 fiscal years (2021/2022-2023/2024) in the different categories including Journalists, Students of high schools, youth

met in forums (clubs) of anti-corruption: students in secondary schools all trained were 109,912 males: 56,710 females: 53,202 in 3 years whereas those in Anti- Corruption Clubs were 5,388 males: 2,306 females. It also conducted both anti-injustice campaigns in Districts and anti-corruption week Countrywide. The Office has also set up members of the Advisory Council against injustice and corruption at the level of Sectors. The office has also adopted various measures to facilitate transparency including through online declaration of assets as provided by Law n° 55/2021 of 29/08/2021 on declaration of assets; adoption of an Integrated Financial Management System (IFMIS); E-recruitment that has been introduced in 2016; E-procurement system for Rwanda (UMUCYO) automates the public procurement process and enables the interactions of Government to business services (G2B); E-Payment; E-recruitment have contributed to the improvement of service delivery and the fight/prevention of corruption.

- 6) The Office of the ombudsman has also strengthened the framework for participation of non-state actors, including the private sector and civil society, in combating corruption. It also promotes national values as core values for society, especially for youth. It also strengthens citizen's demand for anti-corruption and empower them to hold the government accountable as a sustainable approach that helps to build mutual trust between citizens and the government.
- 7) Generally, Citizens have been empowered through different public awareness, different laws, and other public programs to let them know their rights and obligations as good citizens. There is a public-private partnership (PPP) in preventing and fighting corruption, for instance, through the National Policy against Corruption and the National Advisory Council Against Corruption and Injustice. It has carried out training of different categories of people, where youth are fully engaging in anti-corruption activities.

- 8) Efforts provided by the Office of the Ombudsman in collaboration with other government and non-government institutions produced commendable results. According to the latest Rwanda Governance Scorecard, Transparency scored 96.07% and Accountability 86.36%.⁸
- 9) In Rwanda, a significant number of public institutions have established anti-corruption committees. Specifically, between 2021 and 2024, 1,165 institutions have set up such committees, with the Office of the Ombudsman training 1,708 committee members. The Office of the Ombudsman has been given the authority to implement anti-corruption provisions since 2021, including those outlined in Law No. 54/2018.

However, the Coalition notes the following concerns:

- 1) The Office of the Ombudsman lacks sufficient human and financial resources to effectively implement its mandate.
- 2) The review process in solving issues related to Court Judgment takes a long time for people to get their rights due to a large number of reported cases of injustice
- 3) Citizen education on prevention and resisting corruption and promoting national values as core values for society, especially among the youth, is still limited.

The Coalition thus recommends the following:

- 1) It is necessary to strengthen the capacity of the Office of the Ombudsman in terms of personnel, adequate skills, financial and material resources, to endow it with sufficient means in order to examine cases of corruption.

⁸ RGB, Rwanda Governance Scorecard, 2024 p.14, available at <https://www.rgb.rw/index.php?eID=dump-File&t=f&f=111819&token=7e1f2aee0c950090a60476c22930056c8aa65dd6>.

- 2) The best way of handling the injustice cases is to strengthen local mechanisms (District, Sector and Cell levels) in solving them.
- 3) All institutions across the justice chain including the Office of the Ombudsman, the Inspection of Courts and the Supreme Court, need to work together to adopt a common strategy on how to reduce the review time of filed complaints and help people to exercise their rights without taking a long time.
- 4) There is a need to conduct assessments and research to get an evidence-based opinion on the impact of different interventions of the Office of the Ombudsman and draw lessons for further improvements.
- 5) Strengthening the use of ICT to reach out to a wider audience. Strengthening citizen education and encouraging their increased reporting of cases of corruption and injustice, and promoting national values as core values for society, especially among the youth.

1.3.3. Entrenching the culture of human rights respect

The collation commends the following progress attained:

- 1) The National Policy on Unity and Reconciliation was adopted in 2020 and aims to build a united country in which all citizens have equal rights and are free to participate in the governance and development of their country.
- 2) Some programmes have been adopted to foster unity and reconciliation in Rwanda. These include: promoting Rwandan identity and putting national interests first, combating genocide and its ideology, creating a nation governed by the rule of law and respect of human rights, combating divisionism and discrimination, promoting interdependence and synergy in nation-building, healing one another's physical

and psychological wounds, commemorating the genocide committed against the Tutsi to ensure it never happens again, and, lastly, striving for self-determination and a passion for work. Rwanda - 2023 Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report ⁹ contains key messages that illustrate the country's efforts for the protection of human rights.

- 3) Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2018/19 to 2023/24 envisions “to contribute to the promotion of a culture of peace and to emphasise Rwandan values, particularly Agaciro (self-dignity), kwigira (self-reliance) and ubumwe (unity), and the universal values of justice, peace, tolerance, respect for human rights, gender equality, solidarity and democracy.¹⁰ In addition, Education Policy promotes an integral, comprehensive education oriented towards the respect of human rights.¹¹ Human rights courses have been mainstreamed in the 2015 school competence-based curriculum; specifically in social studies in primary and in general paper and communication in secondary schools.¹² Rwanda military Academy organizes courses about human rights and humanitarian law as part of the initiatives and strategies to ensure that public service officers and military officers are human rights sensitive. Monitoring their activities is also another measure.
- 4) The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2024-2029 outlines strategies to address key educational challenges while building on past achievements. Its goal is to provide sustainable, high-quality, and relevant education for all Rwandans. Under this plan, the government of Rwanda seeks to Promote values-based education by integrating human rights, peace education, global citizenship, intercultural dialogue, life skills, and mental health

⁹ <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2023/VNR%20Rwanda%20Report.pdf>

¹⁰ MINEDUC, Education Sector Strategic Plan, 2018/2019 to 2023/2024 p.11.

¹¹ MINEDUC, Op. Cit, p.12.

into national curricula. It also seeks to establish safe school programs, psychosocial support services, health education modules, and peace-building and human rights clubs in schools to GBV, mental health, and child protection.

- 5) Human rights subjects have been mainstreamed in various training manuals for different law enforcement agents. For example, in the RCS Training manual, Human Rights is integrated in compliance with international standards, and it is taught to all staff at all levels.¹³ RIB has a module called “Human rights in criminal investigation and professional ethics,” which is taught for 3 days.¹⁴ RNP has included modules on human rights and the respect for due process in every training conducted for the Police Basic Course, Cadet Course, Career and professional courses.¹⁵ RNP also trained 11,240 Police Officers on human rights respect. Human rights courses are taught within the military and police academy in Rwanda in partnership with the University of Rwanda (UR). Training on legal provisions of CAT, fair trial, and visits to detention centers and prisons.
- 6) Human rights clubs have been formed across schools in partnership with the NCHR and different human rights organisations. Human Rights education campaigns were conducted targeting different groups of rights holders such as students, prisoners, women, youth etc., through different methods such as public sensitization, use of ICT (for example LAF’s toll free line 1022), radio, posters, etc. Topics covered include rights of persons under detention, Procedural law, land and expropriation, Gender based violence and Child’s law, Succession; Family and Jurisdiction of Courts, Abunzi Committee Law, etc.

¹² Interview notes with Rwanda Education Board (REB).

¹³ Interview notes with Rwanda Correctional Service (RCS)

¹⁴ Interview notes with Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB)

¹⁵ Interview notes with Rwanda National Police (RNP).

- 7) To ensure that the general population is aware of regional and international human rights conventions and instruments ratified by Rwanda, the country has incorporated provisions of international human rights conventions and instruments into its national laws and policies. This means that the general population can learn about these conventions and instruments by reading relevant laws and policies. In addition, training of trainers, publication of books, Radio and TV talk shows, training of law enforcers and other outreach activities.
- 8) The Rwandan government and civil society organizations have launched public awareness campaigns to educate the general population about human rights and the international conventions and instruments that Rwanda has ratified. For example, the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) has launched campaigns on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- 9) The Rwandan government maintains websites and publications that provide information on human rights conventions and instruments. For example, the Ministry of Justice has a website that includes information on international human rights instruments, including those that Rwanda has ratified.
- 10) The Rwandan government engages with civil society organizations on human rights issues, including those related to international conventions and instruments. Civil society organizations can play an important role in educating the general population about these conventions and instruments.
- 11) Rwanda participates in regional and international forums, such as the African Union and the United Nations, where human rights conventions and instruments are discussed. Through these forums, the Rwandan government can learn about new developments in human rights and share information with the general population.

12) Rwanda Law Reform Commission (RLRC) worked towards law revision and reform as well as ensuring the accessibility of laws of Rwanda with the following outcomes:

- ▶ Launch of the web portal www.amategeko.gov.rw for wider awareness of Rwandan laws.
- ▶ Issuing guidelines on legislative drafting.
- ▶ Continuous efforts to update laws filling the gap left by the repeal of outdated colonial laws.

13) The Office of the Public Spokesperson has been established to collect, coordinate and disseminate information to journalists as they are often inconsistent in communication.

However, the coalition notes the following concerns:

- 1) There is inadequate coordination of human rights awareness campaigns between NCHR and various human rights CSOs targeting specifically duty bearers.
- 2) The production of simplified manuals on human rights for children in schools has not been realised despite the commitment to have produced them by the end of 2018, as outlined in the implementation roadmap.
- 3) There is still a limited awareness about the rights of children, young people with disabilities and girls and women with disabilities to access and participate in education on an equal basis.
- 4) Lack of awareness and sufficient capacity building of staff in charge of the implementation of human rights through the various mechanisms and strategies.
- 5) There is a limited level of awareness on relevant laws and policies among Rwandans.

Therefore, the coalition recommends the following:

- 1) Organise training for primary and secondary school teachers on human rights so that they can master the human rights content they are supposed to teach.
- 2) Continue rolling out coordinated and inclusive national human rights awareness campaigns targeting all relevant rights holders and duty bearers in partnership between NCHR and different human rights CSOs.
- 3) Continue regular courses on human rights targeting different law enforcement agents including officers from RNP, RIB, RCS and conduct intensive human rights education campaigns targeting para-security corps namely District Administration Security Support Organ (DASSO) and community security patrols agents.
- 4) Increase awareness-raising campaigns at all levels of both national & local to change attitudes, both within the system and public, and to identify and minimize the barriers that prevent these children from participating in school on equal basis.
- 5) Work closely and collaboratively with different stakeholders in order to build a critical human rights movement in Rwanda for enhanced impact.
- 6) Strengthening capacity building of the institutions on various rights and enhancing citizen awareness on existing laws and policies.

1.3.4. Cooperation with International mechanisms of human rights and funding Partnerships

The Coalition commends Rwanda's collaboration with international mechanisms and institutions on human rights. it specifically notes that:

- 1) Rwanda participates in regional and international forums, such as the African Union Commission sessions, and the activities of various regional mechanisms and also participates in various forums at the United Nations level, where human rights conventions and instruments are discussed. Through these forums, the Rwandan government can learn about new developments in human rights and share information with the general population.
- 2) Rwanda complies with treaty body reporting obligations under the respective reporting cycles. From June 28 to 30, 2022, the Ministry of Justice, in collaboration with the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria, organized a training session for members of the Treaty Body Reporting Task Force (TBRTF) on State Party Reporting under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. ¹⁶Rwanda's standing invitation to all special procedures mandate holders is still valid. NHRC collaborates with APT on the organization of training on Human rights and the prevention of torture.
- 3) Rwanda is committed to implementing the recommendations of ICPD25. The Ministry of Health in collaboration with The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) organized a high level multi-sectoral stakeholders meeting to disseminate the Rwanda commitments made at the Nairobi Summit during the

¹⁶ Rwanda's report 2022 on the implementation of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa p.15

25th International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD25), review the progress made since November 2019, and validate the National Action Plan to fast track the implementation of commitments towards achieving the universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights by 2030.

- 4) Rwanda is equally committed to implementing recommendations provided during the Disability Summit held in London 2018 on disabilities' rights.
- 5) The country collaborates with UN Human Rights in Rwanda. MINIJUST and NHRC benefit from support from One UN to fulfill human rights obligations.

However, the Coalition is concerned with the following:

- 1) There is insufficient cooperation with the mission of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT), which culminated in an abrupt suspension of their mission before its completion, citing "obstruction" reasons.¹⁷
- 2) There is also a concern about Rwanda's withdrawal from the voluntary mechanism for direct Individual and NGO submission of human rights complaints to the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights under article 34(6).¹⁸
- 3) There are insufficient financial resources earmarked for human rights monitoring and education available for access by civil society organizations.
- 4) Insufficient implementation of Rwanda's commitment to the recommendations received during ICPD25.

¹⁷ See MINIJUST Press release on the termination of SPT mission, www.minijust.gov.rw/media/news/newsdetails/?L=%2Fproc%27A%3D0&tx. See also the <http://www.rw.one.un.org/press-center/press-release/preventionorture-un-human-rights-body-suspends-rwanda-visit-citing-for-the-causes-of-termination-of-the-mission-by-spt>.

¹⁸ <http://www.minijust.gov.rw/media/press-releases/?L=%2Fproc%2Fself%2F>, see also Why Rwanda withdrew from the African Court Declaration, <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/197697>

The Coalition thus recommends the following:

- 1) The Government of Rwanda re-commits to the mechanism of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights regarding direct individual complaints.
- 2) Initiate dialogue between the GoR and the SPT to renew and complete the mission of the latter in Rwanda.
- 3) Commit more financial resources to human rights monitoring and education.

1.3.5. Awareness of ratified regional and international human rights conventions and instruments

Rwanda received and accepted 1 recommendation on awareness of regional and international human rights conventions ratified. The Coalition is satisfied with the following achievements:

- 1) The NCHR offers training to individuals on the already ratified instruments if those certain persons are to benefit from such information and the training are also offered to law enforcers because they are the implementers of those instruments. More emphasis when training the law enforcers was on the Convention against Torture. Awareness of those instruments is also spread on Radio and TV talk shows. The general population can learn about these conventions and instruments by reading relevant laws and policies.
- 2) The government of Rwanda organizes training of trainers, publishes books, hosts Radio and TV talk shows, organizes training of law enforcers and journalists, and other outreach activities to disseminate information. They also collaborate with the media to support the dissemination of related information.
- 3) A Human rights component is included in the national curriculum for primary and secondary schools. In addition,

there are various human rights education programs offered by civil society organizations and other groups.

- 4) The Rwandan government and civil society organizations have launched public awareness campaigns to educate the general population about human rights and the international conventions and instruments that Rwanda has ratified. For example, NCHR has launched campaigns on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- 5) The Rwandan government maintains websites and publications that provide information on human rights conventions and instruments. For example, MINIJUST has a website that includes information on international human rights instruments, including those that Rwanda has ratified.
- 6) The government of Rwanda engages with civil society organizations on human rights issues, including those related to international conventions and instruments. Civil society organizations play an important role in educating the general population about these conventions and instruments.

However, the Coalition has the following concerns:

- 1) There is still limited awareness among Rwandan citizens concerning ratified regional and international human rights conventions.
- 2) There is still limited collaboration between the Government and CSOs in implementing awareness concerning ratified regional and international human rights conventions and their obligations on the State.
- 3) Awareness through websites and publications is not inclusive, as PWDs cannot access them, and a majority of Rwandans who

are computer illiterate or do not have access to digital spaces and technologies.

The Coalition thus recommends the following to the GoR:

- 1) Strengthen Rwandans' awareness concerning ratified regional and international human rights conventions.
- 2) Diversify channels for awareness concerning ratified regional and international human rights conventions ratified by Rwanda including radio and TV talk shows and community dialogues.
- 3) Strengthen the implementation of Rwanda's commitments through a recommitment to the mechanism of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights regarding individual complaints.
- 4) Increase financial resources earmarked for human rights monitoring and education available for access by civil society organizations.
- 5) Put in place measures for speeding up the implementation of commitments taken during ICDP25 and the London Disability Summit of 2018.

PART II

ASSESSMENT OF SPECIFIC RIGHTS WITHIN SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS CLUSTERS



CLUSTER 1

RIGHTS OF WOMEN, CHILDREN, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND OTHER SPECIFIC GROUPS

1.1. Rights of Women

Rwanda received and accepted 34 recommendations relating to the rights of women, and put them in the roadmap for implementation and the coalition commends the following:

- 1) The Government of Rwanda has put in place and strengthened different institutions and initiatives that focus on the promotion and protection of the rights of women in particular. These include MIGEPROF, GMO, NWC, Umugoroba w'Umuryango (UWI) and Inshuti z'umuryango.
- 2) Family and anti-GBV policies were revised to accommodate changes related to society's evolution and the country's development. Law No. 71/2024 of 26/06/2024 governing persons and family was published in the official gazette on 30/07/2024. This law combined revisions to Law No. 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and family as amended to date and Law No. 27/2016 of 08/07/2016 governing matrimonial regimes, donations and succession. The new provisions seek to promote women's empowerment and family welfare, including through addressing unequal property division in marriages not exceeding five years, recognition of unpaid care work, inclusive marriage vows for persons with disability, amending the age of marriage to 18 years upon request and securing the confidentiality of marriage regimes. Review of the GBV law is ongoing and stakeholder consultations have been carried out. MIGEPROF has been providing training on the new law governing persons and family, 2024 since its publication in July 2024.¹⁹

- 3) Strategies aimed at promoting women empowerment and family welfare-related programs include the National Men Engage Transformative Strategy for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment and Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA) strategy, as well as guidelines for community reintegration of GBV victims.
- 4) During this reporting period, a total of 10,607 couples were trained on pre-marital and married couples' tools "TWUBAKE URUGO RWIZA." Training on the tools has been conducted for 677 local government officials to facilitate its implementation. The tool aims to prepare individuals planning to embark on marital life to assist in nurturing a secure family environment for greater gender equality.²⁰
- 5) The number of operational Isange One Stop Centers (IOSCs) has increased from 44 to 48, covering the entire country. The comprehensive services offered by the Isange One-Stop Center Model, which include medical care, psychosocial support, legal services, relief, and reintegration, are available free of charge on a 24/7 basis.
- 6) Peacekeepers have a well-designed module related to gender-based violence in conflict situations. They are trained using the mentioned module.
- 7) The GoR has observed national and international events and campaigns aiming at raising public awareness on women's rights and fighting against GBV, notably through the institutionalization of the 16 Days campaign of activism. MIGEPROF conducts awareness campaigns through Radio, television, and drama on GBV whereby the institution puts much emphasis on the effects on the victims and the families, and they are empowered

¹⁹ Data from MIGEPROF

²⁰ Data from MIGEPROF

to report the GBV for evidence keeping and minimizing risks of disease transmission. In that perspective, GBV clinics in 5 districts have been established. MIGEPROF also convened a consultative meeting to integrate the needs of teen mothers in the GBV guidelines.

- 8) The Gender Management Information System is a centralized, web-based platform designed to capture, store, and share gender-related data across various sectors. This platform has helped the Gender Monitoring Office in its mandate of serving as a hub for Gender Data to have all gender related information on education and energy in one place. GMIS data played a critical role in the development of the second generation of the State of Gender Equality in Rwanda Country Status Report, a report that indicates progress made across Government Pillars, existing gaps, and provides recommendations to further accelerate progress.

Moreover, the data stored in the GMIS has played a crucial role in positioning gender equality during the development of the second generation of the National Strategy for Transformation (NST2) and targeted Sector Strategic Plans. With the existence of GMIS, the Gender Monitoring Office has been able to provide updated gender data to various institutions, including RGB, to inform RGS 2024. This data serves as evidence to inform planning and decision-making.

- 9) The GoR through MIGEPROF has conducted training on the Gender Responsive Economic Policy Management Initiative (GEPM) targeting Chairpersons of economic commissions of district councils and other technical staff from public institutions, the Private Sector Federation, Civil Society Organisations, and the Media. From 2021 to date, 148 participants (79 male and 69 female) have participated in the GEPM training. In March 2025, MIGEPROF conducted an impact assessment in 9 districts on the overall impact of training conducted since 2014 for

future evidence-based and gender responsive programmatic endeavours.

- 10) Girls' education has been promoted, and the government in collaboration with other stakeholders, have increased opportunities for girls, especially those from vulnerable households such as school feeding programs and girls' rooms, all to facilitate hygienic and conducive learning environments for girls. Available Ministry of Education data shows that for the period under review 2,046 primary schools across the country have a safe room for girls, representing 55.4 % of all primary schools in Rwanda With regards to secondary schools, 1,505 secondary schools have the room, equivalent to 80.5% of all secondary schools in the country. As for TVET level, 262 (76.2%) schools have established the girls' safe rooms.
- 11) Measures for girls' retention include the following: School Feeding program; Gender responsive pedagogy; Gender mainstreaming in education sector; Girl's education policy and, Conducted research on girl's education aligned with development partners (Adolescent pregnancy Prevention in Rwanda by UNFPA. End-line evaluation on girl's education); Remedial learning program, Education law N° 010/2021 of 16/02/2021; Construction of girl's room and providing hygienic materials for girls; Use of Female teacher in charge of girl's room; Operationalization Health clubs (School health policy).
- 12) Measures in place to motivate/ encourage girls to enrol, maintain and complete secondary education include providing awards for female best performers in national exams, conducting different awareness campaigns and Gender responsive pedagogy. School general assembly committee operationalization also contributes to such endeavors.
- 13) Establishment of Girls' schools in Rwanda: Currently, there are about 23 girls' schools teaching sciences. Awarding the

best performing girls: In collaboration with the Ministry of Education and other partners, every year, IMBUTO Foundation awards the best performing girls in national examinations, as a recognition for their hard work and as encouragement to other girls. Organize sensitization campaigns calling girls and young women to join STEM and TVET field of studies.

- 14) According to the 2024 Global Gender Gap Index, Rwanda ranks 39th, dropping 27 places from the previous year.²¹ Rwanda is ranked the first country globally to have the highest women representation in Parliament. Currently, women who are in Parliament, Lower Chamber stand at 63.8% and 53.8% in the senate. while 45.4 % of cabinet members are women. Women make up 50.2% of community mediation and conflict resolution committees, "Abunzi".²²
- 15) Female heads of public institutions are at 25.5%, 35.74% at the Permanent Secretary level, 46.2% women judges (33.3% in the Supreme Court, 46.2% in the Court of Appeal, 28.1% in the High Court, 33.3% in Commercial Court, 46.4% at Intermediate Court and 52% at the Primary Court and 50% of women inspectors in the supreme court. In addition, Rwandan Women are also contributing to global governance with examples of Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, AGRA, African Union Commission, NBA Africa, United Nations, ILO, and IFAD.²³
- 16) A significant increase was recorded in the representation of women in local government positions, including Mayors, District Vice-Mayors, sector, and Cell councilors. Female mayors were 30% from 16.7% in 2019, vice mayor in charge of social 74% from 66.7% in 2019, and female vice mayors in charge of economic

²¹ Global Tax News, Rwanda gazettes new Income Tax Law, <https://globaltaxnews.ey.com/news/2022-614>

²² Global Tax News, Rwanda Gazettes new Tax Procedures Law, https://www.ey.com/en_gl/tax-alerts

²³ Ministry of Justice, The National Human Rights Action Plan of Rwanda : 2017-2020 available at <https://www.humanrights.dk/files/media/document/Rwanda%20NHRAP%202017-2020.pdf>

affairs were 15% from 16.7% in 2019. Under the leadership of RALGA, a Local Government network was initiated to serve as a platform where decentralized level leaders meet and exchange strategies to facilitate their meaningful participation in decision-making.²⁴

17) Rwanda's report in the framework of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa from January to December 2022 states the following progress:

- a. Notably, 95% of pregnant women living with HIV received antiretroviral therapy (ART) during antenatal care, resulting in an estimated mother-to-child transmission rate of 1.5%.
- b. Knowledge of HIV transmission during breastfeeding increased from 88% among women aged 15-19 to 94% among women aged 25-39 and 93% among women aged 40-49.
- c. Rwanda has successfully maintained a stable HIV prevalence rate of 3% or lower across different genders and age groups.
- d. The overall prevalence among pregnant women attending health facilities for antenatal care decreased from 2.78% in 2016 to 2.08% in 2021.
- e. Guidelines for Community Reintegration of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Victims in Rwanda have been put in place to ensure that survivors of GBV receive the necessary support and assistance to reintegrate into their communities successfully.

²⁴ UN Women, Beijing +30 Rwanda Country Report (2024), available at https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/b30_report_rwanda_en.pdf.

- 18) RWAMREC conducted gender-transformative training, reaching 116,844 males and 68,486 females in 15 districts
- 19) 32% of women have acquired credit from formal financial institutions, with only 11% specifically obtaining credit for agricultural purposes.²⁵
- 20) Land ownership has played a crucial role in enabling increased engagement of women in socioeconomic activities.
- 21) Although women are more likely to borrow than men, overall borrowing has declined substantially for both genders. In 2020, 77% of women borrowed money, but this number dropped to 62% in 2024. On a positive note, the percentage of women obtaining loans from commercial banks has increased slightly, from 7% in 2020 to 8% in 2024. Notably, 50% of women still use informal credit, with informal groups remaining the most important source of loans. Women are also more likely to borrow from informal groups than men. In 2020, 63% of women borrowed from informal groups.²⁶
- 22) From May 2022 - May 2025, MIGEPROF financially supported 146 women and girls to acquire skills and knowledge in the mining sector in partnership with IPRC-Kigali. 45 formed cooperatives of Women in the Informal Cross Borders Trade (WICBT) in Rubavu and Rusizi Districts.
- 23) A Comprehensive Legal Analysis of Gender Compliance under Rwandan Law was conducted in 2021 through a partnership between Rwanda Parliament (Forum of Women Parliament), the Legal Aid Forum, and UN Women Rwanda. These institutions advocated for policy and action changes on laws and policies to promote and protect the rights of women. As a result, some laws have been reviewed. For example, Law n° 66/2018 of

²⁵ BNR, Administrative Data, 2021

²⁶ Rwanda Finscope 2024, Gender and Financial Inclusion Report 2024, available at <https://www.bnr.rw/documents/Rwanda-FinScope-2024-Gender-Thematic-Report3.pdf>

30/08/2018, which regulates labor in Rwanda and repealed the previous Law n° 13/2009. This law covers a wide range of topics, including employment relations, public sector employment, and the rights of employees and employers. There is also a new law N° 71/2024 of 26/06/2024 governing persons and family. Both of these were reviewed to ensure that all their provisions are gender sensitive.

24) Several initiatives have been undertaken in 2023, including training 385 School Education Officers (SEOs) on the Gender-Sensitive Learning Environment Strategy, a boot camp on girls' education in collaboration with the Building Learning Foundation (BLF), and the broadcasting of dramas and videos on gender through radio programs (e.g., Ikinamico Umujyambere).

25) RCS organized the 3rd Female Convention in Kigali on September 20- 21, 2022, to empower female correction officers in their professional career development. Additionally, the RCS ensures that 30% of deployed staff in peacekeeping missions are women. In the 2022 deployments, women accounted for 40% of those deployed in peacekeeping missions.²⁷ From 2023 - April 2025 there have been 25 correction officers in different UN Missions with 16 of them being women thus accounting for 64% of the deployments.

26) The role of women in Rwanda's security organs has continuously increased. Currently, 1040 peacekeepers have been trained on gender-based violence.²⁸ More so, a number of measures have been put in place to prevent GBV in peacekeeping missions and these include:

- ▶ Enhanced screening: Peacekeepers undergo thorough background checks to exclude Police Officers with history of misconduct or abuse related to GBV.

²⁷ Rwanda's 2022 Progress Report on the Implementation of Women, Peace and Security Agenda, p.4.

²⁸ Data from Rwanda National Police

- ▶ Pre-deployment and in-mission training: Before deployment and during mission, Police Officers are educated/trained about GBV prevention, gender equality and rights.
- ▶ Leadership or individual accountability: Commanders are directly held accountable of any misconduct related to GBV of personnel under their command, and Police Officers individually suspected of GBV related indiscipline are seriously held accountable.

27)RNP female officers currently deployed for peacekeeping missions are 255 representing 23% of the total number of Police Officers deployed for peacekeeping missions. More so, RNP women in decision making positions under peacekeeping missions are 26 and these women hold higher ranks.²⁹

28)From 2021 to date, 801 members of ex-armed groups have been demobilized and reintegrated into the community of this total, From 2021 to date, 14%³⁰ of the Women ex-armed group members (91 out of 538 men) received support for vocational skills training at Mutobo TVET School, located at Mutobo Demobilization Centre.

29)To improve women’s and girls’ voices and participation in decision-making processes at the local level, Pro-Femmes/ Twese Hamwe, in partnership with CARE International in Rwanda, initiated a leadership mentorship program. As of the end of 2024, 1,986 women and girls were trained in transformative leadership and mentorship, and they have trained another 37,816 women and girls and graduated from the mentorship programs organized by Profemmes/Twese Hamwe across various districts. They have improved voice and participation in decision-making processes at different levels and are making a

²⁹ Data from Rwanda National Police

³⁰ Data from RDRC

great impact on their communities. Additionally, a total of 664 women and girls actively took part in the community score card process, contributing to decision-making aimed at enhancing their engagement and leadership within agricultural value chains.³¹

30) MIGEPROF has forged partnerships with organizations such as Resonate and Profemme Twese Hamwe that aim to train only women and local leaders, media practitioners. To this end, MIGEPROF trained 1,469 women from 5 districts on Gender responsive economic management and budgeting. In 2024, through a partnership with PRO FEMMES TWESE HAMWE, such training has reached 89 staff from public and private sectors, and CSOs. These trainings focused on planning and budgeting to ensure the National Investment Policy is gender transformative and provides equal opportunities to women and men. This training specifically targeted the directors of planning, employment, and development from districts, MINICOM, RDB, MINECOFIN, GMO, and development partners.³²

31) The National Women's Council has conducted various awareness sessions through Television, Radio Shows on gender equality and a National Dialogue on Gender equality and gender empowerment. From 2022 - 2025, a total of 3561 females and 3557 males in higher learning institutions across Rwanda have been reached through these awareness sessions.³³ They also seek to address existing gaps and empower women leaders through the African Women Leaders Program. It is implemented through three commissions, on mentorship, peer learning and transformational leadership. Through this initiative, the NWC has created a platform that brings together women leaders to provide peer learning, support and

³¹ Data from Pro Femmes/Twese Hamwe.

³² Data from MIGEPROF.

mentoring of young women in different aspects of leadership, including political leadership, entrepreneurship and community engagement. Through this initiative, women understand transformational leadership, ethical leadership and sustainable transformation. It has also helped enhance the leadership skills of women and they are now equipped and aware of sustainable leadership that can help maximize impact.³⁴

However, the coalition notes the following concerns:

- 1) Women in the security sector like police still face a challenge of work-life balance. Long-term deployment in remote or conflict affected areas, coupled with family responsibilities back home place pressure on female Police Officers.
- 2) Gender-based stereotypes where women Police Officers are sometimes viewed as less capable by their fellow male officers. This can lead to limited responsibilities such as being assigned to administrative duties instead of frontline operations.
- 3) Cultural and societal barriers in some host countries in which patriarchal norms are deeply rooted, women peacekeepers do not gain trust of local males which can restrict the role women can play.
- 4) Women in rural areas have limited knowledge of the existing policies and laws concerning them including economic empowerment, leadership and participation in decision-making.
- 5) Men's engagement in activities within the government initiatives is still low. As key allies in the fight against gender inequality, it is important that they are active and engaged.³⁴

³³ Data from National Women Council.

³⁴ Data from NWC.

- 6) Law enforcement agencies have limited skills and understanding of mainstream gender sensitive approaches in their daily work.
- 7) There are still discriminatory practices in workplaces, both in public and private institutions, that disproportionately impact women.
- 8) Despite various efforts to curb its prevalence, cases of GBV, sexual violence and harassment continue to be reported, impeding the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.
- 9) Persistent patriarchal attitudes towards gender equality are a major hurdle to overcome. Discriminatory cultural practices and social norms inhibit the full realization of gender equality and women's empowerment.
- 10) Women are still underrepresented in key sectors such as the media and security organs such as the army and the local government. More so, women in science education are still underrepresented.
- 11) The number of women and girls financially supported by MIGEPROF to acquire skills and knowledge in the mining sector and in forming cooperatives of women in WICBT is still limited and is limited to Rusizi and Rubavu Districts.³⁵
- 12) Not all the gender gaps as identified by the 2021 Study on Gender compliance under Rwandan law (LAF, Parliament and UN WOMEN) have been bridged such as ILO Conventions that Rwanda needs to ratify.
- 13) Most forms of violence against women and girls are rooted in power inequalities, gender norms and socio-cultural factors

³⁵ MIGEPROF, Annual Report, 2021/2022, p.vii

such as child defilement (leading to teenage pregnancy), domestic and sexual violence. Yet, these remain unaddressed.

14) The mining sector is still male-dominated for various reasons, including:

- ▶ Cultural and societal norms that often discourage women from participating fully including the perception that mining is a male job.
- ▶ Balancing work and family responsibilities disadvantages women, as they handle multiple tasks like caregiving and household duties which limits their productivity and upward mobility.
- ▶ Technology gap, where women often lag in the use of modern tools and mining techniques due to insufficient technical exposure.

The Coalition thus recommends the following:

- 1) The State to strengthen capacity building and awareness activities of various stakeholders towards effective promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.
- 2) Gender Machinery institutions to conduct capacity building for law enforcement agencies to ensure a better understanding of gender and implementation of relevant legal provisions.
- 3) MIFOTRA and GMO put in place a strong law and policy framework to promote gender equality in the workplace, in public and private institutions and to ensure that any discrimination on the grounds of gender at the workplace faces appropriate sanctions.
- 4) With the support of relevant partners, the state through MIFOTRA and GMO should undertake a series of studies to assess key barriers that hinder effective implementation of gender related

laws and policies and offer suitable recommendations.

- 5) The state put in place a plan, including possible temporary special measures, to increase the number of women in the media, army and other security organs.
- 6) Increase the number of women and girls financially supported by MIGEPROF to acquire skills and knowledge in the mining sector and form cooperatives of women in the informal cross-border trade (WICBT) and extend the support beyond Rusizi and Rubavu Districts.
- 7) Conduct a law and policy gender analysis, and develop a plan for the revision of legal provisions that have gender gaps.³⁶

1.2. Rights of a Child

Rwanda received and accepted 10 recommendations relating to the rights of a child and put them in the roadmap for implementation.

The Coalition commends the Government of Rwanda's efforts to promote and protect the rights of children. With specific reference to the following:

- 1) Rwanda has demonstrated a strong commitment to children's rights, having ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990 and continuing efforts to comply with that convention, alongside the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and other regional instruments that offer protection for children.
- 2) The GoR has put in place different legal and institutional mechanisms to ensure most vulnerable children are taken care of through specific mandated institutions such as the National

³⁶ LAF, Fast-Tracking Gender Equality Law in Rwanda, Comprehensive Legal Analysis of Gender Compliance in Rwandan Laws, 2020, https://www.legalaidrwanda.org/Gender_Equality_in_Law_Rwanda.php

Rehabilitation Service and NCDA. This is further supported by the adoption of various laws and policies which prohibit any form of discrimination against a child, including those with disability and other vulnerable children. More effort was put into prevention, thus raising public awareness on laws that prohibit any form of abuse of children, as well as engaging the competent entities to enforce the law.

- 3) A community- based child protection structure called Inshuti z'umuryango (IZU) was established under the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion. It operates from the village to the sector level and is in charge of ensuring cases of abuse are timely reported and responded to in collaboration with different concerned institutions. IZU also receives direct reports of cases of violence against children and other child rights violations. Most cases reported directly to IZU are reported by parents and caregivers (67%), followed by children (19%) and teachers or faith leaders (14%). This finding indicates that IZU are regarded by their communities as trusted 'friends of family.' There were 1,183 cases formally reported by the IZU cadres through the USSD system during the period under review.
- 4) Rwanda has made significant progress in protecting children's rights through various laws and policies, including Law n° 059/2023 of 04/12/2023 amending Law n° 68/2018 of 30/08/2018 determining offences and penalties in general .The Revised Penal Code imposes penalties, including imprisonment and fines for child abandonment or neglect.
- 5) In addition, Ministerial Order No 001/MIGEPROF/2023 of 12/01/2023 relating to the child well-being determines modalities to provide the child with suitable information to his or her life and well-being and modalities to provide the child with sufficient rest and leisure; modalities for taking care of the health and well-being of a child with special problems; modalities for temporary placement of a child who has no

other choice in a foster family; and modalities for creation of social well-being institutions, requirements to be met by those institutions and modalities for their supervision. It also establishes regulations on the implementation of the National Program of Early Childhood Development.

- 6) According to a 2024 UNICEF report, de-institutionalization has been a major success with over 90% of the 3,782 children who have been in institutional care since 2012 now placed in family care. The National Rehabilitation Service is committed to achieving a delinquency-free society through the implementation of focused measures for delinquency prevention, appropriate measures to respond to cases of delinquency, effective reintegration of graduates from rehabilitation centers, proper coordination of all initiatives, and stakeholders involved in addressing the delinquency problem.³⁷
- 7) Rwanda has implemented several mechanisms to identify and rescue street children, including transit centers, rehabilitation programs, and family reunification efforts. The National Rehabilitation Service (NRS) and the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) oversee these initiatives, ensuring that children are either reintegrated into families or placed in rehabilitation centers for education and life skills training. Last year, the Kigali Transit Center screened and reunified children with their families, while 3,564 were transferred to rehabilitation centers. By December 2024, a total of 5,065 children had been reintegrated into families.
- 8) The NRS works in partnership with NCDA, MINALOC, district authorities, village leaders, Inshuti z'Umuryango and families to carry out thorough family tracing and preparation. In addition, before child reunification, family therapy sessions are offered

³⁷ Data from NCDA.

to parents to ensure their readiness to receive and support the child to be fully reintegrated in the family after rehabilitation. These efforts address family-related issues and ensure that children are reintegrated into their families and re-enrolled in school. After reintegration, regular quarterly follow-ups are conducted to assess the well-being of the reunified children. The reintegration program has achieved a 90% success rate. However, challenges remain as the main reason for relapse among children, which is unresolved family problems; hence a need for continued efforts to address such issues.³⁸

- 9) Former street children are rehabilitated and enrolled in primary school. Since 2022, the NRS budget has significantly increased from 2,972,226,479 in FY 201/22 to 5,477,286,388 in FY 2023/24. From 2021 to 2024, a total of 1,037 (753 male and 284 Female) children have been reintegrated into families.³⁹
- 10) For cases of child abandonment, the NCDA, in collaboration with civil society organizations, has been providing psychological support, conducting DNA tests to help identify relatives when necessary, and carrying out follow-ups after the children are reintegrated into their families. Specifically, in rehabilitation centers, each psychologist is assigned a group to follow throughout the rehabilitation program. The psychologist conducts an initial assessment and develops a personalized treatment plan tailored to each individual's specific needs.⁴⁰
- 11) In Rwanda, professionals and all adults are legally required to report suspected child abuse. Reporting mandates are crucial for the protection of children. NCDA, in collaboration with MIGEPROF, conducted awareness campaigns during the 16 days of preventing and fighting against child defilement across

³⁸ Data from Rwanda Rehabilitation Service.

³⁹ Data from Rwanda rehabilitation Service.

several selected districts. During the period under review, 1,101 children were reintegrated and enrolled back to school.⁴¹

12) NCDA has GBV clinics where teen mothers are provided with counselling, advised to get tested, children officially registered, and informed on how to formulate their complaints.⁴²

ISANGE one-stop centers are the main response intervention for victims and survivors of SGBV. Victims of child abuse are rehabilitated and enrolled back in school. They are also represented in courts as necessary. There is a challenge however when it comes to compensation and reparations for child abuse and SGBV as the law is not clear.

13) The Tubarerere Mu Muryango (TMM) program has significantly improved child reintegration in Rwanda by transitioning children from institutional care to family-based environments. Key impacts of the program include: Strengthening child protection systems to prevent family separation, development and rolling out of a national child protection case management framework, training of community volunteers (Inshuti Z'Umuryango) to identify and support vulnerable children in all villages and establishing a professional child protection workforce to ensure long-term sustainability.

14) MIGEPROF established community-based child protection structures to protect children against different kinds of violations. This includes awareness campaigns at the grassroots level through parents' evening forums (Umugoroba w'umuryango), Radio and TV talk shows on the rights of the child and emphasizing the responsibility of parents and community in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

⁴⁰ Data from Rwanda Rehabilitation Service

⁴¹ Data from NCDA

⁴² Rwanda's 2022 Progress Report on the Implementation of Women, Peace and Security Agenda, p.1

- 15) MIGEPROF also developed a manual on positive parenting to serve as a guiding document on what parents and the community in general have to know about parenting, specifically bringing to their attention their roles and responsibilities towards children, thus discouraging child neglect and abandonment.
- 16) The NCHR has established district-based Child Rights observers in all 30 districts of the country to monitor the implementation of the CRC and other laws about child rights in the district and report to the NCHR.
- 17) The GoR observes and celebrates the Day of the African Child annually on June 16th, conducting child rights awareness and reaching a wide number of people through radio and TV talk shows.
- 18) To fight malnutrition among children, a total of 143,993 children aged 6 to 24 months in both cat 1 and 2 received Fortified Blended Food (FBF), 74,683 Pregnant and Lactating women in both Ubudehe cat 1 and 2 received FBF.⁴³
- 19) ECD initiatives have increased to 32,230 across Rwanda. Of those, 3,771 were school-based ECDS, 609 were model ECDS, 42 were kindergarten-based ECDS, 36 were workplace-based ECDS, 25,417 were home-based ECDS, 2,087 were community-based ECDS, and 268 were for the Center. There are currently 4 ECDS for mothers in correctional centers. The 4 ECDS are in Nyarugenge, Ngoma, Nyamagabe and Musanze. The number of caregivers trained on ECDs increased, they are currently 30,204. Moreover, 409 children living in childcare institutions were reintegrated into families.

⁴³ MIGEPROF, Annual Report 2022, p.22.

- 20) NCDA initiated the Child scorecard model to track interventions received by children under 2 years old and lactating women (in a period of the first 1000 days of life) in 26 districts (12,948 villages). Overall, the NCDA trained a total of 62,426 individuals on the Child Scorecard Model Track. Individuals from various sectors and levels of responsibility were trained, including Community service providers, District/ hospital staff, and Health centers and sectors staff, and the sessions helped ensure that information related to timely child development is properly documented.
- 21) 73 (seventy three) Radio and TV shows on positive parenting, childcare, and safety, as well as alternative family care, were broadcasted. 18 radio and TV shows on child protection principles and the rights of children in general and children with disabilities in particular were broadcasted to address social norms related to children's care and violence against children. In pursuing child abandonment cases, NCDA reported that abandoned children are cared for and counselled, thereafter accompanied back to their parents/relatives or placed under foster families. There have been 91 cases of child abandonment reported to NCDA from 2021 to date.
- 22) There has been improved collaboration among CSOs and the Government in promoting the rights of the child. In 2022, they collaborated with a CSO focusing on children's rights to conduct training and awareness campaigns through community assemblies, National Women Council (NWC) and Inshuti z'Umuryango, to educate local citizens on parental responsibilities and sensitize them on fighting GBV in their communities.
- 23) From 2021 to 2024, 107 child labour cases were identified and reported to RIB for investigation and referred to the Local government and national child development agency for social support and interventions.⁴⁴

24)The Ministry of Public Service and Labour (MIFOTRA continues to conduct inspections and awareness campaigns in workplaces, with special child labour inspections in informal workplaces. This includes inspection of agricultural activities where labour inspectors conduct 720 inspections and 720 awareness campaigns annually.

25)In 2024, Rwanda reported 22,454 cases of teenage pregnancies, a number which has been growing since 2017.⁴⁵

26)MIGEPROF developed a conceptual framework to end teenage pregnancy for 5 years developed at output level. Training and education sessions are organized on positive parenting. MIGEPROF works jointly with the ISANGE ONE STOP CENTER to share information about child pregnancy. This goes hand in hand with providing comprehensive sexuality education that is being implemented in both schools by trained teachers and community trainers.

27)To address the issue of children being detained alongside older adults, upgraded/rehabilitated detention facilities have facilitated the separation of children from adult detainees. RNP has a continuous project of rehabilitation of Police Stations with their detention cells. RNP Department of Inspectorate of Services and Ethics has been leveraged to ensure compliance with policies and procedures related to compliance with rights of children detained.

However, the coalition notes the following concerns:

1) There are many mechanisms for the legal protection of children, but their effective implementation is still an issue, and awareness thereof is limited. There is also an issue with a lack of

⁴⁴ Data from MIFOTRA

⁴⁵ Kagire L, Rwanda: What Will It Take for Rwanda to Rein in the Teenage Pregnancy Menace? (2024) available at:<https://allafrica.com/stories/202410100297.html#:~:text=?%20%2D%20allAfrica.com-,Rwanda:%20What%20Will%20It%20Take%20for%20Rwanda%20to%20Rein%20in,the%20end%20of%20the%20year>

coordination between different agencies to respond effectively to the needs of vulnerable children in Rwanda.

- 2) Despite the interventions taken to feed children from poor and vulnerable households, the 2022 Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis Report (CFSVA) indicates that 32.4% of children under 5 years old experience chronic malnutrition and stunting, with 24% moderate stunting and 8.4% severe stunting, which constitutes a serious threat to their lives.
- 3) The number of children aged 6 to 24 months in both Cat1 and 2 received FBF, and vulnerable Pregnant and Lactating women who received FBF are still limited compared to those in need.
- 4) The number of trained caregivers on integrated ECD services and ECD settings that have been accredited is still limited given the needs.
- 5) Child support enforcement is still an issue for many cases of child defilement, notably due to the cost and accessibility of expertise such as DNA tests, etc.
- 6) Awareness activities for the promotion and protection of rights of children are still limited and uncoordinated.
- 7) The government took the decision to close orphanages so that children are taken care of in families. However, not all families are "caring I families" and the few families that are willing to host children face financial limitations and lack support for adequately helping children that they host. In some cases, children that have been reintegrated into families return to the street.
- 8) There is a lot of shame and stigma associated with various forms of SGBV, and for this reason, it is very underreported. Further, the culture of not speaking out, not willing to lay charges or hold accountable a family member or friend, poses a serious challenge in the fight against GBV.

- 9) There is no special legal provision for promoting and protecting the rights of children with disabilities.
- 10) The exact number of children currently living on the streets is unknown, as the circumstances surrounding this phenomenon make it difficult to determine.
- 11) To rehabilitate Street children, there is no special attention as they are treated as any other case of delinquency, while most of them went to the street due to specific and psychological problems.
- 12) The Justice for Children Policy 2014 has never been implemented. In both civil and criminal matters involving children, there is neither friendly justice nor expert reports that provide data on children's behavior, the way they have grown up and eventual psychological problems that may have affected their behaviors.
- 13) There is a delay in community health workers responding to reports of child abuse due to a heavy work overload. They are acutely understaffed.
- 14) There is no clear legal framework for compensating victims of child abuse. Despite this, the NCDCA has been collaborating with other government institutions to ensure that cases are reported alongside compensation claims.
- 15) There is no psychosocial support offered to children reintegrated from child care institutions. This alongside sufficient financial resources are important to ensure that these efforts are efficient.
- 16) Victims of child abandonment often experience identity crises, which can lead to behavioral issues with children returning to the streets. Challenges with reintegration remain, as the main reason for relapse among children is related to unresolved family problems hence a need for continued efforts to address such issues.

- 17) There is an increase in the number of child labour cases as reported by MIFOTRA from 2021 to 2024, a total of 107 Child Labor cases were identified and reported to RIB for investigations. (8 in 2021, 34 cases in 2022, 39 cases in 2023 and 26 cases in 2024.)
- 18) There is insufficient staff compared to the number of people admitted to transit centers. The infrastructure is also inadequate.
- 19) Children spend a long time in transit centers while efforts are made to locate their families.
- 20) Children are often detained alongside adults in detention facilities.
- 21) There is a challenge however when it comes to compensation and reparations for child abuse and SGBV as the law is not clear.
- 22) Child victims of abuse are required to pay court fees in civil procedures
- 23) Inadequate quality legal aid to children in criminal matters .
- 24) There is a challenge when it comes to compensation and reparations for child abuse and SGBV as the law is not clear.
- 25) The current legal framework presents challenges for foster parents seeking to adopt children under their care. The procedures are often complex and lengthy, making it difficult for foster parents to obtain legal recognition of their parental role.
- 26) The number of health centers that provide comprehensive SRHR services is limited. In addition, christian health centers do not provide contraceptives or SRHR services to the youth which further impacts access. While the government has increased the number of health centers for more access it is not sufficient to respond to the need and is not accessible countrywide.

- 27) Many Rwandan adolescents lack comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, leading to a lack of knowledge about contraception, responsible sexual behavior, and the consequences of teenage pregnancy.
- 28) Poverty and lack of financial stability contributes to teenage pregnancy by increasing vulnerability and limiting access to education, healthcare, and other resources.
- 29) Cultural norms and beliefs surrounding sexuality, marriage, and family planning influence teenage pregnancy rates, especially when they discourage open discussions about sexual health or promote early marriage and childbearing.
- 30) Inadequate parental involvement and guidance leaves adolescents vulnerable to risky behaviors and makes it harder for them to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.
- 31) Teenage pregnancies continue to be a major challenge Rwanda is grappling with. In 2024, Rwanda reported 22,454 cases of teenage pregnancies. The previous year, 2023, Rwanda recorded 22,055 teen pregnancies. The statistics have been growing since 2017.
- 32) There is still an issue of children being detained alongside older adults which infringes the rights of a child.
- 33) Children from historically marginalised communities continue to face limited access to education, health and social services due to the absence of specific government measures tailored to their unique needs.

The Coalition thus recommends the following:

- 1) Put in place an effective National awareness program on child protection rights every year that brings together all stakeholders intervening in the child protection domain including Private Sector, CSOs and the community at large.
- 2) The state should strengthen the training of Inshuti z'Umuryango on child development-related courses.
- 3) Expand the FBF Program to reach a larger number of vulnerable children and Pregnant and Lactating women and reduce the challenges with malnutrition.
- 4) Increase the number of caregivers trained on integrated ECD services and increase the number of accredited ECD institutions by removing the barriers to accreditation.
- 5) Put in place a special legal provision for promoting and protecting the rights of children with disabilities.
- 6) Organise effective awareness programs at the national level and engagement of all stakeholders, including the private sector, CSOs, and the community, in the fight against child abandonment.
- 7) Street children should not be hosted in rehabilitation centers together with criminals, as this may expose them to abuse. The State, through NCDA, should provide for special rehabilitation centers for children.
- 8) Implement the justice for children policy that was adopted in 2014, to enhance children's access to justice.
- 9) There should be a clear legal framework for compensating victims of child abuse.
- 10) Simplify adoption process especially for foster parents who

have already formed emotional and social bonds with the child to enhance the child's right to a stable and caring family environment and ensure that adopted children are granted the same legal rights and protections as biological children within their adoptive families.

- 11) The government should effectively implement the commitment to add more health centers that provide contraceptive and SRHR services, to ensure access to affordable and accessible contraceptives and family planning services, particularly for adolescents.
- 12) The government should prioritize comprehensive sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education, including in schools and community settings.
- 13) Addressing the root causes of teenage pregnancy, such as poverty, lack of knowledge, and sexual violence, is also crucial.

1.3. Rights of Persons With Disabilities

Rwanda received and accepted 8 recommendations on the rights of PWDs and put them in the roadmap for implementation.

The Coalition commends the government of Rwanda on its efforts to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and fight discrimination against them. Insofar as the International legal framework is concerned, the country has done the following:

- 1) In addition to the Rwandan laws for the protection of the rights of PWDs, a National Policy of Persons With Disabilities and a Four-Year Strategic Plan (2021-2024) was adopted in May 2021. These documents affirm the inherent dignity, worth, and human rights of persons with disabilities, and align with the Constitution of Rwanda and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which Rwanda ratified in 2008. The policy aims to guide the implementation

and coordination of interventions that promote the full inclusion and participation of Persons with disabilities (PWDs) in all sectors. Among others, the policy intends to subsidise the provision of assistive devices and disability related health care services to PWDs and promote inclusive technology to PWDs.⁴⁶

- 2) Rwanda adopted a law approving accession to the Marrakesh Treaty on 25th October 2021 to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled (Law No. 013/2020 of 7 September 2020) which constitutes significant opportunity for blind persons to easily have access to the much-needed books and other literary works in accessible formats. Moreover, law No. 01/2007 of 20/01/2007 relating to the protection of persons with disabilities in general and the subsequent law No. 02/2007 concerning the protection of ex-combatants provide the legal basis for disability rights in Rwanda. These laws are supported by the National Council of Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) Law and the National Policy of Persons with Disability (2021), which guides inclusive service delivery across sectors.
- 3) The disability mainstreaming guidelines were developed in collaboration with civil society and adopted in 2022. These guidelines aim to support government institutions and development partners in integrating disability inclusion into their work. Other initiatives include the strengthening of the implementation of inclusive education through teacher training, accessible learning materials and infrastructure updates, by the Ministry of Education in partnership with civil society organizations like NUDOR.

⁴⁶ MINALOC, National Policy of Persons with Disabilities and Four Years Strategic Plan (2021 - 2-24), May 2021, p.27.

- 4) The National Council of Persons with Disability continues to be strengthened as a public and independent institution with the mandate to advocate issues affecting persons with disabilities, build their capacity and ensure their participation in national development. This council assists the Government in implementing programs and policies that benefit persons with disabilities.
- 5) An inclusive Education Strategic Plan 2018/19 - 2023/24 was adopted and implemented under MINEDUC coordination. In June 2022, Special Needs and Inclusive Education Policy Dialogues were organized in all the Provinces of Rwanda by MINEDUC in collaboration with the World Bank. These dialogues brought together different education stakeholders from the local government, Ministry of Education and its affiliated agencies, schools, Non-Government Organizations, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities, and parents. They offered an important awareness raising opportunity for the promotion and protection of PWDs rights and ensured that stakeholders' roles in the successful implementation of the policy.⁴⁷
- 6) To facilitate persons with disabilities to easily access education infrastructures & tools (recommendation 134.99), a detailed Identification of persons with disability and fund mobilization to provide them with necessary tools and equipment for the sake of accessibility have been conducted.⁴⁸
- 7) The inclusion of persons with disability in local governance structures has improved with representation in parliament, the East African Community, and the National Council of Persons with disability. There has also been increased advocacy at district and sector levels resulting in greater representation.

⁴⁷ <https://mineduc.gov.rw/news-detail/special-needs-and-inclusive-education-policy-dialogue>

⁴⁸ NUDOR, Alternative Report on the Implementation of CRPD (2018) available at https://www.nudor.org/IMG/pdf/nudor_alternative_report_on_gds_18_implementation_final_10_dec_2021.pdf

- 8) Organizations such as NUDOR, UPHLS and other organizations of persons with disability have implemented capacity-building programs, community awareness campaigns and research on disability rights. They have also offered legal aid and other forms of legal support and education on the rights of persons with disability.
- 9) Through the Ubudehe categorization and the EDU direct support scheme, the GoR has provided direct support through cash transfers to PWDs. VUP has been in place since 2008, and from 2021 – 2024 a total of RWF 797,531,984,319 was allocated to LODA, with VUP included. 51,572 households for persons with disability have benefited from the VUP direct support component.⁴⁹
- 10) Concerning the nature of disability of albinism, medical insurances currently cover special cosmetics for people with albinism. The Ministry of Health has improved easy access to sunscreen body lotions and creams for people living with albinism to easily afford. Currently, RSSB-Mutuelle de santé covers such cosmetics in all public health facilities, and the rest of the insurance companies, depending on the contractual framework.⁵⁰

however, the Coalition notes the following concerns:

- 1) PWDs still face challenges in terms of their full integration and inclusion in all the sectors of national life. For example, the VUP direct support program does not reach all categories of PWDs due to limited budget, consequently making PWDs not sufficiently benefit from development programs.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Data from Ministry of Local Government

⁵⁰ Data from MINISANTE

⁵¹ UNICEF, Promoting the rights of Persons with Disabilities: Leaving no One Behind, 3 December 2021, available at <https://www.unicef.org/rwanda/press-releases/promoting-rights-persons-disabilities-leaving-no-one-behind>

- 2) While legal frameworks exist, persons with disabilities often face difficulties accessing justice due to lack of sign language interpreters and, inaccessibility of court buildings (lack of reasonable accommodation), lack of legal representation and inadequate awareness of their rights.
- 3) The Disability Policy remains largely unimplemented; for example, in as far as promotion of inclusive technology for PWDs is concerned. Access to assistive devices such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, or screen readers is often limited due to high costs, supply chain gaps or lack of repair and maintenance services.
- 4) Public infrastructure, transportation systems, and communication platforms remain largely inaccessible for many PWDs, especially in rural areas. Additionally, some PWDs are denied the right to have a driver's licence yet their form of disability does not prevent them from driving.
- 5) Many factors, like stigma, lack of awareness, poverty, low income, illiteracy, and unemployment, continue to restrict the full enjoyment of disability rights. There is no systematic/ regular monitoring of how the rights of PWDs are protected and promoted by NCHR and other government institutions as part of their mandate.
- 6) The National Council of Persons with Disabilities has limited capacity for disability-centered advocacy. There are also limited and irregular advocacy activities such as radio and TV talk shows that offer a forum for PWDs, CSOs and government officials to discuss PWDs' concerns and for their enhanced inclusion and participation.
- 7) When it comes to the rights of persons with mental disabilities to be witnesses in court, there is a gap in the law. Mental disabilities vary in severity and those with mild impairments

of mental disability should be able to enjoy the right to be witnesses in court.

- 8) Women and girls with disabilities face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including higher risks of gender-based violence, reduced access to sexual and reproductive health services and limited educational and economic opportunities.
- 9) Women with disabilities sometimes face enforced sterilization which is a violation of their rights. They should be free to choose the use of a contraceptive and to plan their family and should not be forced or coerced.
- 10) Policymaking and program implementation are often hindered by the absence of reliable, disaggregated data on persons with disabilities, making it difficult to plan inclusive services and track progress effectively.
- 11) Despite efforts towards inclusive education, many children with disabilities remain out of school due to inaccessible learning environments, lack of trained teachers, specialised schools and inadequate support services such as sign language interpreters or assistive technologies.
- 12) In times of humanitarian crises, natural disasters, or public health emergencies (like COVID-19), the specific needs of persons with disabilities are often not considered in planning and response, leaving them at greater risk.
- 13) PWDs face significant barriers to accessing formal employment due to stigma, lack of reasonable accommodation and limited access to vocational training.
- 14) Health centers often lack trained personnel and accessible equipment to serve persons with disabilities, particularly those with sensory and intellectual impairments.

The coalition thus recommends the following:

- 1) The State should take essential measures to strengthen the implementation and monitoring of the Disability Policy especially to promote inclusive technology for PWDs.
- 2) Take essential measures to fight stigma, poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment, and increase awareness, and increase income for PWDs to fully enjoy their rights. Additionally, advocacy efforts are needed to establish tax exemptions for PWDs that take into account the unique challenges and limitations they face when conducting business.
- 3) Strengthen regular advocacy activities such as radio and TV talk shows that offer a forum for PWDs, CSOs and government officials to discuss PWDs' concerns and for their enhanced inclusion and participation.
- 4) Build the capacity of both public and private service providers to offer services to PWDs sensitively and appropriately.
- 5) Continue efforts to put in place accommodative infrastructure to accommodate PWDs.
- 6) More efforts need to be invested in addressing the concern of early pregnancies for girls with disability and ensure that these measures are proactive than reactive by addressing the root cause of early pregnancy in girls with disability.
- 7) Conduct awareness raising/sensitization campaigns targeting parents and caregivers of children with severe disabilities. These campaigns should focus on education, encouraging parents to take good care of their children regardless of their disabilities, available support services, and strategies to improve the quality of life and inclusion of these children within families and communities.

1.4. Rights of older persons

The Government of Rwanda received and accepted 1 recommendation that was put in the roadmap for implementation. The coalition commends that the Government of Rwanda promotes and protects the rights of older persons through the following legal frameworks, programs and various interventions:

- 1) The National Older Persons Policy was adopted on 31/05/2021. Its goal is to secure an environment in which older Persons are treated with dignity, guaranteed access to their rights to health and secured lives and responsibilities.
- 2) On 1st October of every year, the Government celebrates the International Day of Older People. During the celebration, people are sensitized to the necessity of taking care of older people.
- 3) Rwanda provides direct support to older persons. In the framework of Vision Umurenge 2020 Programme (VUP), direct support to 340,012 households with elderly persons from 2021 to date.⁵²
- 4) In Rwanda, older persons have a high rate of medical insurance subscription, with nearly 98% subscribing to health insurance according to the 2022 census. The majority (96%) of these subscriptions are through the Mutuelle de Santé program.⁵³
- 5) During the COVID-19 Period, older people were considered a priority for the vaccination process for their protection. Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC) had a target to vaccinate 793,174 older persons aged 60 and above. For the 1st dose, RBC vaccinated 926,046 older persons, the 2nd dose RBC vaccinated 892,359

⁵² Data from MINALOC

⁵³ survey on the situation of the rights of older persons(2022) available at:<https://www.cndp.org.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=84944&token=f75c207b9e1b022104bc3f4c1eb2fa5b74a11877>

older persons, the 3rd dose RBC vaccinated 778,096 older persons and for the 4th dose, RBC vaccinated only 461,116 older persons.

- 6) To ensure the protection of older persons, NSINDAGIZA, which is a local non-profit organization, has embarked on advocacy for the protection of older persons. NSINDAGIZA has 27 elderly support groups in Kayenzi and Karama, composed of close to 900 members. Before the commemoration of IDOP22 at a national level, several activities were completed, including a one-hour TV/Radio show at IMANZI TV/Radio on 30th September 2022, with the support of the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion and one on the Voice of America Radio.
- 7) The Rwanda Social Security Board is mandated to manage and promote social security in Rwanda. This institution envisions a comprehensive social security system that addresses social security needs for all Rwandans. Among RSSB's mandate, managing and promoting old age pension, survivorship benefits, non-occupational invalidity benefits, occupational hazards insurance, maternity leave benefits scheme, health insurance and the long-term saving scheme are included. RSSB primarily intervenes in three main areas related to the preservation of the rights of the elderly.
- 8) RSSB Pension and EjoHeza Schemes provide old-age benefits to members who have contributed to the schemes during their active age. While the contribution to the traditional pension scheme is mandatory for all formal sector workers, RSSB routinely engages in aggressive sensitization of workers in the informal economy to save for their old age through Ejo Heza fund. The scheme has attracted more than 2.7 million active savers since its inception in 2018 .

However, the coalition notes the following concerns:

- 1) There is no implementation framework in place for the policy to promote the rights of older persons in Rwanda, largely due to lack of sufficient resources and no inclusion in the budget.
- 2) While Succession Law has declared provision of inheritance free and voluntary, no mechanism protects older people against children who may threaten them when they are not catered for. They are sometimes coerced into handing over their assets thus leaving them vulnerable.
- 3) There is discrimination in finance institutions and banks on the basis of age making it difficult to access loans and other finance facilities.
- 4) The national older people policy is in English; there is no translation in Kinyarwanda which may exclude many older persons who may not be fluent in English and thus not aware of their rights.
- 5) The age range of EJO HEZA does not include older persons aged 54 years and above. These are not allowed to give their contribution in EJO HEZA while this would be helpful for a number of them.

The Coalition thus recommends the following:

- 1) Put in place mechanisms that protect older people against crimes that may be committed against them by their family members for different reasons including inheritance.
- 2) Increase sensitization of parents for providing their children contributions through the EJO HEZA scheme to protect them during their advanced age.
- 3) The government of Rwanda should put in place measures aimed at protecting older people from isolation.

- 4) Taking measures that enable all older people access to some services that are currently provided through ICT and in modern languages and plan life learning for them and remove microfinance/bank loan criteria that discriminate against older people based on their age.
- 5) Translate in Kinyarwanda the current English version of the national older people policy so that Kinyarwanda speakers can access its content.
- 6) Review EJO HEZA policy to allow people aged 54 years and above to give their contributions so that they can benefit from the scheme even at an advanced age.

1.5. Rights of Refugees, Asylum seekers, Internally displaced persons, Stateless persons

The government of Rwanda received and accepted 4 recommendations on the rights of refugees, Asylum seekers, Internally displaced persons, Stateless persons and put them in the roadmap for implementation. The coalition commends the following efforts:

- 1) Rwanda is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention as well as other related protocols and conventions; through the Ministry in Charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA), it ensures the overall general protection, security and safety of the persons of concern. MINEMA in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is responsible for the smooth delivery of multi-sector assistance by project partners to refugees residing in refugee camps and reception centers, and to refugees and asylum seekers living in urban areas.
- 2) Rwanda Directorate General of Immigration and Emigration facilitates repatriation processes and helps asylum seekers in obtaining legal travel documents. For persons who do not want

repatriation, they are assisted in the process of applying for legal status of refugees in Rwanda.

- 3) 5 Refugee Camps exist in Rwanda, hosting refugees from the continent including from DRC and Burundi. 91% of refugees in Rwanda live in refugee camps. At the end of September 2024, Rwanda hosted 134,658 displaced persons, including 114,654 refugees, 13,281 registered asylum-seekers, 368 unregistered new arrivals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and 6,355 others of concern. The population comprises 82,22 (61%) displaced from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), 51,504 (38%) from Burundi, 698 (0.5%) evacuated from Libya under the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM), and 334 (0.2%) other nationalities. Out of the total population, 91% live in camp locations while the remaining 9% live in urban areas. Rwanda has also experienced an influx of new asylum-seekers due to increased instability in Eastern DRC since November 2022. By the end of 2024, over 13,000 new asylum-seekers were registered in Rwanda including 186 that were specifically registered under the new law.⁵⁴
- 4) The Government of Rwanda through the Ministry of Emergency Management leads the refugee response in Rwanda alongside UNHCR. With the support of partners, UNHCR works closely with a range of different Ministries and local authorities regarding refugee protection and durable solutions. The Directorate of Immigration/Emigration, the National Identification Agency, and the National Refugee Committee are key entities involved in the refugee response.
- 5) Rwanda has adopted progressive policies and created a favorable protection environment to support refugee self-reliance. For example, MINEMA and the United Nations High

⁵⁴ Data from MINEMA

Commissioner for Refugees Joint Strategy on Economic Inclusion of Refugees and Host Communities in Rwanda 2021-2024 aims to use a livelihoods approach that focuses on the promotion of livelihoods assets by supporting income generation through sustainable employment, asset creation and investments alongside prevention approach for managing risks and shocks and protection measures to ensure that basic needs are met.

- 6) Since adopting Law n°042/2024 of 19/04/2024 Governing Refugees and Applicants for Refugee Status in Rwanda (Refugee Law), 186 asylum seekers have been granted refugee status from April 2022 to March 2025. There have been several other changes since the adoption of the 2024 refugee law. Local integration is now recognized as a durable solution, lawyers are now allowed to represent asylum seekers throughout all stages of the RSD process, without limiting their role to court-level proceedings. This enhances access to legal support during critical early stages. This law has introduced legal safeguards to address the automatic enforcement of immigration decisions, thus protecting asylum seekers during the appeals process.⁵⁵
- 7) Refugees are facilitated in obtaining all basic needs and rights like health, education and security. Through the Jya Mbere Project by MINEMA, the GoR has provided basic needs/ services and economic opportunities for refugees, such as food, education, medication, and shelter. The GoR partners with MINEMA and UNHCR to provide direct operational support, capacity development, and technical advice to refugees. 18,388 refugees have received direct operational support and 1321 have received capacity-building training and technical advice.⁵⁶
- 8) The employment to population ratio for refugees is 15% as against 46 % for the total population. According to the RSRI survey, just 24% of refugees reported doing paid work in the

previous seven days (though this increases to 45% for refugees living in Kigali) and only 8% run business or are engaged in farming. The main reasons provided for the low employment levels were lack of skills and lack of information about the local labor market. Low income is reflected in poor food security, with almost 60% of refugee households reporting that they typically eat only one meal per day.⁵⁷

- 9) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, DGIE, NIDA, and the National Refugee Committee coordinate the comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), with key elements toward refugees' social and economic inclusion and their integration into the national system, particularly in the areas of health and education.
- 10) Rwandan Laws allow refugees and asylum seekers to apply for refugee or asylum status, and refugees are included in the national birth registration system, decreasing the risks of statelessness. Rwanda's policies provide for refugee inclusion into national services such as education, health, socio-economic, and financial services (including access to investment & bank accounts) as outlined in Article 21 of the Law n°042/2024 of 19/04/2024 Governing Refugees and Applicants for Refugee Status in Rwanda. This law ensures that refugees enjoy the rights provided for by international refugee instruments.
- 11) In Kigeme and Mugombwa, for example, 769 and 762 children are enrolled in Early Childhood Development (ECD), 3106 and 2,161 students are enrolled in Primary schools, and 1912 and 1569 students are enrolled in secondary education respectively.

⁵⁵ Global Tax News, Rwanda gazettes new Income Tax Law, <https://globaltaxnews.ey.com/news/2022-614>

⁵⁶ Global Tax News, Rwanda Gazettes new Tax Procedures Law, https://www.ey.com/en_gl/tax-alerts

⁵⁷ Ministry of Justice, The National Human Rights Action Plan of Rwanda : 2017-2020 available at <https://www.humanrights.dk/files/media/document/Rwanda%20NHRAP%202017-2020.pdf>

As part of the efforts to ensure students with disabilities have access to learning opportunities unique to their needs, 28 children in Kigeme and 20 children in Mugombwa with different disabilities were enrolled and studied in different specialized schools.

- 12) By April 2025, about 2760 persons of concern have been evacuated from Libya through 21 evacuation flights to the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) in Rwanda. Since its inception in September 2019, 2140 refugees from the ETM have been resettled to third countries. 3,808 Refugees departed on resettlement and complementary pathways in 2022.⁵⁸ About 30,457 Burundian refugees have voluntarily returned to Burundi with UNHCR's support since August 2020.
- 13) As of June 2023, 96.2 % of refugees have ID cards issued by the Government. 98% of urban refugees have access to healthcare through CBHI, which makes Rwanda one of the few countries to ease healthcare access for refugees.⁵⁹
- 14) UNHCR, through WASH partners in camps across Rwanda, provided a total of 2,512.5 litres of liquid soap, for handwashing and other cleaning practices. Furthermore, 1,976 cubic meters of sludge from latrines' septic tanks and 935 m3 of garbage was collected from all refugee camps and disposed of to the respective waste dumpsites.
- 15) Since 2021, the Legal Aid Forum has provided legal advice and legal representation to a total of 2,214 refugees and asylum seekers across Rwanda.
- 16) In managing refugees, projects such as JYAMBERE, EDUFAM, Maison Shalom, LIWOHA, and ARCT Ruhuka have provided services to refugees and the Rwandan host community. These

⁵⁸ Data from MINEMA

⁵⁹ Data from MINEMA

services include GBV prevention and response, community-based protection, legal support, and education for girls. From 2021 to date, a total of 27,971 refugees, including 12,355 women, were assisted in livelihood strategies and economic opportunities.⁶⁰

- 17) There is a toll-free line operated by LAF to offer legal assistance, legal representation, guidance to refugees, as well as raise awareness and advocacy for the promotion and protection of their rights. They also aid refugee and asylum-seeking children during the status determination process by informing them of the procedures for applying to be a refugee in Rwanda and the laws involved.

However, the coalition notes the following concerns:

- 1) While refugees are not automatically entitled to legal aid and have limited financial capacity, there is also a lack of a clear structure of access to legal aid for immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers who face language barriers with the absence of translators at all borders and airports that would refer them to legal aid providers.
- 2) There are still socio-economic and political issues that continue to produce large numbers of refugees, especially in the African Great Lakes Region (GLR).
- 3) There is an absence of informative content at the entry point concerning the process, procedures and deadlines for various services needed by asylum seekers.

⁶⁰ Rwanda's 2022 Progress report on the Implementation of Women, Peace and Security Agenda, pp. 5 -6.

- 4) Despite the Rwandan pledge for PWDs' inclusion in education in refugees' camps, only two camps have specialized schools for children with disabilities, yet there are 5 refugee camps in Rwanda.
- 5) Despite the favorable legal environment, some de facto structural challenges remain for refugees to become productive members of Rwandan society including limited access to finance for refugee entrepreneurs, limited access to upper secondary, tertiary and vocational education. There are also budgetary constraints to cover higher education costs.
- 6) Refugees and asylum seekers have occasionally faced illegal detention due to the lack of explicit incorporation of the non-penalization principle into Rwanda's domestic law. This has led to punitive actions against individuals for irregular entry or stay in contradiction to international refugee standards.
- 7) Many migration officials and some judicial authorities lack sufficient understanding of international refugee law and the domestic legal provisions applicable to refugees. This knowledge gap often results in the misappropriation of laws and undermines the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

The coalition thus recommends the following:

- 1) The rights and the needs of refugees such as freedom of movement, protection, access to basic services and livelihood opportunities must be understood not only as "humanitarian" in nature, but equally as development challenges to be addressed in concert with the needs of host communities and local institutions.
- 2) Take appropriate measures to include students with different disabilities in specialised schools in all camps and to ensure that children in refugee camps are able to access quality education.

- 3) Put in place measures that enable refugees to be more productive members of Rwandan society, have easy access to finance, and increased access to upper secondary, tertiary and vocational education.
- 4) Strengthen mechanisms that promote peaceful cohabitation among states and promote the spirit of peaceful settlement of conflicts in the African Great Lakes Region.

CLUSTER 2:

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

2.1. Right to adequate standard of living (food, housing and safe drinking water)

Rwanda received and accepted 10 recommendations relating to the rights to adequate standard of living and included them in the roadmap for implementation. The Coalition commends the following progress achieved:

- 1) The NIST 1, Social Protection Sector Strategic Plan (SP-SSP) 2018/19 - 2023/24 aimed to ensure that all Rwandan citizens, particularly the poor and vulnerable. This includes protection from life-cycle risks and socio-economic shocks and provides that they should be supported to achieve sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance.⁶¹ Under this plan, the Social Protection Sector has seen significant advancements, with improved coverage for older persons, persons with disabilities, and vulnerable groups, alongside initiatives such as the Ejo Heza savings program and the Vision Umurenge Programme (VUP) extended coverage for mothers and infants. A new Social Protection Sector Strategic Plan (SP-SSP) for 2024-2029 is in place and designed to align with Rwanda's Vision 2050 and the National Strategy for Transformation (NST2), to enhance social protection and reduce poverty.
- 2) In 2024, GDP at current market prices was estimated at Frw 18,785 billion, up from Frw 16,626 billion in 2023. Services contributed 48% to GDP, agriculture contributed 25% while industry contributed 21%. The remaining 7% was attributed to taxes and less subsidies on products. In 2024, GDP grew by

⁶¹ MINALOA, Social Protection Sector Strategic Plan (SP_SSP) 2018/19 - 2023/2024 p.9

8.9%. This is a result of a continuous growth through the year where GDP grew by 9.7% in the first quarter, 9.8% in the second quarter, 8.1% in the third quarter and 8% in the fourth quarter. During this period, Agriculture increased by 5%, Industry by 10% and services by 10%.⁶²

- 3) The implementation of key policies and strategic programmes adopted by the Rwandan government produced the following results: Rwanda's life expectancy increased from 51.2 years in 2002 to 69.6 years in 2022 and 70 years in 2023, which is a 0.45% increase from 2022.⁶³
- 4) In 2024, Rwanda's life expectancy at birth is projected to be 70.27 years, representing an increase of 0.38% from the 70 years in 2023. This means that Rwandans live longer and healthier.⁶⁴
- 5) Tourism is a major source of Rwanda's foreign exchange earnings and tends to generate a higher proportion of formal sector jobs than other sectors. It not only helps protect biodiversity and advance Rwanda's efforts to adapt to climate change but also plays an important role in job creation: for every \$1 million (about Rwf 1,050 million) that nature-based tourism activities inject into the economy, it is estimated that an additional 1,328 new jobs could be created.⁶⁵
- 6) Rwanda has been positioning itself as a pioneer in digital technologies for years. Hundreds of public services can be used fully online and almost 95% of the country's territory is covered by 4G LTE networks. Over 7,000 km of fiber optic cables have been laid to show potential investors that Rwanda is an attractive and excellently connected location for their digital business.⁶⁶

⁶² National Institute of Statistics Rwanda, GDP National Accounts (2024) available at <https://www.statistics.gov.rw/statistical-publications/gross-domestic-product/gdp-national-accounts-2024>

⁶³ NISR, 5TH Population & Housing Census, Rwanda 2022, p.5.

⁶⁴ <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/RWA/rwanda/infant-mortality-rate>

- 7) The following training programs are in place for youth hands-on skills training: Culinary arts, Construction, Mechanics, beautification, Tailoring, Entrepreneurship management, electricity (including welding) and plumbing, carpentry, designing etc. PSF is part of the National TVET steering committee . The government has provided start-up kits, items like sewing machines, carpentry tools, and salon equipment to the vulnerable people in communities, as a way of creating income-generating activities for them and improving their standards of living. 19,360 households benefited from the provision of these kits.
- 8) In the agricultural sector, MINAGRI has advanced irrigation systems countrywide, and in total, 68,126 Ha are currently using irrigation. In 2023, Rwanda had an estimated 102,284 hectares under irrigation, with a national irrigation potential of 589,713 hectares, according to the Rwanda Irrigation Master Plan. Among these Ha of irrigated lands, 22,073Ha of them are using small-scale irrigation technology, while 8,780Ha are using hillside irrigation, and 37,273Ha are irrigated in marshlands.⁶⁷
- 9) Soil terracing has been promoted as a principal soil conservation measure countrywide, for catchment ,restoration and protection. Currently, progressive terraces are on 986,276 Ha and radical terraces on 135,343 Ha. The GoR has established the use of Greenhouse technology across the country to provide favorable environmental conditions for the plants to increase agricultural production.⁶⁸ In 2024, Rwanda is focused on scaling up greenhouse technology to improve agriculture, particularly for high-value crops, and address climate change with initiatives like the Smart Potato Greenhouse Technology app, which uses sensors to monitor crops and automate irrigation.

⁶⁵ RGB, Rwanda Governance Scorecard, 2024.

⁶⁶ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/02/21/>. See also GIZ, Highly skilled workforce for Rwanda's ICT sector, 2022.

- 10) The GoR through MINAGRI has provided subsidies on seeds and fertilizers to farmers to support food productivity. Through this program, MINAGRI collaborates with different stakeholders to bring agro-dealers at grassroots level and close to farmers and also train them on Smart Nkunganire System and its components along the agro-input supply chain.⁶⁹
- 11) The Ministry has also collaborated with stakeholders to put in place agriculture insurance to support local farmers and ensure consistency in food productivity. In 2024, Rwanda's government and partners are actively promoting and implementing agriculture insurance schemes, with the National Agriculture Insurance Scheme (NAIS) dubbed "Tekana Urishingiwe Muhinzi Mworozi" ("Smallholder farmer, feel safe, you are insured"), as a key strategy to mitigate risks and losses in crops and livestock, offering up to a 40% subsidy.
- 12) The GoR has also established the Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture Mainstreaming Guidelines on the Provision of seeds and fertilizers free to poor families in categories 1 & 2 and provision of livestock (cows and small stocks) as a measure to improve the livelihood of the poor citizens.
- 13) All the above measures adopted by the GoR have positively improved the food security status in the country, which is currently at 79.4% as per the Government's data.⁷⁰ While Rwanda has made progress, food security remains a challenge. About 20.6% of households were food insecure, particularly in rural areas, and 18.8% of the population is moderately food insecure.

⁶⁷ Data from MINAGRI

⁶⁸ idem

⁶⁹ idem

⁷⁰ NISR, Comprehensive Food Security & Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) - 2022.

- 14) In addition, various programs have been established to fight malnutrition and stunting. These include:
- a. Provision of nutritional commodities to children and mothers (milk, fortified feeds known as ONGERA, fortified porridge flour known as SHISHA KIBONDO, Vitamins) to children under 2 years of age and pregnant women.
 - b. Among 4 health counselors trained and working at the village level, 2 are specifically mandated to handle matters of infant children and mothers. A total of 9,421 households have benefited from the Girinka program and received small stock including cows and small stock such as pigs, goats, and sheep to support them in improving their standards of living.⁷¹ The GoR has also helped by expanding public works, nutritional-sensitive aid, and access to financial services for poor families. 37,950 households have benefited from the Give Directly program.
 - c. There have been community outreach campaigns focused on educating people about the preparation of a balanced diet. The National Child Development Agency disseminates messages on balanced diet preparation through radio programs broadcast on Radio Rwanda, with 36 programs aired per year. These messages are transmitted through the Itetero children's Radio program, which is broadcast twice weekly on Radio Rwanda. Moreover, mothers with children in the Early Childhood Development (ECD) program in the village attend weekly practical courses to learn about balanced diet preparation.

⁷¹ Data from Ministry of Local Government

- d. The government has also increased citizen enrollment in social protection programs that aim to reduce poverty and enhance the quality of life standard. In this respect, LODA provided support to households, both through various programs and on a per-program basis. 526,934 households have benefited from these initiatives, which encompass a range of programs like skills development, assets transfer, and provision of technical training through vocational centers.⁷² In September 2024, LODA provided targeted assistance to 72 households affected by the May 2023 floods and landslides in Rubavu and Nyabihu Districts, causing damage to homes and livelihoods. In response to the Marburg virus outbreak, LODA extended emergency support to 258 vulnerable households between December 2024 and February 2025, providing a total of 57 million RWF.
- e. To ensure accessibility and sustainability of water infrastructure, the GoR has pledged to supply all its citizens (100%) with clean water by 2024, and many projects are in progress as follows:
- i) Kanzenze water plant was upgraded recently from 15,000 to 40,000 cubic meters per day,
 - ii) Nzove water plant is 98% renovated and supplies 120,000 cubic meters a day yet it supplied 40,000 initially.
 - iii) 568 Km of pipelines were newly established in Kigali and 1,112 Km in secondary cities (Musanze, Huye, Nyagatare, Rubavu, Muhanga & Rusizi).⁷³

⁷² Data from MINALOC

⁷³ Data from WASAC

- iv) Water plants and supply lines under construction include:
 - i) Karongi quick win supplying 2000 m³ a day; ii) 68Km under construction in Ngororero, Burera water plant project that will be able to supply 23,000 m³ per day; iii) Kagaga water plant in Muhanga to provide 11,000 m³ a day; iv) Munini water plant in Nyaruguru that will have the capacity to supply 65,000 m³ a day in Nyaruguru, Huye and Gisagara; v) Kanyonyomba water plant to supply 5,000 m³ per day.⁷⁴
- v) Other water pipeline projects expected to be finished before 2024 program include:
 - i) Muvumba water plant in Nyagatare; (ii) expansion of Muhazi project to supply Gatsibo and Rwamagana; (iii) Sake water plant in Ngoma; (iv) Rukarara water plant in Nyamagabe; (v) Busogwe water plant to supply Ruhango and Nyanza; (vi) Mwangire water plant (Gicumbi); (vii) Mwoya water plant to supply Bugarama in Rusizi and (viii)Gakenke water plant to cover Gakenke and Rulindo.⁷⁵
- vi) WASAC has revealed that 89.7% of the Rwandan population currently has access to clean water. In the City of Kigali, with 97.4%, Northern province 84.9%, Eastern province 81.1%, Southern province 78.4%, and Western province 75.4%.⁷⁶
- vii) At the national level, 31.7% of households access improved water within 200 metres and this increases to 52.7% for households within 500 meters. Urban households have significantly better access at 60%.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Idem

⁷⁵ Idem

⁷⁶ Idem

⁷⁷ Data from the Ministry of Local Government.

viii) World Vision, as a government partner, has trained beneficiaries in the community in the management and use of water infrastructures and how to preserve them, to ensure their sustainability.

However, the Coalition notes the following concerns:

- 1) There are still some economic policies that are gender blind, like the National Investment Policy and the Economic Recovery Fund, which have yet to consider the gendered aspects of poverty and make special provisions for women including those with small businesses.
- 2) Despite the efforts above, in 2024, the national poverty rate was 27.4%, meaning that approximately 3.6 million Rwandans were living below the national poverty line. Additionally, 5.4% of the population, or roughly 700,000 people, were living in extreme poverty.⁷⁸
- 3) The Tourism sector is faced with the challenges of degradation of natural assets, risks presented by infectious diseases, land degradation, overexploitation of natural resources, and the impact of climate change.
- 4) Rising food prices continue to particularly affect the poor, who devote a large share of their spending to food and face higher food inflation than richer households do.
- 5) In 2024, Rwanda's youth unemployment rate (ages 15-24) was reported at 17.54%, according to Statista and Trading Economics. While this marks a decrease in the unemployment rate, effort should be made to ensure that the various strategies in place continue to be deployed to further lower this rate.

⁷⁸ Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey: Poverty Profile Thematic Report: https://www.statistics.gov.rw/sites/default/files/documents/2025-04/EICV7_Poverty%20Profile.pdf

- 6) There are new emerging challenges including malnutrition, livelihood shocks, existence of extreme poverty, and rising food prices, that impede the well-being of vulnerable persons and inhibit their full participation in the development processes.
- 7) There are issues with beneficiary selection and limited public feedback on why certain households were not considered for the provision of small livestock.
- 8) Rwanda's Consumer Price Index (CPI), the main gauge of inflation, increased by 6.3% on an annual basis (April 2025 compared to April 2024) and it increased by 1.2% on monthly basis (April 2025 to March 2025). The annual average inflation rate between April 2025 and April 2024 was 5.4%⁷⁹

The Coalition thus recommends the following:

- 1) The state should strengthen measures to mitigate degradation of the natural assets, risks presented by infectious diseases, land degradation, and overexploitation of natural resources, and the impact of climate change.
- 2) The state should strengthen measures to fight against poverty and further reduce the number of Rwandans living below the poverty line.
- 3) New emerging challenges including malnutrition, livelihood shocks, and the existence of extreme poverty need to be effectively addressed as high priorities.
- 4) Strengthen measures aimed at reducing the unemployment rate, especially among young people.

⁷⁹ Consumer Price Index (CPI) - April 2025: <https://www.statistics.gov.rw/statistical-publications/price-indices-cpi-pi/consumer-price-index-cpi-april-2025>

2.2. Right to health

Rwanda received and accepted 11 recommendations on health and put them in the roadmap for implementation. The Coalition commends the following:

- 1) Rwanda continues to implement the Health Sector Policy (2015) and its fourth Health Sector Strategic Plan (2018-2024) or HSSP IV. This is aligned to the Rwanda National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) 2018- 2024. It prioritizes accessible, affordable, quality, and efficient delivery of healthcare that enables Rwanda to achieve Universal Health Coverage.⁸⁰
- 2) The implementation of HSSP IV showed progress in advancing service utilization and improving the health of the population with achievement of 105 maternal mortality ratio, 45 under-five mortality rate, 33% prevalence of stunting among children under five and 58% prevalence of modern contraceptives. The human resources component was a high priority of the health system strengthening but with challenges on the number, skills mix, distribution, and attrition rates. The Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSP) V 2024/25-2028/29 is a comprehensive blueprint aimed at advancing the Rwanda health sector's progress toward universal health coverage by 2030, in alignment with Rwanda's Vision 2050, the NST 2, and the SDGs. Under this plan Rwanda shall construct 10 new hospitals and 23 health centers, and renovate 30% of existing facilities nationwide.
- 3) The total number of public and private health facilities in Rwanda rose from 2082 in the fiscal year 2022/23 to 2226 in 2023/24. Of these 2,226 health facilities, 86% were at the primary level, comprising 1,914 facilities. Secondary level facilities constituted 13% of the total, amounting to 287 facilities, while

⁸⁰ MINISANTE, National Oral Health Strategic Plan 2019-2024, 2019, p.7.

tertiary level facilities accounted for just 1%, with 25 facilities. Additionally, the number of private health facilities rose from 250 to 360. Over 80% of all health facilities have access to electricity, and 91% have access to improved water sources.⁸¹ In 2024, construction began for a center of excellence to manage high-consequence infectious diseases; this is still under construction to date.⁸²

- 4) Since 2021, Rwanda has strengthened its healthcare infrastructure by constructing three new district hospitals that include Nyabikenke, and Gatunda and Gatonde, raising the national total to 52. In 2023, Butaro Hospital expanded from 150 to 256 beds with new emergency, ICU, imaging, and oncology services. Ruhengeri Hospital's ongoing upgrade will increase capacity from 320 to 650 beds and add MRI and CT scan capabilities.
- 5) Community-based health care was strengthened with over 58,298 active community health workers present in 14,837 villages to date. Cataract surgical rate increased from 483 to 920 operations per 1,000,000 people. Over half (56%) of children under the age of 5 slept under an insecticide-treated net (ITN). The viral load suppression among people living with HIV (PLHIV) where 97% of those on ART have achieved suppression.⁸³
- 6) To date, Maternal mortality dropped from 210 to 105 deaths per 100,000 live births and the neonatal death is 11 per 1,000 live births as per the situation analysis report. Under-5 mortality decreased from 50 to 37 per 1000 live births between 2015 and 2023. From the health management Information System,

⁸¹ Data from the Ministry of Health.

⁸² Data from the Ministry of Health.

⁸³ Data from the Ministry of Health.

around 99% of pregnant women were registered for ANC new registration, with 52% attending their first ANC visit, while 48% completed the recommended four standard ANC with also 86% received early PNC. About 98% and 85% of pregnant women had blood and urine tests respectively. About 79% of women had adequate tetanus toxoid injections during pregnancy to ensure that their most recent birth was protected against neonatal tetanus.

- 7) Rwanda established the legal framework for safe or legal abortion in 2018 and released a ministerial order guiding legal abortion in 2019. Abortion is allowed under defined situations such as rape, incest, pregnancy resulting from forced marriage, child pregnancy and therapeutic abortion. This was done to decentralize the provision of abortion services in health centers. This closes gaps in service accessibility to communities.⁸⁴
- 8) Rwanda has one of the best-organized health care systems in Africa. All citizens can obtain health care insurance for \$2 per year. The actual cost of care per citizen is between \$14-20, with one-half coming from government sources and the remainder from international donors.⁷³ The Percentage of population with health insurance and by type of insurance stood at 87.3% including: RAMA (3.8%); Community Based Health Insurance (94%); MMI (1.2%); Employer (0.3%); Private insurance company (0.7%).⁸⁵ The GoR, through the Rwanda Social Security Board, has sensitized citizens to enroll in health insurance schemes (Mutuelle de santé). Currently, 61% of total health expenditures are financed by domestic resources. Between FY 2013/14 and

⁸⁴ Data from the Ministry of Health.

⁸⁵ Data from MINISANTE

⁸⁶ Data from the Ministry of Health.

⁸⁷ <https://taxnews.ey.com/news/2020-0519-rwanda-establishes-subsidy-contributions-from-employees-for-community-based-health-insurance-scheme#:~:text=This%20order%20has%20introduced%20a,15th%20of%20the%20following%20month>

2022/23 the percentage allocation experienced an increase from 14% to 15.1%. Affordability improved through expanded Mutuelle de Santé coverage, whereby the 2023/24 period included community-based health insurance covering 83.5% of the population and 92.4% of the insured members.⁸⁶

- 9) Rwanda has issued Order N° 034/01 of 13/01/2020 in 2020. This order establishes subsidies that should be paid by employees in the public and private sectors, the government, health insurance entities, telecommunications, and fuel trade companies. It also defines the payment procedures, fines, and penalties for non-compliance. This order has introduced a statutory deduction of 0.05% from every employee's net salary to be contributed to the community-based health insurance scheme. Other Contributors towards the scheme include:
 - a. Health insurance entities pay 5% of all annual contributions collected in their health insurance category.
 - b. Subsidiaries from public institutions with medical insurance schemes in their attributions to pay 10% of all annual contributions collected.
 - c. Fuel trade companies pay FRW20 per litre of fuel that is sold to the community-based health insurance scheme.
 - d. Telecommunications companies pay 2.5% of their annual turnover, with an increase to 3% in their third year of contribution.
- 10) In 2021/22, the Government of Rwanda allocated RWF 377.1 billion to the health sector, up from RWF 282.3 billion in the 2020/21 revised budget. This reflects a nominal increase of 33.6%. This commendable budget increase is largely

attributed to COVID-19 response measures implemented under the health sector, including COVID-19 mass-testing, vaccine procurement and distribution, and treatment.⁸⁸ In 2024/25 RWF 376 billion was allocated to the health sector, equivalent to 6.6 % of the total national budget, well below the Abuja declaration requiring states to spend at least 15% of their national budget on health. The estimated cost of implementing HSSP V is between RWF 5.9 trillion (\$4.2 billion) and RWF 6.9 trillion (\$4.9 billion), with a projected financing gap of 21% to 32% over the next five years. Efforts to bridge this gap will focus on increasing domestic funding and private sector investment.

- 11) Through an innovative approach that brings greater numbers of health posts close to communities, the Government has reduced walking time to 30 minutes.⁸⁹ The health posts serve as an interface between community health workers and health centers. The health posts have also contributed to an effective national response to COVID-19, with communities still able to access basic care despite the crisis. Health workers provide essential primary care services and make referrals to hospitals for specialized services, ultimately strengthening the foundation of the health system and improving the way people receive the care they need.⁹⁰
- 12) The average ratio of health professionals in Rwanda per 10,000 people is 1.7 doctors, 5.4 midwives and 9.0 nurses. The doctor-to-population ratio improved from 1:10,055 to 1:6,578 under health workforce development. Currently, a total of 15,765 nurses are qualified and deployed to various health

⁸⁸ Unicef, Health Budget Brief. Investing in Children's Health in Rwanda 2021/2022, available at <https://www.unicef.org/esa/media/10131/file/UNICEF-Rwanda-2021-2022-Health-Budget-Brief.pdf>

⁸⁹ <https://www.scjohnson.com/en/stories/healthier-world/mosquito/2025/transforming-healthcare-in-rwanda-and-beyond>

⁹⁰ WHO, Rwanda's primary health care strategy improves access to essential and life-saving health services, available at <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/rwanda-s-primary-health-care-strategy-improves-access-to-essential-and-life-saving-health-services>

facilities and 5,293 are studying. 200 associate nurses are to be deployed in health posts. 2,226 midwives have qualified and 2,610 are in training. The total number of qualified allied health professionals are 7,162 while 2,552 are students. The number of qualified pharmacists is 1,355 while 397 are in training. Of 2,647 medical doctors 705 specialized in various medical fields and 317 residents are pursuing medical specialization, while 70 are undertaking medical fellowships. There are 1,219 general practitioners, 206 interns, and 97 dental surgeons complemented by 33 interns.⁹¹

- 13) The country has achieved its target for the Prevalence of modern contraceptive use among women of reproductive age (15-49), which was 54.6% in 2021/2022. It was 48 according to the DHS 2014/15 and increased to 58 as per the DHS 2019/20. The total fertility rate (TFR) declined from 6.8 to 4.2, which is still higher than the desired TFR of 3 children per woman. Fear of side effects, myths, cultural and religious beliefs and lack of knowledge on contraceptives are among factors associated with low uptake of contraceptives in Rwanda.
- 14) Women are accompanied by a community health worker to deliver at health facilities; Pregnant women have follow ups by Community health workers at their homes; 94% of women giving birth are assisted by a skilled birth doctor, Midwife Nurse; Women who give birth receive a postnatal check in the first 2 days after birth; Improved referral system by dispatching ambulances in health centers; Deployments of Midwives in all health centers to assist deliveries; Deployments of doctors including gynecologists in hospitals; Supply of essential drugs/commodities and equipment; Training of Health care providers on Emergency obstetric care.⁹²

⁹¹ Data from the Ministry of Health

⁹² Idem

- 15) In Rwanda 98% of women aged 15-49 who gave birth in the 5 years preceding the Demographic Health Survey received antenatal care (ANC) from a skilled provider during the pregnancy for their most recent birth. 47% had at least 4 antenatal care visits from a skilled provider such as doctors, nurses, midwives, and Clinical Officers.⁷⁸ (DHS 2020) This is a result of the government's efforts to reduce the maternal mortality rate in the country.⁹³ The GoR has also increased efforts in awareness raising and education for pregnant women through midwives, nurses, and community health workers in different forums like *umuganda* as well as maternal child health weeks.⁹⁴
- 16) 164 ultrasound machines and 6 mobile x-ray units have been fully delivered and installed. The healthcare system has been strengthened by the deployment of new equipment with state-of-the-art equipment such as CT scans and Go Up), digital fixed x-rays, fluoroscopy units and mammography machines are already operational in major hospitals including CHUK, KFH, RMH and CHUB. The 17 contracted C-arm units have been successfully installed and are in use. There is a new approach to strategic acquisition from the manufacturer. This has greatly enhanced diagnostic capacity in both tertiary hospitals and district hospitals, reflecting a strong achievement in improving access to advanced medical imaging services nationwide.
- 17) Under the Global Fund, 96 hospital beds and 96 bedside cabinets were successfully installed. Additionally, through the Ente Nazionale and ELMA grants, over 400 individual equipment units were delivered across various facilities, including Kibilizi District Hospital, Karwasa Health Center, Shingiro Health Center and others. This includes 9 electric beds, 8 infusion pumps, 4 infant incubators, 17 hospital beds and 17

⁹³ Idem

⁹⁴ Idem

bedside cabinets at Musha, Gikore and Gishubi Health Centers, along with 64 ultrasound machines, 52 suction machines and multiple Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) machines, stretchers, wheelchairs, delivery kits and baby warmers.⁹⁵

- 18) There are 492 ambulances in Rwanda distributed across all public health facilities and at all health care levels for intra-hospital emergency care, and this number was increased from 100 in 2015. The National Emergency Medical Services (EMS) managed by Service d'Aide Medicale d'urgence (SAMU) operates 24/7 via the toll-free number 912 with GPS-enabled dispatch for faster response. In 2024, digital tools further improved coordination and reduced delays. Boat ambulances were introduced in remote areas like Nkombo and Lake Kivu to support maternal and neonatal emergencies. EMT training was scaled up with support from WHO, PIH and the World Bank.
- 19) The assessment of prescription and availability of medicines was conducted in 107 health centers, 28 district pharmacy sites and 46 hospitals, and it indicated that the status of availability of medicine was 94.6%. The essential list was revised and the number of essential drugs increased from 721 to 836 and all are covered by community based health insurance (CBHI).
- 20) The Ministry of Health continues to support health posts by ensuring the availability of essential medicines and medical supplies, particularly in semi-government health posts. Health posts in Rwanda are primarily managed by nurses and other qualified health practitioners in line with the national health system structure. They serve as the first point of contact for basic health care services including treatment of common illnesses, maternal and child health care services, and preventive care.

⁹⁵ Data from the Ministry of Health.

Efforts are also underway to expand the health service package at health posts and improve the efficiency of medicine supply chains to enhance service delivery at the community level.

- 21) The health sector is ensuring the digitization of service delivery from health facilities during patient recording, follow-up, reporting, and management of patient-related logistics from the usual client consultation up to an unusual case management like (outbreak management). This includes initiatives such as The National Health Management Information System (DHIS2), RapidSMS for maternal and child health tracking, and Rapid SMS for Community Health Workers, existence of individual tracking system that includes vaccination, civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) for registration of all births and deaths at both community and Health Facilities level. The plan is to have the full EMR in all health facilities and also ensure all packages of services are incorporated in the Digital system at all health facility levels from Health Posts to the Referral and Teaching Hospitals.
- 22) To ensure the data quality, a robust framework to ensure data accuracy and completeness was established that includes the use of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), regular validation exercises, and Integrated Supportive Supervision (ISS). The use of International standards, such as WHO data quality guidelines and ICD-10, with the addition of staff training and mentorship. The birth registration completeness rate has reached an impressive 90.3% with involvement of the Cell Executive at the Cell level, and the death rate of 46.1% of completeness as per the CRVS report.
- 23) The Rwandan Ministry of Health has implemented the 4X4 strategy aiming to increase the healthcare workforce to four professionals per 1000 people within four years. This initiative focuses on expanding training programs, improving retention through better working conditions and enhancing

the distribution of health care workers across the country. By investing in human resources for health, Rwanda seeks to improve service delivery and ensure equitable access to quality healthcare for its citizens.

- 24) There are several incentives in place for community based workers in Rwanda. Performance-Based Financing (PBF) is provided for community health workers as an incentive on a quarterly basis based on the individual performance of various indicators. On average, each CHW receives approximately 20,000 Rwf per quarter. Earmarked transfer funds are also provided to CHWs cooperatives for income-generating activities so that the profits can be given to CHWs. MoH through MINECOFIN earmarks 1.2 billion Rwf annually for this budget. All CHWs are part of the cooperatives that carry out various economic activities. However, many cooperatives are still very weak and have many challenges in terms of management, and need technical support. CHWs receive frequent training and mentorship for their capacity building. In these training and mentorship, they also receive per diems. CHWs receive various tools including smart phones, umbrellas, bags, solar panels among others. These motivate them as they are used for work and also personal benefits.

However, the Coalition notes the following concerns:

- 1) The Coalition is concerned with the management of community-based health insurance schemes commonly known as *Mutuelle de santé*, including frequent lack of some essential medicines in some public health centers and district pharmacies. Many times, subscribers have to buy their own medicine whenever there is no stock in the public health centers or in case the prescribed drugs are not available in the public health facilities.

- 2) Health centers are still heavily under-resourced with the required human and technical skill. There is also a limited number of medical doctors compared to the total population.
- 3) The limited number of healthcare providers in Rwanda significantly affects both the quality and accessibility of healthcare services. With only approximately 0.84 physicians, nurses, and midwives per 1000 residents, the country falls short of the World Health Organisation's recommended minimum of 4.45 per 1000. This shortage leads to overburdened medical staff longer wait times for patients and challenges in delivering comprehensive care, especially in rural areas.
- 4) Malnutrition is still a big challenge, especially to the health of children as 32% of children aged 2-23 months screened were stunted, 7.1% underweight and 6.6% wasted.⁹⁶
- 5) Long waiting periods to see a medical care provider at health facilities also pose a challenge. This is because they are overwhelmed by a large number of clients and patients and limits the rights of Rwandans to access quality and affordable health care.
- 6) There is limited access to information for PWDs to access health services.
- 7) Despite the increase in the number of ambulances at health facilities, there is an issue of maintenance, their dispatch and poor management that impede their effective use.
- 8) There is inconsistent implementation of Ministerial Order N°002/MoH/2019 of 08/04/2019 regarding abortion. In some hospitals, women seeking abortion services are required to provide evidence that their circumstances meet the legal criteria

⁹⁶ MINISANTE, Health Sector FY 2021/2022 Backward-looking Joint Sector Review Report, October 2022, p.7.

for the procedure. This practice contradicts the ministerial order, which explicitly states that such evidence should not be requested at the hospital level.

- 9) The adolescent sexual and reproductive health and the maternal and child health policy are silent about the rights and needs of women/girls with disabilities regarding Sexual and Reproductive Health.
- 10) Persons with deaf and blind impairment are still facing the issue of communication with health service providers at health centers due to limited knowledge of sign language.
- 11) Limiting the provision of abortion care services to doctors in hospitals and private polyclinics has resulted in unequal access among Rwandan women, with the most vulnerable often excluded from services.
- 12) There is a delay in accessing abortion services due to objections of some health care providers who are not willing to provide services including medical doctors, midwives and nurses.
- 13) There is a challenge of stigma around abortion affecting both clients and providers.
- 14) Safe abortion procedures are legally restricted to be performed only by medical doctors. However, many health centers (Centre de Santé) lack enough qualified medical doctors to provide these services, marking a significant barrier to safe and timely access.
- 15) The requirement for parental consent and accompaniment when children under 18 years of age seek sexual and reproductive health services is a barrier and often unrealistic
- 16) Some of the challenges with the use of modern contraceptives include:

- a. Prohibitive religious and cultural beliefs that stigmatize the use of contraceptives.
- b. Accessibility challenges in certain areas, particularly in health facilities managed by some faith-based organizations.
- c. Insufficient equipment in health facilities including family planning Kits for IUDs.
- d. Inadequate funding of family planning commodities resulting in unavailability of these commodities.
- e. Shortage of human resources that can provide all sexual and productive health services.
- f. Misconceptions about modern family planning methods.

Therefore, the Coalition recommends the following:

- 1) Increase the budget allocation to the health sector to cover areas which need urgent attention, such as increasing the number of professional doctors, supply of essential drugs in health centers, increased subsidization of Mutuelle de santé to provide more services for persons with disabilities, as well as overall modernization of the health sector.
- 2) Initiate a thorough assessment of the community-based health insurance scheme with the view of ensuring that all challenges faced by subscribers to the community-based health insurance scheme are addressed.
- 3) The state should increase the number of nurses and doctors to meet the WHO recommended ratio to patients.

- 4) Government to consider CBI access to all health facilities, including private health centers and pharmacies and ensure full supply of essential drugs, and to be covered by CBHI
- 5) The State should increase the number of health centers and health posts, especially in rural areas and improve service delivery in health services.
- 6) The State should take measures to ensure universal, affordable, non-discriminatory access to quality health care services for all persons with disabilities, including refugees with disabilities.
- 7) Raise awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities among medical professionals through training and the promulgation of ethical standards, including on the right to free and informed consent.
- 8) Adopt and implement a strategy to ensure the availability and accessibility of public health education, health care services and facilities for all persons with disabilities throughout the country, including emergency services, sexual and reproductive health services, and HIV/ AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support programs.
- 9) Build the capacity of doctors on the legal framework for abortion, to address the objection of some health care providers who are not willing to provide abortion services.
- 10) The Government of Rwanda should consider allowing children aged 15 years and above to access sexual and reproductive health services without parental consent or accompaniment to reduce barriers and better address the issue teen pregnancies.

2.3. Right to education

Rwanda received and accepted 14 recommendations and put them in the roadmap for implementation. The Coalition is satisfied with the following efforts:

- 1) The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda guarantees all Rwandans the right to education. Primary education is compulsory and free in public schools.
- 2) Strategies have been put in place to expand infrastructure, budget, and human resources for education to reach the commitment to free, universal, quality, and inclusive education. The following results have been achieved:
 - a. The Rwanda Basic Education board has trained teachers/facilitators to teach students with disabilities. The trained teachers were equipped with skills to teach the existing curriculum for learners with special needs, and as a result, children with disabilities have benefited from special needs and inclusive education programs. This includes, autism spectrum disorders, deaf-blindness, deafness, emotional and behavioral disorders, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, physical disability, other health impairment, speech or language impairment and visual impairment including blindness.
 - b. Children living with disabilities, especially those with special needs, are facilitated to easily access education through breaking learning tasks down into smaller parts, presenting information in a variety of ways, eliminating distractions proactively, building relationships and resilience, and focusing on strengths.

- c. From 2021 to date, a total of 24,701 teachers were trained to support children with disabilities, particularly in special needs and inclusive education programs.⁹⁷
- d. Despite school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, great strides have been made in terms of school construction and expansion of classrooms. Jointly with support from its partners, in particular the World Bank, the Ministry of Education has constructed from 2021 to 2025 , a total of 23,976 new classrooms have been constructed and increased significantly. In the academic 2023/2024, 82,685 classrooms were in use, of which 11,734 were for nursery, 50,406 and 20,545 for primary and secondary respectively. All classrooms constructed from 2021 are inclusive for all students including students with disabilities. ⁹⁸
- e. In the Fiscal Year 2023/24, the Government of Rwanda has demonstrated a significant commitment to the education sector by increasing budget allocations for the education sector from FRW 675.0 billion in the 2022/23 revised budget to FRW 786.9 billion in 2023/24, making a notable increase of 16.5 per cent. ⁹⁹ For the Fiscal year 2024/25, the government further increased the allocated amount to 793 billion.¹⁰⁰
- f. The provision of sanitary pads for 9 and 12-year basic education (YBE) was covered through earmarked transfers to districts, with a total budget of 285,786,263 RWF allocated for this purpose.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Data from MINEDUC.

⁹⁸ Data from MINEDUC.

⁹⁹ www.unicef.org/rwanda/media/6471/file/UNICEF_2023-24%20Education%20Budget%20Brief_layout_corrections_25-3-24.pdf.pdf

¹⁰⁰ www.unicef.org/rwanda/media/6466/file/UNICEF_Rwanda_Budget_Briefs_2024_2025_Education.pdf.pdf

- 3) The school feeding program has been scaled up from nursery to secondary levels, with the government contributing 85% of the total cost and parents covering the remaining 15%.¹⁰² In 2024, Rwanda's school feeding program saw positive strides, with more schools offering meals (87.4%) and a notable increase in student coverage, demonstrating the government's commitment to combat child hunger and boost education. The above efforts demonstrate the government's commitment to strengthening human capital development through the education of Rwandan children and young people. The GoR has also ensured access to safe drinking water in the education sector at both nursery, primary and secondary schools.

Rwanda has also taken a leadership role in the global School Meals Coalition, a group of 78 countries and 86 partners that supports sustainable school meals programs and emphasizes the human capital agenda. Rwanda is committed to universal school meal coverage. The country has scaled it up from pre-primary to secondary schools, equipped schools with kitchens and cooking stoves, and provided a subsidy for each student's meal to complement parents' contributions. With the support from the UN World Food Programme (UN WFP), MINEDUC has developed School Feeding Operational Guidelines to guide schools and other stakeholders involved to effectively implement a high-quality and safe School Feeding Program by leveraging food produced from local farmers and cooperatives while improving the local economy.

The World Food Programme's Home-grown school feeding program has been making a big difference in the lives of school children in Rwanda. Implemented successfully in seven districts, this program provides nutritious meals to children. Parents of the students' contribution to school feeding is only RWF 975 per student per

¹⁰¹ Data from MINEDUC

¹⁰² MINEDUC, Education Statistical Year Book 2020-2021, p.15.

term (three months), that is 11% of the school feeding funding per term, while the Government contributes RWF 8,775 per student per term which is 89% of the total RWF 9,750 school feeding funding per term. In addition to the reduction of parental contributions, the government also implemented tax reductions on rice and maize to reduce the cost of school meals and encourage the addition of more animal protein sources to the menu.¹⁰³

- 4) Equally, in efforts to improve the quality of education, the GoR has emphasized recruiting new qualified English-speaking teachers and also trained the existing ones in English speaking skills. A total of 21,858 teachers have been trained in English proficiency from 2021 to date. This includes 2500 local secondary school teachers, trained in 2024 within the Rwandan Education Board (REB) learning platform, with support from the Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE).
- 5) The One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) program was introduced in schools and currently, 1,700 primary schools with electricity, representing 67% of primary schools, have received laptops.¹⁰⁴ As of 2025, 1,668 primary schools across the country have received XO laptops through the OLPC program. The laptops are mainly used in lower and Upper primary levels (P1-P3, P4-P6) and have been integrated into foundational learning. The One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) program is still in place and remains a key initiative in promoting digital literacy at the primary school level in Rwanda. The program aligns with learner-centered approaches and promotes interactivity in teaching.
- 6) In an attempt to mitigate the impact of the school closures on pupils' education during COVID-19, the Government, through the Rwanda Education Board (REB), acted swiftly and doubled

¹⁰³ <https://www.africanews.com/2023/04/29/rwanda-school-feeding-programme-with-wfp/> "Rwanda: School feeding programme with WFP making impact."

¹⁰⁴ Idem

the capacity of its existing e-learning platform and launched a radio learning program and YouTube channel. Parents, teachers and school leaders have ensured that their students continue classes through online and distance learning during the global health crisis. The Higher Education Council (HEC) of the Ministry of Education in Rwanda has guidelines for Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) regarding the use of e-learning platforms, covering design, development, and implementation of programs in virtual learning environments. They aim to ensure a safe and conducive environment for all e-learners in Rwanda.

- 7) The Government of Rwanda does its best to improve the quality of education, notably through advancing the well-being of schoolteachers and staff. In that respect, the Cabinet meeting of 29 July 2022 discussed strategies to improve the welfare of teachers, including access to finance through Umwarimu SACCO, and promoting the quality of education in public and government-aided schools for general education and TVET. The salaries for Head Teachers, Deputy Head Teachers, and support staff working in public and government-aided schools were revised upwards. These were effected in August 2022.¹⁰⁵ In addition to the improvement of teachers and their families' wellbeing, the increase is likely to bridge the gap of teacher shortage, instill teachers' motivation, and thus produce a positive impact on the quality of education, which is currently recognized as low.¹⁰⁶
- 8) Measures have been taken by the GoR to strengthen girls' access, retention and completion of secondary education. Among those include; Mobilization and education of parents to support and ensure that all girl children enroll, retain and

¹⁰⁵ MINEDUC Communiqué, Kigali, on 01 August 2022.

¹⁰⁶ The Edvocate, The 20 biggest challenges facing education in 2023, April 2023 available at <https://www.theedvocate.org/the-20-biggest-challenges-facing-education-in-2023>

complete secondary education through school general assembly committee operationalization; Introduction of a gender responsive pedagogy; Strengthening Gender mainstreaming in the education sector; Adoption of a girl's education policy; Adoption of the education law N° 010/2021 of 16/02/2021 determining the organisation of education; Construction of special rooms for girls and availing hygienic materials (sanitary pads) for them; Introduction of health clubs to empower girls at school (School health policy); Collaboration with development stakeholder to conduct regular research on girl's education; Provision of awards for female best performers in national exam.

- 9) Human rights are integrated into our level 5 curricula. Human rights are included in the following subjects: Social Studies and religious education (P2 and P5) and History and Citizenship (S1 to S3).
- 10) Key forums, initiatives or platforms that bring together various educational stakeholders to ensure continuous improvement of the quality of education include the following: The Joint Sector Review (JSR) forums that brings together all Sector Working Group (SWG) stakeholders and engages them in policy dialogue to ensure ownership, accountability; there is also transparency of the NST 1 implementation and monitoring process. Recent reforms have been made regarding schools management and have produced impact on the quality of education as follows: School structure Improvement by introduction of new positions; Training of school administrators on school leadership and management improved quality of service delivery at school; Empowering the school Executive committees improved parents' participation in students' learning process.

- 11) According to the latest data available, the total number of graduates from Technical Secondary School was 2,926 in 2020-2021 and 2,353 in 2021-2022. Graduates from Workplace learning interventions from 2021 to 2023 were 5,405 in the category of Rapid Response Training; 6,475 in Dual Training/ Out of school Youth; 13,064 in Industrial Based Training; 1,460 in Recognition of Prior Learning which makes the total of 26,404 graduates.¹⁰⁷
- 12) A total of 21,768 in 2021 and 20,766 in 2022 passed the TVET national exam. Among these, the number of males was in 2021 and 11,180 in 2022 while that of females was 9,952 in 2021 and 9,586 in 2022.¹⁰⁸ The total TVET schools nationwide was 344 in 2020/2021 and 422 in 2021/2022. Among these, public ones were 99 in 2020/2021 and 152 in 2021/2022. In addition, there were 49 government-subsidised TVET schools in 2020/2021 and 88 in 2021/2022.¹⁰⁹ Since June 2021, a total of 22,865 new classrooms have been constructed countrywide.¹¹⁰
- 13) In terms of enabling more opportunities in rural areas in terms of educational facilities and their geographic distribution, in 2021-2023, a total of 42 workshops were established at existing schools and 63 classrooms were distributed into different rural areas. In addition, 7 new schools were established in rural areas.¹¹¹
- 14) Rwanda Building code version 2/2019 mandates all school buildings to comply with the rules and regulations that give accessibility and safety of PWDs to school infrastructure. Notable progress has been made in increasing access, improving

¹⁰⁷ Data from MINEDUC

¹⁰⁸ Idem

¹⁰⁹ Idem

¹¹⁰ Idem

¹¹¹ Idem

quality, and aligning education with labor market demands. The 2024-2029 Education Sector Strategic Plan aims to further strengthen the quality and market relevance of education. Key objectives include increasing pre-primary net enrollment from 39% to 65%, improving learning outcomes at all levels, reducing dropout and repetition rates, and expanding adult literacy programs. A major focus will be on aligning curriculum with labor market needs, particularly in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Higher Education.

- 15) According to the 2024 Rwanda Statistical Yearbook, the gross enrolment rate for the 2023/24 academic year reached 92.1%, with female enrolment at 91.7% and male enrolment at 92.5%. This reflects a significant increase from 79.6% in 2022/23 and 72.4% in 2021/22. At the primary level, the gross enrolment rate stands at 148.2%, disaggregated as 143.7% for boys and 138.7% for girls. In secondary education, the rate is 48.6% overall, with 40.5% for boys and 48.1% for girls.¹¹²

However, the Coalition notes the following concerns:

- 1) Despite the increase in the budget allocated to the education sector, there is a lack of alternative financing options to complement public financing for education
- 2) No specific training programs on human rights education have been developed for teachers, as we are still integrating the subject into the curricula of other levels. There are no trained teachers on human rights.
- 3) The percentage of schools with safe drinking water increased from 48.8% in 2020-2021 to 77.0% in 2023 which is a significant increase but still this is insufficient compared to all the schools

¹¹² 2023/2024 Education Statistical Year Book: www.mineduc.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=123716&to-ken=d67b88abed7ff24796f67eccd727ef58e2ebb6e0

that need to be covered (100%). This suggests that a significant majority of schools do have access to some form of water, but not necessarily a consistently reliable and sufficient supply.

- 4) ICT is increasingly relied on as a tool for teaching, learning, and teacher training, but it is still limited due to limited infrastructure, such as network connectivity, and limited skills among teachers and students.
- 5) Female enrollment in TVET is still limited compared to the number of boys thus resulting in a reduced number of qualified female graduates able to join the workforce with vocational training.
- 6) Despite significant progress in terms of school enrollment, the quality of education remains low, estimated at 62.7%.¹¹³ The drop out rate is 5.2% at primary school level and 4.4% at secondary school level. Repetition rates are 29.7% at the primary school level and 13.8% at secondary level.
- 7) The playgrounds and games infrastructure are very limited in schools and especially those in villages. This impedes on the child's right to play as a key component of their development.
- 8) School feeding in Rwanda is faced with inadequate infrastructure and material including lack of sufficient kitchen facilities to prepare enough food for the students. There is also a low level of community participation in school feeding and the use of firewood for cooking, which harms the surrounding environment.
- 9) Data on children with disabilities is often incomplete or unreliable, making planning and monitoring difficult.

¹¹³ Data from MINEDUC.

- 10) Parents may be hesitant to send children with disabilities to school, fearing social rejection or lack of support and failure to provide required support such as reasonable accommodations and access to assistive technologies. Special education teachers, for intellectual and other disabilities are in short supply, particularly in rural areas. Many schools lack accessible buildings, assistive technologies, and materials in Braille or sign language.
- 11) Parents from vulnerable households are not able to contribute their share to the school feeding programs which affects the quality of the program due to insufficient resources. The overall parents contribution rate for term I, 2024-2025 school year was 64.3% while for term II, 2024-2025 it was evaluated at 69.9%.¹¹⁴
- 12) Some schools are not yet connected to a source of clean water. This is a challenge as water is required to prepare food and ensure proper hygiene.
- 13) There is a continuous increase of food prices in the market which hinders the provision of nutritious food to students.
- 14) REB regularly conducts training of teachers from different levels. However, there is a high rotation of teachers or upgrading from one school/level to another. This impedes REB to check the impact of the training provided and whether there is a positive or negative impact for further way forward.
- 15) One of the main challenges with the one laptop per child program is outdated hardware and lack of spare parts have made many devices non-functional over time for the XO laptops mainly. There is a need to find devices that can be used in primary and also replace the non-functioning devices.

¹¹⁴ Data from MINEDUC

The coalition thus recommends the following:

- 1) School leaders, teachers, and the school administrative staff should ensure optimum utilization and due care of ICT facilities given to the schools (computers, internet modems). Students should also be trained in how to use those facilities and learn how to take care of them and other properties.
- 2) Teachers should be more committed and participate fully in ICT-related training organised by different development partners in the education sector.
- 3) The state should take measures to increase female enrollment in TVET including the adoption of temporary special measures such as affirmative Action.
- 4) School leaders should promote school-based continuous professional development through communities of practice (CoPs), where teachers can support each other to improve teaching and learning.
- 5) The State should strengthen measures to significantly decrease school dropout by seeking to understand and address the drivers thereof.
- 6) Strengthen existing efforts towards achieving free, universal, and quality education that is accessible to all children and to increase the number of classrooms throughout the country.
- 7) Strengthen the existing efforts to pursue the continuous improvement of the quality of all actors in the educational system.
- 8) Increase the number of schools especially in rural areas to enhance children's access to quality education, especially at the pre primary, primary and secondary school levels.

- 9) Strengthening the existing efforts to accelerate the scaling up of access to safe drinking water in schools, particularly at the nursery, primary, and secondary school levels.
- 10) Strengthen existing efforts to integrate human rights education into school curricula and training programmes for teachers.
- 11) Take measures to access alternative financing options to complement public financing for education, notably through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs).

2.4. Right to work

Rwanda received and accepted 3 recommendations about the Right to work. The Coalition commends the following progress attained:

- 1) The Government of Rwanda through NST1 (2017-2024) has pledged to create 1,500,000 decent and productive jobs where 942,324 jobs Created in past 5 years compared to 1,071,425 targeted jobs; So far 88% has been achieved to reach the NST1 5-year target; Among those 942,324 new jobs Created in past 5 years, 797,548 equivalent to 84.6% are of youths (16-30 years old).¹¹⁵
- 2) NST2 (2024 - 2029) is designed to build on these achievements and take the country closer to realizing the Vision 2050 of sustainable economic growth, prosperity, and a high quality of life for all citizens. This strategy aims to deliver long-term success and positive impact on the lives of citizens by prioritizing sustainable development and climate resilience, development of domestic manufacturing industries to reduce the trade deficit, creating sustainable and decent jobs, improving the quality and relevance of education, enhancing nutrition and

¹¹⁵ MINICOM, 2022/2023 Forward Looking Report, <https://www.mincom.gov.rw/index.php?elD=dump-File&t=f&f=63347&token=36703d1704ebe6a6152b22d9fcb3d2999017eb5>

early childhood development to reduce stunting, improving the quality-of-service delivery while strengthening citizen engagement and participation.

- 3) MINEDUC has put in place a Youth skills development Strategy through industrial based training, dual training and recognition of prior learning, internship and improved access to start-up capital and toolkits facilities and management for self-employment of youth. MoE through UNDP has mobilized funds worth 15.000.000\$ for Youth and women led small & medium Enterprises aimed at supporting Youth and Women to build back better their businesses post covid-19 through provision of required support to implement Agriculture, digital trade & Eco-tourism value chain activities. Women & Youth from the following districts are benefiting from this support: Rubavu, Nyabihu, Bugesera, Rwamagana, Rulindo, Musanze, Kamonyi & Kigali-City.¹¹⁶
- 4) PSF has developed and supported the identification of priority sub- sectors with high potential for growth and employment which are Agro-processing, Construction, Light manufacturing, Meat and Dairy, Leather, Textiles and Garments, Horticulture, Tourism & hospitality, Knowledge based services, Value addition and processing of Mining products, Creative Arts, Aviation, Logistics, and Transportation. PSF has also supported and empowered youth and women to create businesses through entrepreneurship and access to finance by initiating partnerships with financial institutions and the Business Development Fund (BDF). PSF also trained 1,500 young entrepreneurs, 500 in each District, on financial literacy, SMEs management, tax compliance, equality and inclusion, the fight against corruption and epidemic diseases, transformational leadership, and governance.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Data from MoE

- 5) Rwanda's working-age population (16 years and above) was estimated at approximately 8.3 million in 2024. Out of this population, around 4.4 million were employed, while 780,000 were unemployed. The remaining 3.1 million individuals were classified as being outside the labor force (such as students, homemakers, retired individuals, or discouraged job seekers). Overall, around 5.2 million people were either employed or actively looking for a job. The labor force participation rate, which represents the percentage of the working-age population engaged in the labor market, was 62.9% in 2024, up from 59.3% in 2023. At the same time, the number of people outside the labor force decreased from 40.7% in 2023 to 37.1% in 2024.¹¹⁸

The Coalition notes the following concerns:

- 1) The minimum wage of RWF 100 is low and the labour laws would need to be amended and updated to reflect current market trends.
- 2) Unemployment remains one of Rwanda's most pressing challenges, despite its strong economic growth.
- 3) The number of young people entering the employment market is rising each year. However, they often lack sufficient vocational training.
- 4) Limited involvement of the Private Sector in generating employment.
- 5) Absence of a clear legal framework governing the informal sector hence issues of informal sector workers working under no contracts, no access to social security benefits, poor working environment, among other challenges.

¹¹⁷ Data from PSF

¹¹⁸ NISR, labour force survey 2024 annual report release Available at:<https://statistics.gov.rw/news-and-events/Rwanda-Labor-Force-Participation-Continues-to-Grow-in-2024#:~:text=Overall%2C%20around%205.2%20million%20people,inclusive%20and%20sustainable%20economic%20growth.>

- 6) Absence of well coordinated and documented data on the exact number of people involved in the informal sector
- 7) There are still high levels of discrimination and harassment of informal workers working in the informal sector.

The Coalition thus recommends the following:

- 1) Rwanda should ratify ILO Convention 189 which talks about protection of informal workers.
- 2) Speed up the establishment of minimum wage to serve as the basis of evaluating the state of implementation.
- 3) Strengthen measures to reduce the unemployment rate, especially among young people.
- 4) Creating a conducive environment for job creation and taking measures to strengthen industry viability.
- 5) Empowering and linking youth to national, regional and global employment market opportunities and supporting skills development for youth and women.
- 6) Increasing employable skills through workplace learning and accelerating growth of potential employment sectors by increasing involvement of the private sector.
- 7) Include gender equality and gender promotion in all employment policies and programs.
- 8) Strengthen measures aimed at fighting poverty and put in place strategies that enable people to access income-generating activities.
- 9) Raising awareness on policies and strategies conducive to productive employment and growth.

2.5. Climate change and land rights

The Government of Rwanda received and accepted 4 recommendations concerning environment protection and climate change, land use and expropriation mechanisms and put them in the roadmap for implementation.

The Coalition commends the following efforts:

- 1) Climate Change is highlighted in the National Strategy for Transformation I (NST1) as a priority cross-cutting area in the strategy. The strategy prioritizes several Agro ecology and climate resilient practices that contribute to the achievement of two major priorities, namely: (i) modernize and increase productivity of Agriculture and livestock as well as (ii) promote Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and Environment to Transition Rwanda. To give effect to this, several policies and laws have been adopted, including the Mine and Geology Policy; Ministerial Order No 004/2021 of 12/ 02/2021 governing the use of substances that deplete the ozone layer or may cause climate change. Environment and Natural Resources Gender Mainstreaming Strategy, 2017/18-2023/24, under implementation. The revised Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) is under implementation. Most actions fall into the broader context of Agro ecology, Climate Resilience, and Food-Energy System. MoE through UNDP has mobilized funds worth 1.500.000\$ for Youth and women-led small & medium Enterprises aimed at supporting Youth and Women to build back better their businesses post-COVID-19 through the provision of required support to implement Agriculture, digital trade & Eco-tourism value chain activities.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Data from MoE

The project was implemented for 18 months from 1 January 2021 to 30 June 2022. 108 beneficiaries were served. The three main outputs for the project were i) women and youth entrepreneurs/SMEs empowered to expand access to finance and digital tools to adapt and respond to COVID-19 economic shocks through active participation in the tourism supply chain, 2) tourism industry recovery supported by a strategy to re-orient towards greener and local/regional market orientation and 3) Rwanda's national recovery agenda guided by multi stakeholder partnerships, dialogues and guidelines for long-term green growth and investments.

The project achieved high success in all 3 outputs mentioned above. The project activities were relevant to the beneficiaries. The COVID-19 pandemic had drained their resources, and the financial rescue proved invaluable. They also found the greening aspects very meaningful in terms of environmental responsibility and value addition. The project was very relevant to Rwanda's development aspirations. It resonates well with the SGDs, NST1 goals on export, food security, environment and job creation, as well as the recovery plan.

- 2) The GoR has put in place the legal and policy frameworks to address cross-sectoral environmental challenges. The following laws have been adopted: Law N° 27/2021 of 10/06/2021 governing land was adopted in June 2021; Law N° 064/2021 of 14/10/2021 Law governing biological diversity has been adopted; Law No 72/2019 of 29/01/2020 establishing Rwanda forestry authority was also adopted; Presidential Order N° 033/01 of 06/05/2022 governing Rwanda environment management authority; Ministerial Order No 004/2021 of 12/02/2021 governing the use of substances that deplete the ozone layer or may cause climate change; Presidential Order N° 123/01 of 28/12/2021 ratifying the Host Country Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Rwanda and

Ministerial Order No 001/2021 of 08/02/2021 establishing the list of projects that must undergo environmental audit, instructions and procedures for conducting environmental audit.

In addition, Ministerial Order No 002/2021 of 08/02/2021, determining procedures for conducting strategic environmental assessments, was adopted, as well as Ministerial Order No 003/2021 of 08/02/2021, determining the list of chemicals and other polluting substances that are not permitted. The Government of Rwanda repealed the old land law, N° 43/2013 of 16/06/2013, making way for Law N° 27/2021 of 10/06/2021. The Latter took effect on the 10th of May 2021. Among others, the new land law offers clarity on how a foreign national can obtain the right to land within the Rwandan territory. Official Gazette n° Special of 01/12/2021 provides for Rwanda Land Reference Prices 2021 . Within the new land reference prices, there has been a general increase of more than 20% on the minimum cost per square meter this year compared with 2018.¹²⁰

- 3) The Government has made efforts to effectively respond to the climate change crisis by developing specific projects including: Capacity building and disaster resilience; Lightning protection project in Rutsiro district; Contingency plan for floods and landslides, Contingency plan for storm, Contingency plan for drought, Basic housing construction instructions against natural and manmade disasters in rural areas.
- 4) The government is currently working on many initiatives to tackle climate change as part of its commitment to the Paris agreement and its NDC target to reduce 38% of its emissions through its Rwanda Green Growth and Climate Resilience

¹²⁰ <https://rwandatoday.africa/rwanda/news/dreams-for-low-cost-housing-shattered-as-cost-of-land-soars-3654760>

Strategy (GGCRS). It is promoting sustainable transportation by removing taxes on electric cars.

- 5) Officials of the government of Rwanda attended the 2020 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) in significant numbers, given the multiplicity of climate issues that interest them. COP27 concluded with a historic decision to establish and operationalize a loss and damage fund. During the meeting, the President of the Republic of Rwanda launched a green investment facility. This was oversubscribed: while the target was \$100 million, over \$104 million was realized within 30 minutes.¹²¹
- 6) Rwanda has prioritized the implementation of Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) which is a climate action plan to cut emissions and adapt to climate impacts. Projects got financing, for instance, NDC facility for Public institutions; Ireme Invest Facility for the private sector with an initial capitalisation of \$104M, Rwanda Sub National Adaptation fund: \$5M; GIZ/ NAMA Project (€297,613); \$ 333,832 for e-moto project facility preparation; TA for circular economy and waste management (€4M): USD 4.27M; Sustainable Urbanisation (€12M): USD 12.83 M; Finkerat (Rwanda, Kenya & Tanzania) (€2.5M): USD 2.43M; Other projects that got financing include EDA among others.¹²²
- 7) In response to the critical need for environmental protection, the GoR has engaged citizens, especially women, children, and PWDs, in safeguarding and environmental conservation measures and programs. The GoR engaged COPORWA, an NGO representing the rights of historically marginalized people, to sensitize this community of people who lived in

¹²¹ Africa Renewal (2020), Climate action: Rwanda is a laboratory of innovative ideas, available at <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/november-2022/climate-action-rwanda-laboratory-innovative-ideas>

¹²² Environment JSR Report, 2021-22

forests and depended on deforestation, to relocate from forests and integrate with other communities, hence conserving and preserving the environment. The government further allocated this community with marshlands for cultivation, and COPORWA provided them with tree seeds and fruits suitable for small land holdings. This approach has greatly contributed to the shift in their livelihood and in the end contributed to environmental protection and preservation.

- 8) There has been increased awareness of environmental preservation and climate change in secondary schools across the country. Students from various secondary schools have formed environmental clubs, and they have been trained in environmental preservation and climate change, and they are tasked to extend awareness to their families and communities.
- 9) The GoR has also introduced efficient stoves called “cana rumwe,” (meaning lit one) where its users use only one piece of wood to prepare meals. This stove has greatly benefited the general community by reducing reliance on firewood, and it has also contributed to climate conservation.
- 10) Several studies have been conducted to examine the involvement and integration of diverse groups, such as women, children, people with disabilities, minority communities, and locals, in the development and execution of environmental programs. These studies aim to learn from successful initiatives and share their achievements with others. Notably, projects like GreenAmayaga and Green Gicumbi serve as excellent examples in this regard. In these projects, community committees have been formed, consisting of women, youth, PWDs, local communities, religious leaders, and local authorities. The primary purpose of these committees is to actively engage and include these diverse stakeholders in the decision-making and implementation processes of the environmental programs. By doing so, these initiatives promote inclusivity, sustainability, and collective action towards environmental preservation.

- 11) To increase its forested area to its target of 30%, the government is pursuing afforestation efforts in rural areas. They have taken initiatives to restore the landscape and biodiversity across the country and are building resilient climate infrastructure. The government is engaging the private sector to invest in climate projects, engaging the community, media, and providing incentives. These mechanisms are designed to raise public awareness and support the shift towards low-emission activities.¹²³

The Coalition notes the following concerns:

- 1) Rwandan citizens lack awareness and understanding of land laws and policies, especially when it comes to land expropriation which frequently result in distrust of government actions.
- 2) The Government did not establish the Disaster Response Fund as provided for under Article 38 of the law n°41/2015 of 29/08/2015 related to disaster management. This is a major implementation gap.
- 3) Agro Ecological Practices (AEPs) are not institutionalized to better tailor their scaling up.
- 4) District land use plans are not yet finalized and thus remains largely unregulated with an impact on land rights and management.
- 5) Floods and landslides affected the parts of Western, Northern and Southern provinces, claiming the lives of 130 people . without clear efforts towards mitigating the impact of climate change, this may recur thus claiming more lives.

¹²³ Data from the Ministry of Environment.

- 6) A vast majority (nearly 98%) use biomass (firewood, charcoal) for cooking, with electricity being almost nonexistent for this purpose. There is a low awareness of eCooking and low availability of electric cooking appliances, particularly EPCs and this a continued reliance on polluting sources.¹²⁴ There is a low rate of cooking gas penetration, including biogas, with required incentives to increase its access.
- 7) Interfamilial tensions over land, especially involving women and youth, contribute to breakdowns in social cohesion and affect their right to land ownership and management.
- 8) There is a lack of a strong capacity-building program for both agroforestry and sustainable land use management concerns.
- 9) Landowners often feel their properties are undervalued by the state-contracted valuation companies or that they are unfairly compensated for land seized, and households subject to expropriation often face significant declines in monthly income. For example, in early 2020 Kigali City built multi-story houses in Kanombe, Kicukiro district and offered apartments in the Gasabo district to compensate households whose property was seized; conflict arose between some people targeted for expropriation and the city of Kigali because people who lost property did not see the housing compensation as equal to the original value of their land and wanted cash compensation instead.
- 10) Some national policies and legal frameworks governing land are misunderstood and inconsistently applied, leading to tensions and grievances. There is limited climate change resilience with a focus on mitigating and addressing vulnerability to climate change through building institutional capacity in Greenhouse gases (GHGs) emissions inventory, implementation of NDCs and carbon markets monitoring.

¹²⁴ MECS (Modern Energy Cooking Services), Rwanda eCooking Market Assessment February 2022, p.4.

- 11) There is limited focus on research for agroecological approaches and food-energy systems.
- 12) There are limited strategies to adopt measures to ensure the protection of wetlands, riverbanks, hilltops and slopes from unsustainable practices to prevent soil erosion and environmental degradation.
- 13) There is limited use, adoption, and promotion of crop rotation, organic fertilizers, terracing, agroforestry, and eco-friendly chemical fertilizers among small-scale farmers.
- 14) There is a lack of policy that provides the best ways of building urban resilience to climate change, especially in poor, vulnerable communities of cities in Rwanda.
- 15) While expropriation is most often carried out in the interest of infrastructure development, on numerous occasions private property has been seized for the purpose of conserving native wetlands, which raised issues related to fair and timely compensation.
- 16) While legal frameworks in Rwanda codify women's land ownership rights, many women are unaware of these guarantees or face continued exclusion from decision-making processes, especially in rural areas where laws are not fully implemented. In particular, women in informal domestic partnerships, which account for 34% of couples in Rwanda, lack some of the guarantees to decision-making around land to which married women have legal rights. Intimate partner violence is also linked to tensions or disputes over land rights: in a recent study, some Rwandan women reported experiencing violence after disagreeing with their partner's decision to sell land and being perceived as "siding with [their partner's] enemy in a land dispute."¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Hughes Ailey K and Amanda Richardson, "Land and Gender-Based Violence: Experiences from Rwanda and Liberia," Focus on Land in Africa, January 2015.

- 17) Young people's access to land is predicted to be a growing driver of conflict in the future. With families forced to divide their already modest land holdings into smaller plots, conflict often arises between siblings or children and parents over the size and quality of land partitions and ownership decisions. As a result, many young Rwandans face a future of limited economic prospects and competition with peers and family over land.

The Coalition thus recommends the following:

- 1) Take specific measures to improve expropriation practices by ensuring fair, just, and timely compensation to affected land owners.
- 2) Adopt measures and make required investment to ensure the protection of wetlands, riverbanks, hilltops and slopes from unsustainable practices to prevent soil erosion and environmental degradation.
- 3) Conduct sensitization campaigns on eCooking opportunities and put in place measures to increase the percentage of Rwandans who use electricity as their primary cooking fuel and electric cooking appliances. Increase the penetration rate of cooking gas, including biogas and LPGs, with required incentives to increase its access.
- 4) Develop a strong and high-quality farmer's capacity building program for both agroforestry and sustainable land use management concerns.
- 5) Ensure effective climate change resilience with a focus on mitigating and addressing vulnerability to Climate change through building institutional capacity in Greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions inventory, implementation of NDCs and carbon markets monitoring.

- 6) Ensure full Compliance enforcement of environmental regulations through systematic inspections, regular monitoring, mainstreaming, training, issuing guidelines and procedures.
- 7) Establish the Disaster Response Fund as provided in article 38 of the law n°41/2015 of 29/08/2015 related to disaster management and include support to the victims of the consequences of climate change and other disasters across Rwanda.
- 8) Increase awareness of Rwandan citizens and their understanding of land laws and policies, which frequently results in resentment or distrust of government actions and increase citizen awareness on environmental protection and climate change mitigation.
- 9) Strengthen financing of a project helping to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions & Continue financing the Rwanda Green Fund for the Environment and Climate Change.
- 10) Promote agroforestry and reforestation from the perspective of an effective and efficient food-energy system.
- 11) Put in place a policy that provides the best ways of building urban resilience to climate change, especially in poor, vulnerable communities of cities in Rwanda.
- 12) Small-scale farmers need to adopt and promote crop rotation, (ii) organic fertilizers, (iii) terracing, (iv) agroforestry, and (v) eco-friendly chemical fertilizers.
- 13) Speed up finalization of District master plans and strengthen awareness of various land and climate management policies among communities and among implementing stakeholders.
- 14) Strengthen climate-smart practices, protecting agricultural land against fragmentation, erosion and degradation. Put in place clear indicators of AEPs.

- 15) Take appropriate measures to ensure all women are aware of their legal guarantees on land ownership and ensure their full participation in decision-making processes, especially in rural areas.¹²⁷ Institutionalize the AEPs to better tailor its scaling up.
- 16) Take appropriate measures to mitigate floods and landslides that affect parts of the country and claim the lives of people.

CLUSTER 3:

CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

3.1. Freedom of association and peaceful assembly, Freedom of expression and opinion

Rwanda received and accepted 16 recommendations on freedom of association and peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and opinion, which the country put in the roadmap for implementation.

The Coalition commends the following efforts:

- 1) From 2021 to date, Rwanda has made notable progress in promoting the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, the press, association, and peaceful assembly. This is evidenced by the increase in registered media houses and accredited journalists under the Rwanda Media Commission (RMC), as well as the government's efforts to digitize public information access.
- 2) The Media Policy is currently under review, and it is expected to inform the revision of media-related laws, resulting in the revision or repeal of any provision that undermines freedoms.
- 3) The Media Development Technical Working Group (MDTWG) was established in December 2023 and brings together all key stakeholders. RGB's Media Coordination and Monitoring Department, in collaboration with the Working group have put in place a mechanism to systematically monitor and document media training initiatives. As a result, for the fiscal year 2023/24 RGB has been able to document 34 training sessions for 1,018 participants (418 males and 600 females).

- 4) Law No 058/2024 of 20/06/2024, governing NGOs in Rwanda, was enacted in June 2024. This new legislation consolidates previous frameworks for national and international NGOs, aiming to simplify registration, enhance transparency, and strengthen accountability. Some of the modifications include: the repeal of Article 38 on notification of local authorities before convening general assembly meetings and removal of a temporary double layer of registration for National NGOs involving application for temporary certificates before issuance with legal personality.
- 5) The Rwanda Media Commission receives financial support mainly from RGB, and other partners including Legal Aid Forum. This includes various Media development grants for capacity building of investigative journalists that have been provided to various organisations. These funds are provided for the implementation of specific activities aimed at strengthening media regulation, promoting ethical journalism, and enhancing the overall media landscape in Rwanda. Notably, such support is channeled through the DDGA Project, under the oversight of the Rwanda Governance Board.
- 6) Additionally, in accordance with Article 4, Paragraph 3 of Law No. 02/2013 of 08/02/2013 regulating the media in Rwanda, which provides for a joint working agreement between relevant institutions, the Joint Working Agreement (JWA) stipulates that the Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA) shall provide both financial and technical support to RMC as part of its collaborative mandate.
- 7) All these efforts have been put in place to ensure that freedom of association and peaceful assembly, freedom of expression, and opinion are all observed and fully respected. The RMC has been active in promoting ethical practices in the media by handling complaints, accrediting local and foreign journalists, content monitoring and enforcement of professional

accountability. During the reporting period, the RMC received 568 complaints, of which 557 were fully handled among them, 147 complaints were received from 2021 to date. In addition, 484 local journalists have been accredited out of more than 1000 operating in Rwanda.¹²⁷

- 8) Since 2021 RMC has received or been informed of five cases involving threats to the safety of journalists. These incidents included physical assaults, denial of access to information, unlawful detention and harassment during public interviews without prior authorization. In response, RMC visited a journalist detained in a transit center, engaged with relevant authorities and successfully advocated for their release. In other cases, RMC facilitated dialogue between the affected journalists, their respective media houses and the individuals responsible for the violations to ensure accountability and resolution.¹²⁸
- 9) Journalists are free to report and publish information; citizens freely express themselves. Also, online stream platforms (YouTube channels) have made journalists and other citizens freer to express their opinions.
- 10) Freedom of worship remains upheld as a constitutional right without compromising the existing standards. However, the closure of several “sub-standard churches” and mosques to ensure the safety and well-being of worshippers is concerning. Churches and Mosques that were up to standard remained operational and those that met the standards have been reopened. The assessment for reopening continues for the churches and mosques that meet the standards. As such, In addition, new regulations were established to facilitate the churches and mosques to comply with the law.

¹²⁷ Data from Rwanda Media Commission.

¹²⁸ Idem

- 11) Key initiatives have been put in place that strengthen media viability. PAX PRESS, in collaboration with Fojo Media Institute, has initiated a five-year project (2021 - 2026) on Media Capacity building covering a variety of subjects, including training for journalists on Access to information, professional journalism, investigative journalism, and media laws and reporting on corruption and injustice. In total, 120 journalists were trained in 4 workshops. Journalists were also trained in anti-corruption reporting and helped to form a permanent group to self-train and exchange ideas.¹²⁹ Most importantly, the organization has started in-house coaching on media business model, business management, media viability and sustainability within 36 media houses in Rwanda.

PAX PRESS further initiated activities that aimed at increasing the capacity of journalists and promoting the diversification of media content and innovations. These initiatives are also aimed at equipping journalists with creativity skills in their daily reporting work and fostering a more diverse and inclusive media landscape. PAX PRESS trained 36 media houses, inclusive of: Big media houses and developing media houses and the focus of training was (i) strategic planning, (ii) Marketing and branding using audience research insights, (iii) sales (iii) podcast (iv) editing skills, (v) fact checking, (vi) ethical journalism, (vii) investigative reporting, (viii) digital media skills, (ix) data journalism, and (x) multimedia storytelling.

- 12) Other initiatives to strengthen media visibility include offering grants to the media self-regulatory body (RMC) and media associations (ARJ & ARFEM) to allow their operations and to build their capacity to develop project proposals. An assessment of the financial sustainability of media houses and associates was conducted to identify opportunities and key challenges and possible solutions within the media space for enhanced sustainability.¹³⁰ A peer learning initiative, involving 20 media

owners and managers, was convened in 10 radio stations (1 public broadcaster, 5 commercial, 2 community, 2 faith based), 5 TV stations and 5 print/online media houses. Various awards initiatives, including the annual development journalist awards organized by ARJ in partnership with RGB, RMC and ARFEM. There have also been various capacity-building initiatives for financial management and accountability for grant beneficiaries. There was also support for the creation, registration and initial operations of the media development cooperative aiming at financial sustainability of media practitioners and media houses.¹³⁰

- 13) The RMC has focused on media literacy by supporting a community awareness raising campaign and mobilization for youth, women and people with disabilities, emphasizing inclusion through drama series broadcasted in synergy across community-based radio stations. The awareness campaigns were also extended to Media and Information Literacy on risk and harm of public health misinformation. All these efforts were meant to promote public access to diversified content so as to serve and strengthen people's fundamental right to information that is much needed for public information and meaningful engagement and participation. Specifically, they were intended to empower community radios' media practitioners with practical knowledge that is needed for them to engage the public effectively as to empower the media to debunk misinformation through fact checking skill sets, to leverage the use of community radios in pursuit of empowering the public, to promote media's role in informing and educating the public. Through collaborations with local, regional and international partners, the RMC also facilitated training programs for journalists to enhance their skills and

¹³⁰ The report is available at <https://www.rgb.rw/publications/reports-assessments/media-reports>

¹³¹ Data from Rwanda Governance Board.

understanding of media laws and ethics. These programs have contributed to the professionalization of the media sector in Rwanda.

- 14) Transparency International Rwanda also reported to have trained 120 journalists on investigative reporting and reporting against corruption and injustice and anti-corruption reporting techniques.
- 15) In addition to capacity building for over 145 journalists, especially on access to information, media professionalism and ethics, investigative journalism and on Laws relating to freedom of expression in Rwanda, investigative and environmental reporting, Legal Aid Forum also provided free legal assistance to 32 journalists (8 women and 24 men) accused of media related cases.
- 16) Article 218 of the Penal Code on Humiliation or insult against one of the persons referred to under Article 217 was declared unconstitutional by the Rwanda Supreme Court in RS/INCONST/SPEC 00002/2021/SC).
- 17) Article 54 of the Constitution states that political parties are legal and Article 59 establishes a coalition of political parties National Forum of Political Organisations (NFPO). Adherence to that forum is free. In the forum, decisions are made by consensus, and all the political organisations are equal members of the forum. The forum has a rotating leadership every 6 months.
- 18) Social media platforms such as X (Twitter), YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok have become essential tools for rapid information sharing, public engagement, and income generation, especially for young content creators. These platforms have expanded the media landscape and fostered greater participation in national discourse.

- 19) GLIHD in partnership with LAF have assessed the Human Rights Defenders protection and found out that there are important gaps to be bridged especially with regards to the absence of policy and laws on HRD, limited awareness among the citizens and capacity building of lawyers, HRDs, government officials in charge of security or have security in their daily activities but also young people in higher learning institutions as well as actors in civil societies, NGOs and in private sectors.

However, the Coalition notes the following concerns:

- 1) The new law No 058/2024 of 20/06/2024, governing NGOs in Rwanda, was enacted in June 2024, presents the following concerns from the perspective of the coalition:
 - a) Ambiguity in the definition of NGOs. The definition of NGOs under Article 3 refers to both national and international NGOs, but the term national NGOs is still ambiguous. The revised definition also mentions organizations “that work in the public interest.” The term “public interest” covers a narrow scope of organizations and would seem to exclude associations that serve interests of a defined group of individuals, such as member-based associations, clubs, research institutions, etc. It is unclear if the intent is to regulate only Public Benefit Organizations (PBOs) and then develop a separate law for non-PBOs or mutual benefit organizations.
 - b) Barriers to obtain legal personality. Article 6 retains broad discretionary powers to the Board to deny registration, which violates international law. Article 6 (3) (b) uses vague terms such as “unity of Rwandans,” which are incompatible with the permissible grounds for limiting freedom of association under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, Article 22). Article

6(3)(c) allows the Board to deny applications based on false or misleading information that may or may not be intentional and fails to provide for the right to appeal against the decision to a competent court.

- c) Onerous obligations imposed on NGOs. Article 8 maintains excessive and burdensome obligations on NGOs to submit action plans, bank accounts and keep records for excessive periods, all of which do not fulfill legitimate aims prescribed under the ICCPR. International law provides that reporting should not require extensive details but should be aimed at ensuring financial propriety to ensure transparency and accountability of NGOs.¹³² Submitting an annual plan of action is unnecessary to ensure financial propriety, which according to the ACHPR Guidelines entails “basic description of association projects and activities as necessary to account for the use of funds.
- d) Improper regulation of overhead costs, Article 8 (1) (f) requires organisations “not to exceed 20% of its operating budget in activity programs that are not in the interest of its beneficiaries.” According to sources, this has been slightly revised to clarify that what is prohibited is to exceed 20% of “overhead” in activity programs that are not in the interest of beneficiaries. It is unclear how “overhead” is interpreted, and this is likely to cause confusion for NGOs to comply with the provision and is an impermissible restriction on freedom of association. As a general rule, organizations have the right to seek, receive and use funds freely in compliance with not-for-profit aims.³ Restrictions on NGO budgets interfere with management discretion in determining appropriate levels of administrative costs that help an organization achieve its overall objectives

¹³² Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa, 2017, principle 48 (b)

- e) Excessive and impermissible operational restrictions, Article 11 still contains broad and vague prohibitions on NGOs: from receiving funding from people or organizations involved in illegal activities (f); from supporting or financing terrorist activities (g); and from committing “acts that jeopardize the unity of Rwandans, ... good morals, good conduct” (h). These terms are vague and violate the “prescribed by law” standard contained in the ICCPR. The law must be “sufficiently precise for an individual or NGO to assess whether or not their intended conduct would constitute a breach and what consequences this conduct may entail.”
- f) Excessive discretion in auditing and monitoring, Article 13 authorizes the Board to “request” (as opposed to “order”) organizations to conduct an audit. These powers are still too broad and likely to violate an NGO’s freedom of association. The provision does not specify any grounds for requesting an audit, leaving broad discretion on the Board to decide. Such powers could be used unreasonably to target NGOs engaging in sensitive work to divert their resources. International law provides that an audit should not be conducted to harass an association.¹³³ The ACHPR Guidelines require that oversight powers should be carefully delimited, so as not to infringe on the right to freedom of association
- g) Interference in an NGO’s internal affairs, Article 14 reserves to the Board broad powers to oversee NGOs’ internal affairs that violate the right to freedom of association. Clauses 2-3 raise concern, as they subject INGOs to excessive supervision by the government in the sale of their assets. International law recognizes NGOs as self-governing entities that operate autonomously.¹³⁴ The sale

of assets is an internal governance matter and should not be subjected to invasive oversight by the ministry.

- h) Onerous requirements to obtain legal personality, Article 18 (as retained) imposes excessive requirements for registering NGOs that will impede their formation. These include requirements that NGOs submit electronic applications, notarized minutes, identity cards and criminal records, annual work plans and related budgets and sources of funding, in addition to submitting letters of collaboration from districts. The requirements are unnecessary to achieve any of the legitimate aims permitted under the ICCPR and will further violate the right to privacy for NGOs or their members by exposing personal details of its personnel. The ACHPR Guidelines recommend that states require only basic information for registration, including the name of the association, names of founding members, physical address (if any), contact information, and planned aims and activities of the association
- 2) Rwanda's current media policy (2011) is outdated. While a new one has been under review for some years, it is yet to be adopted hence hindering the advancement of the media sector.
- 3) While Rwanda has taken a progressive step by decriminalizing defamation, the continued criminalization of blackmail appears inconsistent. The cybercrime law has provisions that may criminalise press-related offences, including publication of rumours which contains elements akin to criminal defamation (article 39).

¹³⁴ Idem, principle 36

- 4) There are challenges in the governance and coordination of Rwanda's media sector. While RGB serves as the lead institution, other bodies—including RURA, RMC, OGS, and MINICT—also hold overlapping mandates, with no clear boundaries or formal coordination framework. This overlapping jurisdiction has led to ambiguity in regulatory authority, thus undermining coherent media governance.
- 5) Law No. 02/2013 of 08/02/2013 regulating the Media in Rwanda does not clearly define who is a journalist and lacks inclusiveness, as it does not consider gender sensitivity and other specific groups.
- 6) Law No. 04/2013 of 08/02/2013 relating to access to information is silent with regards to penalties for breach of provisions on Access to Information and lacks a clear complaints mechanism and well guided appeal mechanism where one can seek redress in the event the request for information is denied.
- 7) Rwanda media self-regulation is not fully achieved given the persisting role of certain government institutions in regulating media along with RMC, which serves as a media self-regulation body.
- 8) The current policy environment does not fully accommodate the rise of digital media and content creators. This leaves many online journalists, bloggers and independent creators operating in a legal grey area, subject to selective scrutiny or lacking access to professional support mechanisms.
- 9) There exists unethical journalism especially on digital platforms. Without clear policy guidelines on media ethics, public service obligations, and transparency standards, the media sector suffers from diminished public trust. This affects both the credibility of journalists and their ability to influence public opinion responsibly.

- 10) Digital media literacy is low and the public is thus not informed on how to use social media and digital spaces responsibly.
- 11) Women are not adequately represented within media houses and currently sits at 35.6%. Women in editorial lead are only 39.4% (2024 RGB Media barometer). Percentage of women who are the leads of media houses is only 19.6%.¹³⁵
- 12) There needs to be better coordination of the capacity building initiatives by various stakeholders to avoid duplication and for better value for money.

Therefore, the Coalition recommends the following:

- 1) Revisions to the new NGO law as follows:
 - ▶ Adopt a broad, more-encompassing definition for organizations as provided in the African Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly (ACHPR Guidelines): “an organized, independent, not-for-profit body based on the voluntary grouping of persons with a common interest, activity, or purpose.”
 - ▶ The provision should add the right to appeal to an independent court in line with the Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa (principle ix). Article 6 (d) should be revised to allow rejections only where it is proved that the applicant intentionally submitted false or misleading information and allow the applicant to rectify it before denying the application. Time for processing applications can be reduced to align with regional best practices such as Ethiopia’s CSO Proclamation (30 days) and Uganda’s NGO Act (45 days).
 - ▶ Remove broad requirements for NGOs to disclose accounts, submit annual action plans and maintain records for excessive periods and instead adopt more proportionate, risk-based requirements in line with FATF Recommendation 8.

- ▶ Remove prohibition in Article 8 (1) (f) from the Bill.
 - ▶ Delete Article 11. At the very least, it should be redrafted with greater specificity, including what actions are considered to “jeopardize the unity of Rwanda, good morals or conduct,” or “support terrorist activities.” Article 11(1)(f) is similar to Article 8(1)(h) which is one of the provisions that has been negotiated to be removed. The two should be harmonized.
 - ▶ The Bill should set forth specific provisions limiting the scope of audits and prescribe clear procedures to guide authorities and NGOs when audits are requested.
 - ▶ Delete Article 14 (2) and (3).
 - ▶ Article 19 (as retained) provides for content of NGO statutes including beneficiaries, audit committees, source of assets and giving the board powers to determine additional items are too broad, onerous, and unnecessary to further any of the legitimate aims under international law.
 - ▶ Reduce the requirements for content of NGO Statutes by retaining Article 6 of the current NGO Act.
 - ▶ Revise Article 18 to require basic information as prescribed by the ACHPR guidelines
- 2) Secure high-level political support by appointing a senior representative—ideally from the Presidency, the Ministry of ICT and Innovation, or RGB—to lead the advancement of the media policy toward Cabinet approval. This individual should coordinate final consultations, align the policy with national development priorities, and address concerns raised by key stakeholders.
 - 3) Officially designate a lead ministry to represent the media sector at the Cabinet level. This will streamline coordination,

drive legal reforms, and ensure long-term governance of media and digital content regulation. Clarifying mandates will reduce institutional overlaps improve accountability.

- 4) Prioritize reforms that enhance RMC's credibility and independence to gain the trust and support of journalists.
- 5) Develop a sequenced approach to policy implementation. Begin with broadly accepted initiatives—such as journalism training, online content guidelines, and media literacy programs—before addressing more sensitive issues like civil defamation reform and AI content regulation.
- 6) Journalists' associations, media networks, and NGOs should intensify targeted advocacy efforts on the policy's objectives and safeguards to help build trust among hesitant stakeholders
- 7) Activate the Media Support Fund as envisioned in the policy to bolster media viability. Complement this with fiscal incentives, including tax exemptions on media equipment, preferential access to public advertising, and grants for digital transition.
- 8) Initiate the necessary legal reforms concurrently with the policy development process, to prevent delays in operationalizing the policy and provide a clear legal framework to support its enforcement.
- 9) Form a Media Policy Steering Committee comprising representatives from government, civil society, media professionals, and the private sector to coordinate advocacy for the policy's adoption and oversee its implementation. This body will help prevent institutional silos, ensure alignment across sectors, and enable timely progress reporting. Subcommittees focusing on key areas such as media literacy, financing, and legal reform can further enhance its effectiveness. The existing Technical Working Group may be expanded or adapted to fulfill this rol

- 10) Strengthen campaigns and sensitization on the access to information law and public awareness on media literacy.
- 11) Ensure that national laws and policies are consistent with international human rights standards regarding freedom of association and assembly.
- 12) Enact laws and policies that specifically recognize and protect the work of human rights defenders to ensure that violations against human rights defenders are promptly and impartially investigated, perpetrators prosecuted, and victims have access to effective remedies.
- 13) Ensure that administrative and law enforcement officials are well-versed in international human rights principles and standards related to freedom of association and assembly.
- 14) Investigate and prosecute any incidents of violence or harassment against individuals exercising their rights to freedom of association and assembly.

3.2. Right to life, liberty and security of the person, Prohibition of Torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

Rwanda accepted 12 recommendations relating to the right to life, liberty and security of persons, prohibition of torture and inhuman degrading treatment, and put them in the roadmap for implementation.

- 1) In Rwanda, the Constitution guarantees the right to physical and mental integrity as stipulated clearly under Article 14, where everyone has the right to physical and mental integrity, and in Article 14(2) provides that no person shall be subjected to torture, abuse or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. To give effect to this provision, Article 35 of Law No 022/2022 of 29/09/2022 governing correctional services also provides that an incarcerated person may not be subject to torture or physical abuse, or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. The law further provides that no one shall be subjected to torture or physical abuse, or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Furthermore, the national law that determines offences and penalties in general, in its article 112 also criminalizes and punishes any acts of torture. More so, the same law under its articles 151 and 285 also prohibits and punishes unlawful detention of a person and Unlawful detention respectively.
- 2) Presidential Order n° 022/01 of 31/03/2023, determining modalities for the execution of the penalty of community services, has been adopted and will contribute to the decrease of the density in detention facilities. To align national legislation with international standards and criminalizing torture and ill-treatment, the government of Rwanda ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Presidential order No 60/01 of 12/02/2014 on the Ratification of the optional protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted by the United National General Assembly, in New York on 18 December 2002.

- 3) The Rwandan Judicial System also ensures that perpetrators of such crimes are held accountable for their actions, including through prosecutions and provides remedies to victims, as provided for in the provisions of the Convention against Torture. Furthermore, some safeguards have been ensured in places of detention, including by improving infrastructure, applying stricter rules regarding interrogation techniques (through training sessions of law enforcement and prison officials) and establishing independent monitoring bodies e.g the NCHR.
- 4) Community Policing Committees (CPCs) have been established with a Police-Public Partnership approach and characterized by proactive approaches that combine awareness campaigns against crime and human security initiatives between the security organs and the public. Currently, there are 75,464 CPCs across the country. Rwanda National Police organizes basic training for all staff on skills, including human rights respect. RNP has established periodical training of CPCs that emphasises building the capacity for crime-solving, proactive prevention of crime and disorder, and community mobilisation. Community Policing Committees made up of ordinary citizens chosen by fellow residents, operate at the sector, cell and village level to collect information that helps in crime prevention, sensitise them about the need to overcome crime and address public safety collectively.¹³⁷
- 5) A help desk has been set up at the Rwanda Investigation Bureau to report cases of missing persons, and these cases are thoroughly investigated and prosecuted. RIB ensures that families of the missing persons have all the information relating to the investigations of their person.
- 6) The GoR has maintained a strong stance against extrajudicial executions and torture, and any acts related to those are not in any way tolerated. The government has ensured that all

reported cases of such acts are promptly investigated for potential criminal prosecutions, and appropriate administrative sanctions are applied as needed

- 7) From 2021 - 2024 there have been no cases of extrajudicial executions or enforced disappearances reported to the NHRC. However, during its monitoring of RIB custodies, the Commission found that there is no consistent and unified way for detainees to inform their families that they are detained or that they have been transferred to another center. This issue affected 21 detainees in Rwamagana, 27 in Rusizi and 12 in Nyamasheke.¹³⁸ To address this concern, the Commission requested the Ministry of Interior to put in place an adequate system to help detainees in RIB Custody centers to communicate with their families about their detainment without delay when this has no negative impact on the investigation.
- 8) Prisoners and detainees have representatives within their detention facilities through whom they can report complaints of ill-treatment, harassment, delay in hearing their case files, and other illegal treatment during detention and custody.¹³⁹ Prison and detention representatives have played a key role in supporting fellow inmates by voicing their concerns, facilitating communication with prison authorities and helping to raise awareness of issues such as ill-treatment, harassment and delays in legal procedures. In some cases they have successfully brought attention to systemic abuses and advocated for better conditions. There is continuous monitoring conducted by prison authorities, as well as training for prison leaders, particularly on legal matters. According to RCS, to date, no suicide cases have been registered so far and other forms of ill-treatment in the

¹³⁷ Data from RNP

¹³⁸ National Commission for Human Rights, Annual Activity Report July 2022- June 2023, September 2023 at <https://www.cndp.org.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=1000445&token=55f4bc9def1edd35cc94bbdd-231ef537470f0> p 54.

¹³⁹ Data from RCS

prisons. However, the institution has put in place a reporting channel in case such a case occurs. Cases are expected to be taken to the court of justice for redress.

- 9) The Ministry of Justice and stakeholders also raise awareness through legal aid weeks within detention facilities for prisoners to know their rights and fight any inhumane treatment and acts of violence against them. The Rwandan penitentiary system has also raised awareness in detention facilities and prisons, on the legal rights of prisoners, and they have been educated on the availability and use of alternative measures including community work and plea bargaining.
- 10) The Rwanda Correctional Services has improved communication channels in prisons for prisoners and also protected the emotional well-being of prisoners by allowing them to express their needs and feelings. Currently, detainees receive visits from their families, friends, spouses, and relatives, with 15 minutes dedicated to conversations. Recreation activities have also been introduced in prisons like games, music, television, reading, and writing books, to ensure that detainees enjoy their right to a good life even when serving their sentences in prison. Inmates can get in touch with their lawyers and advocates. The government tried to improve the hygiene level by providing hygienic materials. The functioning of the penitentiary system is rated at 70% (Data from RCS). To improve the functioning of the penitentiary system, the Government of Rwanda conducts the mobilization of the general population by informing them about crimes and their consequences (prevention). It also creates partnerships with other institutions to find employment for the vulnerable people (youth, women with low income), which reduces criminality in the long run since poverty seems to contribute to the delinquency of many people. It also uses alternative measures, including community work and plea bargaining as a strategy that contributes to reducing the density within penitentiary facilities.

- 11) The NCHR organizes training workshops for staff and commissioners focusing on areas like monitoring human rights violations, implementing international human rights treaties and preventing torture. These trainings aim to equip staff with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively carry out their duties, including protecting the rights of suspects, detainees and other vulnerable groups.¹⁴⁰
- 12) According to Detention in Dignity the correctional services system in Rwanda has improved. For example, detainees are no longer called “imfungwa” but “abagororwa” which focuses on rehabilitation and reintegration once their sentences have been served, rather than retribution.¹⁴¹ Reduction of prison density is a national goal. The government has put efforts into constructing new facilities, creating a 6.2% increase in space for inmates. CSOs such as LAF provide legal aid to the most vulnerable offenders. In addition, the plea bargaining procedure enables some cases to end at the prosecution level whereby people who have problems can settle them among themselves and this is a kind of win-win situation for all parties.¹⁴²
- 13) The role of CSOs like Prison Fellowship and Detention In Dignity (DIDE) in raising awareness and peace building in prisons has greatly contributed to the improved well-being of prisoners. This has been proved by the fact that prisoners’ mental health has improved, and the rate of prison suicides has reduced. RCS reported from 2021 to date, there has been no recorded cases of suicide within prisons.

¹⁴⁰ Data from NCHR

¹⁴¹ Data from DIDE, May 2023.

¹⁴² Data from MINIJUST

14) The Medical and Social Affairs Department, under the leadership of RCS, collaborates with the Ministry of Health, Rwanda Biomedical Center, and partner NGOs to address medical issues within correctional facilities. The measures implemented to address and control transmissible diseases within prisons are:

- ▶ For Tuberculosis (TB) in Fiscal Year 2024 - 2025, RBC Team has conducted awareness and screening of TB by using mobile x-ray machines in 5 correctional facilities namely, Rusizi, Huye, Bugesera, Nyarugenge and Nyagatare Juvenile CF's. The use of mobile x-ray machines has a crucial role in reducing new infections of TB as an early detection measure.
- ▶ For HIV/AIDs and Hepatitis, all new inmates for each correctional facility have been tested and educated on prevention of and managing transmission and all positive cases receive treatment free of charge.
- ▶ For other communicable diseases the medical department has established the following measures:
 - Vaccination programs and campaigns are conducted within correctional facilities to protect inmates from infectious diseases.
 - Efforts have been made in RCS units to improve sanitation and hygiene conditions. This includes access to clean water, sanitation facilities and proper waste management.
 - The medical departments and RBC conducted fumigation programs in RCS Units for prevention and reduction of the spread of infectious diseases by eliminating or reducing disease- causing pathogens, vectors and pests in the prison environment.

- Inmates receive health education on hygiene practices, disease transmission and prevention strategies. This is critical in informing inmates about how to protect themselves and others.
- The Rwanda Correctional Service has constructed a block of Nyarugenge CF to support inmates infected with contagious diseases such as measles and tuberculosis. In order to prevent the transmission to others RCS. This is a key component of infection prevention and control in correctional facilities.

15) On July 20th 2022, RCS and Interpeace launched a comprehensive curriculum which is a 6-month certificate programme divided into eight key modules, and each module focuses on different themes. Those modules include interpersonal skills and conflict management; physical and mental wellness; career development and entrepreneurship; drug and substance abuse education; human rights and legal awareness; family dynamics, civic education and genocide ideology, and safe return and connection with family and society. It will be implemented in all 13 prisons across the country by RCS staff members in collaboration with RCS stakeholders.¹⁴³ Through the RCS curriculum for prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration, prisoners who completed their sentences were reintegrated into society. Those who completed sentences, do not reoffend due to the rehabilitation curriculum.¹⁴⁴

16) To address prison overcrowding, the Rwandan government has implemented several measures. In January 2024, authorities inaugurated the first designated reintegration center in Kigali, accommodating 2,800 soon-to-be-released inmates and

¹⁴³ Data from RCS.

¹⁴⁴ Idem

offering family visits and vocational training, with plans for additional centers underway. There is an extension of the use of parole and presidential pardons supported by the RCS. Legislative reforms introduced alternative sentencing, such as community service orders and probation, to divert low-risk offenders from custodial terms. Since April 2023, a total of 1,132 convicts have been assigned to community service. Plea bargaining, introduced in 2022, has also been utilized to reduce congestion.

- 17) The combination of reintegration centers, expanded parole, and alternative sentencing has begun to temper inmate growth and improve living conditions, but full relief will depend on scaling up non-custodial sanctions and completing capacity-building projects in the months ahead. There is construction of Rwamagana Hallway Social Reintegration Center as a special facility to prepare inmates nearing release, for life after prison. There is also the expansion of 4 correctional facilities which increased sleeping spaces - Rwamagana CF, Musanze CF, Muhanga CF and Gicumbi CF. In December 2023, the correctional population was 89,550 but with the various measures above, overcrowding dropped from 144% to 107.8% in 2025.
- 18) To address the issue of overcrowding in detention facilities, 191 detention facilities have been upgraded/rehabilitated, in addition to measures implemented by other stakeholders in detention facilities management like RIB, to track detention capacity and length, and balance it with possible release eligibility.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Data from RNP

19) To prevent individuals from being detained in transit centers for prolonged periods, RNP Commanders at Region and District levels work with local government authorities responsible for transit centers through:

- ▶ Consistent screening in transit centers to avoid prolonged detention.
- ▶ Continuous monitoring of the effectiveness of the transit center's administration and staff.
- ▶ Monitoring for strict adherence of the time limit for selection and transfer to other rehabilitation centers or reintegration to families, and hold accountable any noncompliance.

20) Since the government adopted the ADR and Criminal Justice Policies in September 2022, Rwanda's courts have dramatically shifted lower-level disputes out of formal dockets and into faster, cost-effective ADR tracks. In the 2023/2024 judicial year alone, 2,199 cases were resolved through mediation and 10,785 criminal matters were finalized via plea bargaining, bringing the total ADR-based resolutions to over 12,000 and generating savings of roughly Rwf 7.5 billion. Plea bargaining uptake has been especially rapid: from October to December 2023, more than 4,000 cases were concluded through plea agreements, with an additional 1,500 resolved in the earlier months, pushing plea bargain closures past the 5,000 mark within just over a year of the pilot launch.¹⁴⁶ Together, these figures attest to the twin policies' impact in diverting thousands of cases from lengthy trials, cutting judicial costs, and helping to reduce court backlogs while improving access to timely, victim-centered justice.

¹⁴⁶ Data from MINIJUST

- 21) A plan of communication was established for awareness measures. The new features of IECMS were advertised on MINIJUST's website, radio and social media platforms through publications that included a flyer highlighting key points of the upgrade, along with a link to a YouTube video explaining the new features.
- 22) The Ministry of Justice continues to strengthen MAJ in every district, each staffed with three lawyers whose mandate is to provide free legal aid, including to detainees, under the Law on the Bar and the national Legal Aid Policy. Through a formal collaboration protocol, the Rwanda Correctional Service (RCS) refers all newly detained persons to the nearest MAJ. Detainees' files (including whether they have received legal advice or assigned counsel) are then entered into MINIJUST's case-management system, which the RCS and MAJ jointly review on a monthly basis.
- 23) Where MAJ resources are insufficient, the Rwanda Bar Association steps in: its Office of Consultation and Defense maintains a pro bono roster and assigns advocates to indigent detainees. Those assignments are recorded in the Bar's own register, and periodic audits ensure no detainee remains unrepresented. Bailiffs working under the Ministry's Abunzi (mediation) and bailiff services also track service of summons and notifications. Their logs are cross-checked against MAJ and RBA records to confirm that every detainee has had a lawyer appointed and court documents properly served.

However, the Coalition notes the following concerns:

- 1) There is still the issue of overcrowding in prisons despite the various efforts made by the state.
- 2) The existing alternative measures to imprisonment are not fully implemented. The implementation of these is important to reduce prison overcrowding.

- 3) There is no national curriculum, particularly regarding the psychosocial preparation of soon-to-be-released inmates, as well as a strong coordination structure between the many actors involved in the rehabilitation process.
- 4) Prisoners and detention representatives play a key role in supporting fellow inmates by voicing their concerns, facilitating communication with authorities and helping to raise awareness to issues of ill treatment, harassment and delays in legal procedures. However, their effectiveness is often limited by inadequate training, fear of retaliation and insufficient support from external oversight bodies which hinders their ability to fully defend the rights of other detainees.
- 5) Within Rwanda's judicial system, administrative delays and prosecutors' trend of favouring imprisonment over alternatives to imprisonment even though legal provisions allow so. This causes a big number of court backlogs and results in lengthy pretrial detention. Although overcrowding dropped from 144% to 107.8% in 2025 this is still well above the recommended limit.
- 6) Many members of the CPCs show a low level of understanding of the essential role they play in fostering security and governance. This can hinder effective communication and responsiveness to community needs.
- 7) A significant portion of CPC members is older, which may affect their adaptability to modern policing techniques and technologies, leading to struggle with new concepts or methods that require a certain level of engagement with innovative Community Policing approaches.
- 8) Limited funding poses a significant barrier to enhancement of CPCs capacities. Insufficient resources restrict the ability to provide training sessions, workshops, and materials that could improve the effectiveness of CPCs in their roles.

Thus, the Coalition recommends the following:

- 1) Strengthen the principle of the Presumption of innocence and comply with the law provisions.
- 2) Take measures to avoid administrative delays within Rwanda's judicial system and prosecutors' trend of favoring imprisonment over alternative punishments.
- 3) Discourage recourse to pre-trial detention for all offences which can be punished by a fine or community service as an alternative to imprisonment .
- 4) Provide adequate resources (human, financial and infrastructure) to all institutions in charge of implementing alternatives to imprisonment for an effective implementation of alternatives; and organize regular training and public awareness campaigns on alternatives to imprisonment.
- 5) Strengthen criminal justice mechanisms, including law enforcement, prosecution, and judiciary, to effectively investigate, prosecute, and punish perpetrators of torture and other human rights violations.
- 6) Ensure that all detentions are lawful, based on credible evidence, and in accordance with due process.
- 7) Establish independent oversight bodies to monitor detention facilities, investigate allegations of abuse, and ensure adherence to international standards.
- 8) Ensure that detention facilities are safe, hygienic, and provide adequate medical care, nutrition, and access to legal counsel for detainees.
- 9) Fully cooperate with the UN Committee against Torture, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, and other international human rights bodies.

- 10) Raise public awareness about the importance of the right to life, liberty, and security of the person, and the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment.

3.3. Access to justice

Rwanda accepted 12 recommendations on access to justice and put them in the roadmap for implementation.

In efforts to ensure that all its citizens have equal and easy access to Justice, the GoR has put in place various measures and policies in place among which some include adopting laws and policies, implementing projects and programs aimed at easing access to justice for its citizens, among others. The following are some of the government's achievements and progress regarding ensuring access to justice for all its citizens.

- 1) According to the Rwanda Governance Scorecard 11th Edition Overall performance of respect for the rule of law stands at 88.51% against the set target of 82% and access to justice scored 86.02%.¹⁴⁷
- 2) In Rwanda, legal aid is primarily provided by the Ministry of Justice through its Access to Justice Bureaus (MAJ) and CSOs such as the Legal Aid Forum (LAF), a network of legal aid service providers.
- 3) Rwanda Bar Association (RBA) has, among others, the role of providing legal representation. For that purpose, it ensures capacity building and skills development for lawyers. By July 2022, it had 1447 active members in total, among whom 584 were young lawyers and 863 were senior lawyers. In 2025, the Rwanda Bar Association (RBA) has over 1450 active members, including practising advocates and interns.

¹⁴⁷ RGB, Rwanda Governance Scorecard, 2024, p.8.

- 4) The Justice, Reconciliation, Law and Order Sector (JRLOS) secretariat has been established as a platform that gathers representatives for public and civil society institutions working in the sector of Justice, Reconciliation, Law and Order. It ensures planning and coordination of their work aimed at strengthening safety and order, Rwandan culture and values, adherence to Human Rights and capacity building for improved service delivery and accountability thus providing building blocks for peace and unity.
- 5) The innovative use of ICT through IECMS contributes to improving access and delivery of justice to all. The system enables case filing management and records and has been upgraded to link together all justice chain users, RIB, NPPA, Judges, Registrars, lawyers and individual litigants and plaintiffs which enables easy access and coordination of justice information and enforcement of justice.
- 6) To reduce court backlogs, mainly during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown, Rwanda established an E-Court Video Conferencing approach in 7 out of 12 correctional facilities countrywide, namely Huye, Ngoma, Nyamagabe, Nyanza, Nyarugenge, Rwamagana and Rubavu Prisons to enable prison defenders access justice even during lockdown.¹⁴⁸
- 7) Adopted the Presidential Order N° 022/01 of 31/03/2023, determining modalities for the execution of the penalty of community service in 2023.
- 8) Adopted the Criminal Justice Policy and Alternative Dispute Resolution Policy in 2022, which considers alternatives to imprisonment. The total number of prisoners released on parole from 2021 to date is 9,806.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ JRLOS, Backward Looking Sector Review, 2021/2022, October 2022, p.1.

¹⁴⁹ Data from MINIJUST

- 9) The GoR is using qualified lawyers (MAJ) who provide free legal aid services (Legal advice, orientation and accompaniment representation before Courts, free execution of enforcement orders) to indigents who are at the district level. MAJ contributes immensely to reducing the problem of limited access to Lawyers, lack of knowledge about legal procedural and substantive provisions of Laws by indigent and other vulnerable groups, such as GBV victims and minors. During the period under review a total of 4,052 people were assisted.
- 10) Partnership with the Rwanda Bar Association represents minors and indigents before a court of law. Abunzi Committees/ Community mediators are at Cell and sector level, who assist in reducing the problem of geographical distance that has to be covered in seeking justice, the cost of justice that should be affordable for all increase the extent to which citizens can actively participate in the justice delivery .
- 11) The GoR, in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and various partners in the Justice Sector, conducted radio and TV shows to raise awareness among citizens on various human rights topics, including principles of due process. Additionally, MAJ organizes community outreach programs to educate citizens at the local level on selected topics, with a particular focus on due process. These initiatives aim to promote a better understanding of human rights and legal procedures among the public.
- 12) Access to justice is also ensured through the use of ICT platforms, for example LAF's Legal Aid Call Center "1022", and toll-free lines within various justice stakeholder institutions including Transparency International Rwanda. The platform aims to ease access to information about laws, allowing for

simplified explanations and advice on legal issues they may have. ICT facilities are also used for sensitization and campaigns on access to justice.

- 13) In 2022, 3 journalists from Iwacu TV were supported by LAF and were released.¹⁵⁰ Since 2021 a total of 32 journalists have received legal advice and legal representation.

However, the Coalition notesth following concern :

- 1) The National Legal Aid Policy (2014) remains largely unimplemented. Key provisions—such as the enactment of a legal aid law, the establishment of a legal aid fund, and the definition of qualification criteria—have not been realized. As a result, legal aid services face significant challenges, including limited resources and weak coordination due to the absence of clear eligibility guidelines.
- 2) The overall performance of the Judiciary scored 81.89 % in 2022 but dropped to 78.53% in 2024 which constitutes a significant regression in service delivery in the justice sector.¹⁵¹
- 3) The country's criminal justice system is still faced with limited financial resources and a limited number of judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys which results in delays in the provision of justice for many defendants, especially in need for pro bono legal aid provided by the government.
- 4) The distance between the MAJ office and service seekers in some areas is wide, limiting access to legal services especially for PWDs and vulnerable people.
- 5) There is a limited number of lawyers with skills and capacity to use sign languages to fully communicate with PWDs.

¹⁵⁰ Data from LAF.

¹⁵¹ Data from MINIJUST

- 6) MAJ does not provide legal assistance for criminal matters which constitutes limited access to legal aid in criminal matters.
- 7) Some poor and vulnerable people cannot afford fees for professional court bailiffs to execute their court judgments, hence a barrier to fully accessing justice.
- 8) E-conferencing does not take into consideration cases of persons with hearing and speaking impairments.
- 9) The Rwandan criminal procedure law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, however, cases of arbitrary arrest and detention of persons without due process still exist, notably by security forces for example vis-à-vis street vendors.
- 10) NGOs providing legal aid and access to justice services under the Legal Aid Forum umbrella provide legal assistance to a certain number of vulnerable people, including prisoners and indigent defenders but lack enough resources to provide defense counsel to all in need.
- 11) 2021 in particular was affected by COVID-19 which disrupted justice sector operations through movement restrictions and bans on public gatherings. These conditions delayed court proceedings and made access to justice more difficult for many. This crisis also highlighted the urgent need to digitize case management processes and expand remote legal services.
- 12) While execution of judgment is currently done using online platforms, there is limited training for the use of IECMS especially for non-professional bailiffs.
- 13) There is a challenge of a large number of people who need access to justice services compared to a small number of service providers and limited resources of the government and non-governmental organizations compared to the needs.

- 14) There is limited awareness of the use of ADR mechanisms despite the noted benefits.
- 15) Community-Based Paralegals are not legally recognized while they can be very beneficial for legal aid provision.

The Coalition thus recommends the following:

- 1) Enact a standalone Legal Aid Law.
- 2) Increase financial resources for access to justice and increase the number of judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys.
- 3) Put in place mechanisms for limiting administration delays, prosecutors' trend of favoring imprisonment over alternatives to minimize case backlogs and the number and length of pretrial detention.
- 4) Put in place measures that enable professional mediators to provide pro bono services to the most vulnerable members of our community so that they can benefit from mediation services.
- 5) Establish a Legal Aid Fund and inject enough monetary resources to support the work of RBA and NGOs working on legal aid and access to justice notably those under the Legal Aid Forum umbrella so that they can provide defense counsel to all in need within set criteria.
- 6) Set criteria for legal aid qualification and ensure that legal aid services are accessible to all vulnerable persons fulfilling established selection criteria.
- 7) Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of the functioning of the Judiciary and ADR system for improved service delivery and access to justice.

- 8) Strengthening awareness and sensitization of the citizens on Court Annexed Mediation and ADR mechanisms.
- 9) Extend the E-court video conference approach to all detention facilities to enable detainees to benefit from it when required and ensure access for PWDs.
- 10) Legally recognize Community-Based Paralegals as they could be very beneficial for legal aid provision.
- 11) Strengthen and expand the use of ICT in the provision of legal aid services to reach persons in remote areas.

CLUSTER 4:

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

4.1. Human trafficking

Rwanda received and accepted 7 recommendations on human trafficking. The Coalition commends the following efforts of the government of Rwanda and its partners:

- 1) The adoption of the Prime Minister's Order N° 019/03 of 29/08/2021 determining the Organ responsible for providing necessary means for repatriation of the victim of crime of trafficking in persons and the adoption of the Ministerial Order N° 013/MOJ/AG/21 of 29/08/2021 providing for other particular means for supporting the victim of crime of trafficking in persons. A person suspected to be trafficked is provided with basic assistance and protection to prevent further abuse and insecurity. With the provision of the Article 3 of this Ministerial order, a victim of the crime of trafficking in persons in Rwanda or a victim of that crime repatriated from abroad who is unable or does not want to immediately return to his or her origin, who is unable to support himself or herself or who has no place of residence in Rwanda is received and temporarily sheltered at a place designated by the organ in charge of Isange One Stop Center service.
- 2) In 2021, investigators were trained on "protection, assistance and referral on Human Trafficking". All newly hired immigration officers receive training on the identification of trafficking victims. In 2023, the Rwandan government dedicated 306 million Rwandan francs (approximately \$288,680) for services for victims of crime, including trafficking, and continued to operate its network of 44 Isange one-stop centers to assist GBV and trafficking victims.

- 3) According to the DGIE, awareness raising emerges as the utmost primary and effective measure of fighting human trafficking, since many people fall victim due to lack of knowledge on this offence
- 4) The NPPA has received 30 human trafficking cases, 10 of which were filed in the courts and 17 closed at the NPPA level. Of the 30, 27 (90%) have been resolved, with 3 still pending by the end of March 2025.¹⁵²
- 5) The government has resolved to invest in awareness-raising activities, especially in communities with risks of vulnerability like refugee camps, schools, border posts and youth centers. Awareness of human trafficking is ensured through Radio talk shows in collaboration with the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany. Radio one FM has been airing the Rirarashe show. The Government also relies on other digital platforms and social media channels like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to raise awareness .
- 6) In 2022, 5 Police officers of different ranks attended the course in Italy on counter human trafficking, and during the same period, 4 police officers and 2 investigators attended a course related to fighting human trafficking in Egypt. All these capacity-building measures are being adopted to equip law enforcers with advanced skills in handling the crime of human trafficking.¹⁵³
- 7) From 2023 to date, the Rwanda National Police has carried out Courses on combating human trafficking and smuggling of migrants and were attended by 201 RNP members .
- 8) 5 officers from RNP, 3 officials from DGIE and one official from the Ministry of Justice attended a seminar on counter trafficking

¹⁵² Data from NPPA

¹⁵³ Data from MINOFTRA

in persons organised in collaboration with the US Department virtually.

- 9) The RNP established a unit in charge of human trafficking and counterterrorism with police staff with special skills in tracking and prevention of Human trafficking. They are working with volunteers trained in all regions surrounding customs and who help the police to prevent and fight against human trafficking.
- 10) MIFOTRA developed a child labor elimination strategy that involves the following:
 - Child labor committees at the cell, village and district level, that track child labor victims and labor trafficking and labor inspectors as well to monitor child labor and trafficking from household level and report to the labor unit in MIFOTRA through a steering committee.
 - An Integrated Labor Administration system (ILAS) used by all bodies related to child labor.
 - A USSD code, which is a toll-free (*520#) for an alert on child labor.
 - Legal penalties for people caught practicing child labor and trafficking.
 - Inclusion of a rehabilitation process in the strategy where child victims are taken back to school and receive psychological and emotional support if needed.
 - Conducting seasonal inspections and carries out Awareness activities on social media, radio, TV and campaigns on child labor and trafficking by MINOFTRA.
- 11) District-based child protection officers have been deployed on border posts across the country to work closely with RIB and Immigration officers to monitor cases of child trafficking.

The Rwanda National Police (RNP) plays a crucial role in this process. They carry out identification, screening, and verification procedures to determine whether individuals or groups are victims of human trafficking. Once identified, these victims are promptly referred for appropriate assistance. The RNP has also collaborated with other institutions to establish safe houses where victims can find refuge.

- 12) The Rwanda National Police has taken significant steps to combat human trafficking by providing specialized training to 914 police officers on prevention measures, and also established dedicated teams known as “Imboni z’umutekano” in all districts located near the borders. These teams are mandated to monitor and detect human trafficking cases and any potential trafficking activities at border posts.¹⁵⁴
- 13) The government has also invested more in awareness-raising activities, to educate parents and the general community on the trends of human trafficking tactics. Through community participation gatherings (utugoroba tw’ababyeyi), radio & TV talk shows, as well as training of duty bearers so that they can raise red flags and indicators of any acts of human trafficking.

However, the coalition notes the following concerns:

- 1) Effective investigation and prosecution of trafficking in persons is slow with a limited number officially reported against the actual prevalence.
- 2) Officials in charge of investigations and prosecutions have limited knowledge and skills on the new standard operating procedures for the identification and referral of victims to appropriate services.

¹⁵⁴ Data from NPPA

- 3) There is weak coordination of government agencies contributing to Rwanda's counter trafficking efforts.
- 4) Victim witness support programs and training for law enforcement and legal professionals working with victim-witnesses are not expanded across the country.
- 5) The community is less educated about human trafficking as well as the law enforcement in relevant ministries
- 6) Poverty, Ignorance, conflicts, limited cooperation, limited data and porous borders, social exclusion of prostitutes, and gender inequality hamper human trafficking combat as they render individuals vulnerable to human trafficking.
- 7) The challenges towards the prevention and control of human trafficking come from within and from foreign countries. Trafficking often involves cross-border activities, and lack of cooperation with neighboring countries can hinder investigations and prosecutions.
- 8) There is insufficient funding available for effective prevention of and response to human trafficking which can constrain efforts to implement prevention programs, provide victim assistance, and support law enforcement activities.
- 9) Lack of adequate shelters and specialized services for trafficking victims can impact their ability to receive long-term care and support.
- 10) Victims may not readily identify themselves as trafficked, and law enforcement may not have standardized procedures for identifying them.
- 11) Lower levels of awareness among communities about the nature and dangers of trafficking can hinder efforts to prevent and identify cases.

- 12) Traffickers may utilize technology and social media to exploit victims, requiring efforts to address this aspect of trafficking.
- 13) Challenges in prosecuting traffickers, particularly those involved in international criminal organizations, can make it difficult to hold perpetrators accountable.
- 14) The Government of Rwanda does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. This has led the country to be ranked Tier 2 Watch List.¹⁵⁵

The Coalition thus recommends the following:

- 1) Identify and address the root causes of the problem of human trafficking.
- 2) Increase efforts in trafficking investigations and prosecutions and deterrence by sentencing of convicted traffickers.
- 3) Raise awareness in the community about human trafficking on the available law and the resultant obligation.
- 4) Increase training and capacity building of law enforcement officials on the new standard operating procedures for the identification and referral of human trafficking victims to appropriate services.
- 5) Enhance cooperation and coordination among countries as well as enacting comprehensive laws that support the criminal justice system to operate to its full capacity.
- 6) Strengthening the coordination of government agencies contributing to Rwanda's counter trafficking efforts.
- 7) Expand victim-witness support programs and training for law enforcement and legal professionals working with victim-witnesses.

- 8) Develop and implement a data system of trafficking crimes, with data disaggregated by type of trafficking available for NGOs working on human trafficking.
- 9) Speed up the adoption of the Anti-Human Trafficking Policy which has been under review for so long within the Ministry of Justice.
- 10) All stakeholders should assist and advocate in favor of the victims of human trafficking for obtaining financial support, job creation, vocational training and related materials and advocacy for improved rights and inclusion.
- 11) Enhance the access to legal aid and representation for victims and survivors of human trafficking so that they obtain justice and reparation.
- 12) Support human trafficking victims' reintegration in their families and their inclusion in the government socio-economic programmes.
- 13) Put in place a regular and effective system for monitoring and evaluating the support granted to the victims of human trafficking and the community in the fight and prevention of human trafficking.
- 14) Develop formal SOPs for victim identification and referral to care and train stakeholders on their use.
- 15) Proactively identify trafficking victims by screening for trafficking indicators among vulnerable populations, including among GBV victims, persons in commercial sex, LGBTQI+ individuals, children experiencing homelessness, and refugees and foreign nationals residing at government transit centers.
- 16) Continue to increase efforts to investigate and prosecute alleged traffickers, including for both transnational and internal trafficking crimes, and seek adequate penalties for convicted traffickers, which should involve significant prison terms.

- 17) Implement and consistently enforce strong regulations and oversight of the labor sector, including training labor inspectors to identify and report trafficking crimes and holding employers or labor recruiters criminally accountable for crimes committed.

4.2. Genocide prevention

Rwanda received and accepted 3 recommendations on genocide prevention. The Coalition commends the following efforts:

- 1) The GoR launched a program called “Learning from the Past, Building for the Future,” which aims at educating Rwandans on their past history, to prevent future crimes of Genocide denial. The government is thus taking proactive steps to educate its citizens about the past, prevent genocide ideology, and foster unity and reconciliation through various initiatives and in partnership with private and other non-state organizations.
- 2) Through media campaigns, MINUBUMWE collaborated with the local government to provide information through videos of hate speeches of famous leaders inciting and mobilizing people to commit genocide in 1994, as a way to educate the population on the 1994 genocide. The government has also introduced online platforms to fight genocide denial. Ministry of Unity and civic engagement has online platforms for combatting genocide denying.
- 3) From July 2021 to March 2025, 43 Genocide Denial cases were received. Among them 30 cases were filed with courts, 13 closed at NPPA level, with an 100% handling rate. From July 2021 to March 2025, 3828 genocide ideology related cases were received. Of those, 2182 were filed in court and 1607 closed and 39 still pending. There is therefore a 99% completion rate for these cases.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Data from NPPA.

- 4) From October 2021 to March 2023, a total of 14,923 NdiUmunyarwanda campaigns were carried out on national, district, sector, and cell levels for the central and local government, and public, private universities to educate people on unity and reconciliation.
- 5) The government through MINUBUMWE, has published fact-checked and approved research on the 1994 Genocide against Tutsis for citizens to be knowledgeably equipped to fight denial and negation.
- 6) 14,683 Itorero campaigns have been carried out on national, district, sector, and cell level for the central and local government, and public, private universities, and these campaigns covered the year from 2021, 2022, to March 2023. ¹⁵⁷
- 7) CSOs like Aegis Trust have played a significant role in developing the Competence Based Curriculum, which incorporates principles of peace and values education. Never Again Rwanda has also launched dialogues on the fight against genocide and its ideology targeting mostly the youth all over the country and diaspora.

However, the Coalition notes the following concerns:

- 1) There is a rise in genocide denial, especially among the young generation, including offspring of genocide perpetrators and fugitives residing outside Rwanda. These have been characterized by exploiting the freedom of speech and expression to spread the propaganda of Genocide denial and ethnicity.
- 2) There is an insufficient budget for education programs in order to reach genocide deniers, and persons with unhealed trauma that may include schoolteachers who may not be adequately equipped to teach the history of genocide in schools.

¹⁵⁷ Data from MINUBUMWE

The Coalition thus recommends the following:

- 1) Strengthen the fight against genocide ideology, genocide denial and genocide revisionism especially done using online platforms.
- 2) Take essential measures to address the issue of depression, trauma and mental health issues linked to the consequences of the genocide.
- 3) Create safe spaces and platforms for the youth to share their stories and experiences related to genocide and invest more in educating diaspora Rwandans on the Rwandan Genocide and its negative impacts.

CONCLUSION

The Government of Rwanda has made notable progress in implementing the 2021 UPR recommendations. Most have been assessed as “implementation in progress,” with a few marked as “not implemented.” We urge the State of Rwanda to expedite the full implementation of all accepted recommendations.

The Coalition further recommends that the Government strengthen coordination, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms related to the UPR implementation roadmap. In particular, we call for the systematic collection and centralization of gender-disaggregated data—both quantitative and qualitative—to better track progress across specific actions and indicators.

REFERENCES

1. BNR, Administrative Data, 2021.
2. Cabinet decision as of 20th April 2023.
3. Chrétien, J. P., Rwanda: Les Média du Génocide, KARTHALA Editions, 1995.
4. Environment JSR Report, 2021-22
5. GIZ, Highly skilled workforce for Rwanda's ICT sector, 2022.
6. Global Gender Gap Index 2022.
7. Global Gender Gap Report (2019).
8. Hughes, Ailey K, and Amanda Richardson, "Land and Gender-Based Violence: Experiences from Rwanda and Liberia," Focus on Land in Africa, January 2015.
9. JRLOS, Backward Looking Sector Review, 2021/2022, October 2022
10. Judicial Annual Report 2021-2022
11. Kigali Today, October 08 2021
12. LAF, Fast-Tracking Gender Equality in Law in Rwanda, Comprehensive Legal analysis of Gender Compliance in Rwandan Laws, 2020.
13. LAF, Monitoring of Human Rights, Data Collected from National Human Commission, May 2023.
14. MECS, Rwanda e-Cooking Market Assessment February 2022.
15. MIGEPROF, Annual Narrative Report of 2021-2022.

16. MIGEPROF, Annual Report, 2021/2022.
17. MINECOFIN, 2019 Rwanda Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report on the implementation of SDGs.
18. MINEDUC Communiqué, Kigali, on 01 August 2022.
19. MINEDUC, 2020-2021 Statistical Year Book, 2022.
20. MINEDUC, Education Sector Strategic Plan, 2018/19 TO 2023/24.
21. MINEDUC, Education Statistical Year Book 2020-2021.
22. MINEMA, Revised Green Growth and Climate Resilience (September 2022,) Revised Green Growth and Climate Resilience, Kigali.
23. MINIJUST, Alternative Dispute Resolution Policy, September 2022.
24. MINIJUST, Criminal Justice Policy, September 2022.
25. MINIJUST, Legal Aid Policy, 2014.
26. Musanabaganwa Clarisse et Al., Use of Technologies in COVID-19 Containment in Rwanda, p.5.
27. National older persons Policy, 2021, p.15.
28. NCHR Annual Report 2020/2021, p.12.
29. NISR, 5th Population & Housing Censu, Rwanda 2022, 5.
30. NISR, Labour Force Survey, November 2021 (q4), p. 6.
31. NRS, A 5-Year Strategic Plan 2022-2027, April 2022.
32. NUDOR, Alternative Report on the Implementation of CRPD, (2018).

33. Our World in Data, Rwanda: Coronavirus Pandemic Country Profile.
34. Prime Minister Presents to the Parliament Rwanda's Economic Recovery Plan, Kigali, 25 March 2021,
35. RGB, Rwanda Governance Scorecard, 2021.
36. RGB, Rwanda Governance Scorecard, 2022.
37. Rwanda Economic Outlook, <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/east-africa/rwanda/rwanda-economic-outlook>
38. Rwanda Economic Update report, 20th edition of the 21st February 2023.
39. Rwanda's 2022 Progress Report on the Implementation of Women, Peace and Security Agenda.
40. Rwanda's Report 2022 on the Implementation of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa.
41. Rwanda SUPREME COURT - RS/INCONST/SPEC 00002/2021/ SC
42. (Ntezilyayo, P.J., Nyirinkwaya, Cyanzayire, Muhumuza and Kalimunda, J.) December 24, 2021.
43. UNCT Annual Results Report Rwanda, 2022..
44. UNHCR report December 2022.
45. UNICEF, Social Protection Budget Brief Investing in Inclusiveness

2022/2023, p.6.

Online sources

1. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0149718922000180>
2. <http://www.minijust.gov.rw/media/press-releases/?L=%2Fproc%2Fself%2F>, See also, Why Rwanda withdrew from the African Court Declaration, www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/197697.
3. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202208020067.html#>:
4. <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/rwanda/voluntary-national-reviews-2023>
5. <https://lot.dhl.com/in-rwanda-building-a-knowledge-based-economy-starts-with-the-youth/>
6. <https://rwandatoday.africa/rwanda/news/dreams-for-low-cost-housing-shattered-as-cost-of-land-soars-3654760>
7. <https://www.afro.who.int/news/covid-19-rwanda-countrys-response>
8. <https://www.gov.rw/services/legal-aid-services>
9. <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/RWA/rwanda/infant-mortality-rate>
10. https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/415610_RWANDA-2022-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf
11. <https://www.unicef.org/rwanda/child-protection>.
12. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/rwanda/>

13. <https://www.gov.rw/blog-detail/prime-minister-presents-to-the-parliament-rwandas-economic-recovery-plan#:~>
14. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf accessed on 5th December 2019.
15. <https://globaltaxnews.ey.com/news/2022-614> Global Tax News, Rwanda gazettes new Income Tax Law
16. 2022 UN Annual Results Report Rwanda, <https://rwanda.un.org/sites/default/files/2023>
17. <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/november-2022/climate-action-rwanda-laboratory-innovative-ideas>
18. ATP, Rwanda: Moving forward on implementation of the Méndez Principles, https://www.aptr.ch/en/news_on_prevention/rwanda-moving-forward-implementation-mendez-principles
19. Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2022, Transformational Index,
20. Rwanda 2022 human rights report, <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/RWA>
21. <https://www.unhcr.org/rw/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2017/07/Guide-to-employment-of-refugees-in-Rwanda.pdf>
22. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/02/08/covid-19-pandemic-pushes-rwanda-into-recession-severely-impacts-human-capital>
23. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/02/21/>
24. <https://www.africanews.com/2023/04/29/rwanda-school-feeding-programme-with-wfp/> " Rwanda: School feeding programme with WFP making impact"

26. <https://singapore.prod.risa.rw/info/info-details/rwanda-revises-green-growth-strategy#Rwanda> in Singapore, RWANDA REVISES GREEN GROWTH STRATEGY,
27. <https://www.minaloc.gov.rw/news-detail/how-government-supported-families-with-food-relief-during-3rd-lockdown>.



**KIMIHURURA, KG 668,
BP 5225 Kigali – Rwanda
Tel: [+250]-280036090
[+250] – 0788307174
Email: legalaidrwanda@gmail.com
Website: www.legalaidrwanda.org**