

**Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale**

|                                    |                                       |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Bilagsnr.:</b>                  | <b>235</b>                            |
| Land:                              | Rwanda                                |
| Kilde:                             | US Department of State                |
| Titel:                             | Trafficking in Persons Report: Rwanda |
| Udgivet:                           | 1. juli 2021                          |
| Optaget på<br>baggrundsmaterialet: | 6. august 2021                        |

Document #2055269

## USDOS – US Department of State

### 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report: Rwanda

#### RWANDA: Tier 2

The Government of Rwanda does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore Rwanda remained on Tier 2. These efforts included identifying more victims and referring them to care; increasing national awareness and prevention campaigns; and organizing government and NGO long-term care shelters into a government-managed network. The government also increased sex trafficking investigations and prosecutions and convicted a sex trafficker for the first time. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. The government investigated fewer trafficking cases and prosecuted and convicted fewer traffickers compared to the previous year. The government lacked a victim-witness support program and did not maintain shelters for male victims. The government detained thousands of potential victims in district transit centers without conducting adequate screening or referring identified victims to proper care and assistance.

#### PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Systematically and proactively screen and identify trafficking victims, especially among vulnerable populations, including among gender-based violence (GBV) victims, persons in commercial sex, those from the LGBTQI+ community, children experiencing homelessness, and those at government transit centers. • Increase effective trafficking investigations and prosecutions, particularly domestic forced labor and sex trafficking cases, while respecting due process and human rights. • Finalize and implement the national referral mechanism and train officials on its use. • Develop and implement a victim-witness support program and expand training for law enforcement and legal professionals working with victim-witnesses. • Expand victim and shelter services, including for male victims. • Adopt and implement an updated national anti-trafficking action plan. • Implement trafficking identification and protection measures for Rwanda’s refugee population. • Develop and implement a centralized data system of trafficking crimes, with data disaggregated by type of trafficking, and train law enforcement and immigration officials in relevant ministries on its use.

#### PROSECUTION

The government maintained mixed law enforcement efforts to combat trafficking crimes. The 2018 anti-trafficking law criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking. The law prescribed penalties of 10 to 15 years’ imprisonment and a fine of 10 million to 15 million Rwandan francs (\$10,530 to \$15,790), which increased to 20 to 25 years’ imprisonment and a fine of 20 million to 25 million Rwandan francs (\$21,050 to \$26,320) if the offense was transnational in nature. These penalties were sufficiently stringent, and with regard to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. However, the law defined trafficking broadly to include illegal adoption without the purpose of exploitation. The fact that the government did not compile disaggregated data on trafficking crimes made year-to-year comparisons difficult. Although sporadic pandemic-related lockdowns throughout the reporting period and increased efforts to enforce lockdown and curfew directives impeded law enforcement efforts to investigate trafficking crimes, authorities initiated 35 trafficking investigations (12 on sex trafficking and 23 on labor trafficking) involving 46 suspects, compared to 86 investigations in 2019 and 63 in 2018. The government prosecuted three cases—two labor trafficking cases and one sex trafficking case—involving two defendants, compared to prosecuting 11 labor trafficking cases involving nine alleged traffickers during the previous reporting period. Courts convicted one trafficker for both forced labor and sex trafficking crimes, and a second trafficker for forced labor; both received 10 years’ imprisonment and a fine of 10 million Rwandan francs (\$10,530) on the labor trafficking charges and sentenced one defendant to an additional 20 years’ imprisonment and a fine of 20 million Rwandan francs (\$21,050) for sex trafficking. This was the government’s first reported sex trafficking conviction. Comparatively, in 2019, the government convicted two traffickers for forced labor crimes and sentenced them to 20 years’ imprisonment plus a fine of 20 million Rwandan francs (\$21,050). Prosecutions of nine defendants remained pending from previous years. A six-week government closure due to the pandemic hampered law enforcement efforts. The government reported border closures due to the pandemic limited law enforcement’s ability to identify and investigate potential trafficking cases at border points. Observers reported work from home slowed law enforcement and judicial court proceedings. Observers also reported senior government officials directed law

enforcement to enforce pandemic-related curfews, which reduced capacity to investigate potential trafficking crimes. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking offenses.

Scarce resources, deficient operating procedures, and a lack of a centralized data system inhibited law enforcement efforts to investigate trafficking cases, prosecute suspected perpetrators, and convict traffickers. The government focused on transnational trafficking cases and interceptions at border crossings and did not prioritize identifying and investigating possible internal trafficking crimes. Although the government reported sharing information with other governments, it reported difficulty obtaining evidence for domestic and transnational investigations and prosecutions. In February 2020, the government entered into an extradition agreement with Uganda; however, the government did not report using the agreement during the reporting period.

Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB) continued to operate a 15-officer anti-trafficking unit in its criminal investigations division. The Rwanda National Police (RNP) directorate responsible for anti-GBV efforts also oversaw anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts and had three officers in each of the country’s 78 police stations who served as points of contact for trafficking victims. Despite limited resources, the government increased training to law enforcement and legal practitioners; it provided anti-trafficking training as part of its professional development curricula and standard training for immigration officers, police, labor inspectors, judicial officials, social workers, and other relevant officials several times throughout the reporting period. In addition, the government trained 1,452 law enforcement officials and one-stop center personnel as well as 22 service providers from various government institutions, civil society organizations, and NGOs on trafficking and the identification, treatment, and referral of trafficking victims, compared to training 308 individuals during the previous reporting period. Additionally, the government collaborated with an international organization to provide training to 15 immigration officials on the prosecution of trafficking crimes. In June 2020, the government sponsored a training for 15 prosecutors and their assistants on investigating trafficking cases and prosecuting suspects. The government also collaborated with a foreign government to provide training to an unknown number of officials on the victim-centered approach in law enforcement efforts.

## PROTECTION

The government minimally increased protection efforts. The government identified and referred more victims to care, but it neglected to conduct adequate screening of potential victims detained at government transit and detention centers. The government identified 131 trafficking victims in 2020, compared with 96 victims in 2019. Officials referred 37 victims to government and NGO shelters for assistance, compared to 30 during the previous reporting period. In 2019, the government collaborated with an international organization to develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) for victim identification and referral; however, due to limitations imposed by the pandemic, the government did not finalize and implement the SOPs during the reporting period. Law enforcement, immigration officials, and social workers in government one-stop centers had victim identification guidelines, but implementation remained limited and officials reported lacking knowledge and training to screen specifically for trafficking among GBV victims they assisted. In addition, sources reported challenges distinguishing trafficking from other crimes such as forced marriage, abduction, commercial sex, migrant smuggling, and rape; concurrently, sources reported a need for gender-specific victim identification procedures. Immigration authorities emphasized screening of foreign workers for trafficking indicators when such workers arrived at border posts.

The government decreased funding for victim care due to pandemic-related budget shortfalls; it dedicated 206 million Rwandan francs (\$216,840) for victim care in 2020 compared to 233 million Rwandan francs (\$245,260) in 2019. Despite decreased funding, the government continued to operate its network of 44 one-stop centers to assist GBV and trafficking victims. The government’s one-stop centers—located in hospitals and district capitals—provided short-term shelter and psycho-social, medical, and legal services to victims. The government did not report how many trafficking victims it assisted at the one-stop centers; however, NGOs reported assisting 21 victims referred by the one-stop centers. NGOs reported the one-stop centers primarily focused on the needs of female victims; assistance for male victims remained insufficient and service providers lacked knowledge on how to prevent further trauma and revictimization. The government organized 16 government-run and 12 NGO-run shelters into a network for the provision of longer-term care; the government operated and oversaw the network during the reporting periods. The long-term shelters provided up to six months of shelter services for human trafficking and GBV victims. The extent and quality of services varied between locations, particularly regarding the provision of adequate psycho-social counseling, and social workers did not always screen and identify trafficking victims as distinct from GBV victims. The government continued to distribute to all relevant stakeholders a directory of service providers to assist trafficking victims developed in the previous reporting period, in partnership with an international organization. The government and NGOs reported adult victims were free to leave shelters and support programs on their own accord. NGOs reported foreign victims had the same access to services as domestic victims. The government reported providing and funding counseling services, medical care, literacy and numeracy education, and vocational training for the reintegration of identified former child soldiers – both boys and girls – and treating and discharging a total of 82 children in 2020. NGO service providers offered general assistance and support in refugee camps, but a lack of capacity and resources inhibited the development and implementation of effective procedures, screening, and assistance to victims of trafficking in refugee camps. NGOs reported a lack of coordination and collaboration between the government and civil society inhibited their ability to provide assistance for trafficking victims.

The 2018 anti-trafficking law stated that trafficking victims should not be detained, charged, or prosecuted for their involvement in any unlawful activity that was a direct consequence of being exploited. However, due to a lack of formal identification procedures, authorities sometimes penalized victims for forced begging and other crimes their traffickers compelled them to commit. The government continued operating transit centers that advocacy groups and NGOs reported detained vulnerable persons and potential trafficking victims – including those in commercial sex, homeless adults and children, members of the LGBTQI+ community, foreign nationals, and children in street vending and forced begging – and did not adequately screen for trafficking indicators. Observers reported the government held many potential victims of trafficking in these centers, which functioned as de facto detention facilities, for up to six months. Observers further noted that authorities often released detainees back on the streets abruptly and without notice, thereby exposing them to possible revictimization. Former detainees often reported being detained and moving through the detention centers a few times a year. NGOs also reported law enforcement officials may have arrested on immigration charges and deported potential foreign trafficking victims without first screening for trafficking indicators. While some centers provided detainees and identified victims with psychological counseling, education, vocational training, and reintegration services, not all transit centers offered the same services.

The government repatriated an unknown number of Rwandan victims identified abroad. The anti-trafficking law also required the government to provide support to identified trafficking victims abroad by covering the cost of transportation and repatriation to Rwanda. In 2020, the Ministry of Justice and the Directorate General for Immigration and Emigration drafted two ministerial orders to clarify responsibilities for interagency coordination to support the repatriation of victims and coordination of efforts to identify and assist internal victims; however, the government had not released the orders by the end of the reporting period. Media and NGOs reported victims received support packages of 250,000 Rwandan francs (\$263) upon reintegration into their home communities. In 2019, the government collaborated with an international organization to draft SOPs to serve as the basis for these ministerial orders; however, the SOPs had yet to be adopted at the end of the reporting period. The 2018 anti-trafficking law called for the government to provide legal assistance and information to victims in a language they understood; however, the government did not report the number of potential victims to whom it provided such assistance. The National Public Prosecution Authority continued to operate two safe houses for witnesses in criminal cases, which were available to trafficking victims; however, the government did not report the number of trafficking victims who used safe houses during the reporting period. An NGO previously reported that seven of the one-stop centers had video recording equipment to allow victims the ability to testify via video testimony; however, the government did not report using this option during the reporting period. The anti-trafficking law also protected the identity of victims by allowing court proceedings to be conducted by camera and permitting the use of a video link, but the government did not report providing any victims with these protections during the reporting period. The anti-trafficking law continued to permit foreign victims to remain in Rwanda for a minimum of six months or until legal proceedings concluded. The government did not report whether it granted this immigration relief to any victims during the reporting period; however, the government did report efforts not to deport foreign victims who faced retribution in their home countries. The anti-trafficking law continued to allow victims to file civil suits against traffickers and stated that victims were exempt from paying any associated filing fees, but the government did not report any suits filed during the reporting period.

## PREVENTION

The government increased efforts to prevent trafficking. The interagency anti-trafficking technical committee continued to lead coordinated national anti-trafficking efforts and met every two months despite insufficient funding and pandemic-related closures. Due to the government's lockdown and strict curfews during the pandemic, the government had not yet adopted the draft national action plan drafted in partnership with an international organization and quasi-governmental entities in the previous reporting period. During the reporting period, the government drafted two ministerial orders to clarify responsibilities of interagency coordination to combat human trafficking as well as responsibilities on victim protection and referral; due to the pandemic lockdown, work-from-home logistical and resource limitations, and the government's efforts to mitigate pandemic-related economic and social issues, the orders remained unsigned at the end of the reporting period. The government continued its ad hoc monitoring of trafficking trends and anti-trafficking efforts and incorporated the results into regular public activity reports; the government consulted with victims and survivors and included their input when developing the national action plan. Due to the domestic effects of the pandemic, the government and an international organization reported a need for more detailed assessments of internal trafficking and efforts to combat it. The government conducted national and local awareness-raising campaigns at community events, government celebrations, and within refugee camps. In January 2021, the government conducted an awareness raising campaign in Rusizi. The government conducted, in collaboration with an international organization, cross-border community dialogue meetings, roundtable discussions, trainings, live radio talk shows, and awareness messaging and campaigns on national news broadcasts and social media across seven districts, which involved community leaders and members, civil society representatives, teachers, parents, and victims. An international organization reported the government increased radio and social media programs to increase awareness of trafficking threats and facilitated video presentations in refugee camps to educate refugees and asylum-seekers on identification and reporting of trafficking cases and tips. RIB, RNP, and other government agencies and human rights commissions continued to operate national hotlines for reporting crimes, including trafficking, that were staffed by social workers trained to identify and refer trafficking cases. These hotlines accommodated speakers in English, French, Kinyarwanda, and Kiswahili, and advertised in public awareness campaigns on TV, radio, and social media. The government reported identifying nine victims via

the hotline. The government made efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts. The government deployed officers to discourage consumers from frequenting commercial sex locations by arresting women in the commercial sex industry; however, the government did not report screening for sex trafficking victims at these locations.

The government had policies to regulate labor recruitment companies, which required their registration with the Rwandan Development Board, licensing from the Ministry of Labor, submission of monthly reports to the government, writing labor contracts in one of the official languages and in a language that both the employee and employer understand, and including salary, date of payment, and dispute settlement procedures in employment contracts. Nevertheless, observers reported the government did not require labor contracts with foreign companies operating in Rwanda. The government reported labor inspectors and local authorities were trained to identify forced labor; however, NGOs reported the limited number of inspectors and insufficient funds hindered the government’s labor inspections. The government reportedly prosecuted fraudulent recruitment companies in the past; however, there were no reports of these efforts during the reporting period nor were there reports of efforts to rectify other labor issues identified by the researchers. In an effort to reduce vulnerability to trafficking, the government implemented a policy to allow hospital and health centers to register babies immediately after birth. The government and an international organization carried out joint refugee verification exercises where authorities issued refugee identity cards and travel documents throughout the reporting period. In February 2020, the president ordered military forces to ensure all recruits were at least 18 years of age at intake; the government’s age verification program was ongoing at the end of the reporting period. The government sought coordination with other governments on transnational labor issues. In 2019, the government signed a framework agreement with United Arab Emirates to allow further agreements on labor safety and worker recruitment; implementation of the agreement remained pending at the end of the reporting period.

## TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Rwanda, and traffickers exploit victims from Rwanda abroad. Traffickers exploit Rwandan children and young adults, some of whom are secondary school students between the ages of 13 and 18 in commercial sex in hotels, at times with the cooperation of hotel owners. Traffickers subject Rwandan men, women, and children to sex trafficking and forced labor in domestic work, and in the agricultural, mining, industrial, and service sectors in Rwanda. Traffickers exploit Rwandan women and girls in forced labor, specifically in domestic service, bars, and restaurants, and exploit men and boys in forced labor in mines and plantations. Traffickers subject Rwandan adults and children to sex trafficking and forced labor in domestic work, agricultural, industrial, and service sectors abroad, including in China, India, Kenya, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Uganda, Zambia, and parts of East Asia. NGOs reported cultural norms minimized laborers’ rights and consequently made identifying forced labor difficult. Traffickers transited victims through Uganda and Tanzania before reaching final destinations that include African, East Asian, and Middle Eastern countries. In 2016, Tanzanian men forced some Rwandan girls into marriages and these girls may have experienced commercial sexual exploitation through these marriages.

Observers reported an increase in domestic trafficking, possibly due to the impact of the pandemic. International organizations reported increased vulnerability to trafficking among Rwandans due to the pandemic and a dwindling economy. Migrant workers migrated from rural areas to urban areas, specifically Kigali, in search of job opportunities and, consequently, became vulnerable to traffickers. Observers reported pandemic-related border closures reduced the number of victims transiting out of the country. Traffickers target vulnerable populations such as youth experiencing homelessness, orphaned children, children with disabilities, young women and girls, unemployed adults, and internally displaced persons. International organizations reported traffickers entice young girls into domestic servitude and then force them into prostitution. In October 2020, an NGO reported forced street begging as a new form of trafficking exacerbated by the pandemic. Observers report parents renting out their children during the day to beg. Local human rights groups reported in 2017 employers of some Rwandan girls in domestic work terminated their employment after the girls became pregnant and were therefore unable to return to their home villages; subsequently, they were sexually exploited. An international organization reported that 43 percent of children with disabilities did not attend school, increasing their vulnerability to be targeted by traffickers. In 2019, an international organization reported a number of children living in refugee camps may have departed the country to the DRC for unknown reasons and observers suggested the children might have joined armed groups operating in the DRC. In 2020 and 2018, an international organization reported Rwandan children were demobilized from armed groups in the DRC. Traffickers in neighboring countries continue to pose as labor recruitment agents to recruit and transport small numbers of victims through the country. A study found that most victims were Rwandan or Burundian in origin, and traffickers tended to transit victims through porous borders. Victims tend to know traffickers and recruiters; researchers report parents of victims occasionally were complicit in trafficking. Traffickers tend to be male, but females increasingly make up a substantial percentage of traffickers. Sometimes parents send their children to live with relatives to improve their economic situation, but the children become victims of child sex trafficking or domestic servitude. Traffickers deceive guardians and victims with false promises of better opportunities for employment in neighboring countries. Greater access to the internet and social media platforms continues to create new and easier opportunities for traffickers to access and recruit victims. Observers report traffickers employ coercive means to control and keep their victims in their exploitive positions; coercive tactics include isolating and restricting victims’ movements, depriving them of money, restricting their ability to communicate, threat and use of violence, drugs, debt bondage for children of victims, and retaining identity or travel documents.

Sources report traffickers move victims more easily across borders due to a trilateral agreement among the governments of Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda that allows foreign nationals to use national identification in lieu of a passport. In 2019, sources reported a new migration pattern developed by traffickers transiting victims through each of these countries on their way to Ethiopia and Kenya before they embark on their journey to the Middle East. In 2020, Rwanda hosted 146,000 refugees and asylum seekers from the DRC and Burundi. Refugees fleeing conflict and political violence in Burundi and the DRC remain highly vulnerable to trafficking in Rwanda due to an inability to secure legitimate employment and stigma within the country, and some are exploited by traffickers in other countries after transiting Rwanda. Researchers report some parents in refugee camps receive money in exchange for their daughters' work in domestic service or in the commercial sex industry. Researchers report Burundians and Congolese were at risk for trafficking. There were no reports of forcible or coerced recruitment out of the Mahama refugee camp by Rwandan government officials since 2015.

**ecoi.net summary:**

Annual report on trafficking in persons (covering April 2020 to March 2021)

**Country:**

Rwanda

**Source:**

USDOS – US Department of State

**Original link:**

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/rwanda/>

**Document type:**

Periodical Report

**Language:**

English

**Published:**

1 July 2021

**Document ID:**

2055269

Austrian Red Cross  
Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum  
Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien  
**T (Telefon)** +43 1 589 00 583  
**F (Fax)** +43 1 589 00 589  
info@ecoi.net

Contact  
Imprint & Disclaimer  
F.A.Q.  
Data Protection Notice

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

