



UNITED NATIONS
RWANDA



UNCT REPORT – REPUBLIC OF RWANDA
Fourth Cycle Universal Periodic Review
(UPR 4th cycle)

Report - June 2025

I. Legal, Policy, and Institutional Framework

1. Rwanda has established a legal and institutional framework to promote and protect human rights anchored in its Constitution, which dedicates 41 articles to fundamental human rights and freedoms¹. The country is a party to eight of the nine core UN international human rights instruments² as well as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OP-CRC-AC), the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OP-CRC-SC), the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OP-CAT) which establishes a system of regular visits to places of detention by independent international and national bodies and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (OP-CEDAW)³. Rwanda is also party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and several other AU treaties that promote and protect human rights in Africa⁴.
2. Rwanda has not yet ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED) as well as the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR-OP1) which allows individual complaints, the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR (ICCPR-OP2) that aims at the abolition of the death penalty though the country officially abolished the death penalty on 25 July 2007 with the enactment of Organic Law No. 31/2007. Other instruments that Rwanda has not yet ratified include the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (OP-CRPD), which allows individual communications and inquiry procedures, and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OP-ICESCR), allowing individual and group complaints to the Committee. Rwanda has also not yet ratified several International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, such as Convention No. 156 (Workers with Family Responsibilities); Convention No. 183 (Maternity Protection) and Convention No. 189 (Domestic Workers).

Policy Framework

3. Following the 2021 UPR recommendations, Rwanda put in place several policies aimed at strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights. These include Life Cycle Engagement Procedures Policy (2021) that provides guidance to the Ministry of Education on management of risk to support and ensure the protection of government funds and properties as well as ensuring value for money; the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Policy (2022) aimed at easing access to justice; the Criminal Justice Policy aimed at strengthening rehabilitation of offenders to re-enter into society; the National Policy of Persons With Disabilities (2021) which streamlines how PWDs access services and their full inclusion and participation.

¹ https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org/IssueLibrary/RWANDA_Constitution.pdf

² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/core-international-human-rights-instruments-and-their-monitoring-bodies>

³ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=145&Lang=EN

⁴ <https://au.int/treaties/signedby/50>

Other recent policies adopted by the Government include the National Family and Nutrition Policy (2024), which strengthens families, ensures the well-being of all citizens through improved nutrition throughout the life-cycle, protection of children's social cohesion. as well as the National Gender Policy which was revised in 2021 to better align with new national priorities and international commitments including promoting effective participation of boys and men in programs and strategies in gender promotion and gender mainstreaming across sectors. There is a need to establish robust implementation frameworks for the rights owners to fully enjoy the benefits of these policies.

4. In April 2024, Rwanda enacted a new legal framework governing refugees and asylum seekers through Law No. 042/2024 of 19 April 2024. In line with the new law, the Directorate General of Immigration and Emigration (DGIE) is responsible for receiving and registering asylum-seekers, conducting Refugee Status Determination, and issuing status documentation to asylum-seekers and refugees.

National Human Rights Institution

5. The National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) is mandated to promote and protect human rights through monitoring, investigation, and reporting on allegations of violation of human rights. The NCHR also plays the role of a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture to carry out, with or without notice, regular visits to all places where people may be deprived of liberty, as well as to issue recommendations to relevant authorities with the aim of improving conditions of detention and preventing torture and other ill-treatment. The NCHR has a public reporting mandate that could be more effectively fulfilled if it had more than just one office in Kigali. Expanding its presence across the country would enhance representation and make it easier for right-hand workers to access the services provided by the Commission. It is recommended that the Commission consider publishing and disseminating periodic human rights reports on the situation of human rights, including reports relating to the Commissions NPM mandate.
6. Rwanda has made commendable progress in aligning its domestic legal framework with international human rights standards. The Penal Code, Civil Code, and various sectoral laws reflect the country's commitment to legal modernization and compliance with its international obligations. This ongoing legal reform process presents a valuable opportunity to further strengthen human rights protections and ensure consistency across all legal instruments. To build on these achievements, continued review and refinement of existing laws will be essential. Addressing any remaining gaps or inconsistencies between national legislation and the international treaties Rwanda has ratified will enhance the effectiveness and clarity of human rights implementation.
7. Rwanda also benefits from a vibrant and committed civil society. Human rights defenders, NGOs, and other civil society organizations play a vital complementary role to state institutions, monitoring progress, advocating for rights-based policies, and delivering services to vulnerable populations. Their presence strengthens the human rights ecosystem and contributes to inclusive governance. To maximize this potential, there is room to expand the operational space and institutional capacity of civil society actors. Doing so would further enable their meaningful participation in shaping and

implementing human rights policies, ensuring that the voices of all communities are heard and reflected in Rwanda's development journey.

II. Equality and non-discrimination

8. Rwanda's legal and policy framework on equality and non-discrimination is grounded in the 2003 Constitution as revised in 2015⁵. Equality is further upheld in specific areas such as marriage, inheritance, education, and employment. Key laws include the 2016 Law on Matrimonial Regimes, Liberalities and Successions; the 2013 Land Law; the 2018 Labour Law; and criminal laws addressing gender-based violence, marital rape, and forced marriage. In addition, Rwanda is the first country in the world with a female majority in Parliament, with 63.75% in the Chamber of Deputies and 53.8% in the Senate⁶ and 31.25% of the Cabinet.⁷
9. Rwanda has made remarkable strides in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, earning global recognition for its high representation of women in Parliament and its progressive gender policies. Building on this strong foundation, there remains an important opportunity to further deepen progress in line with the 2024 recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Key areas identified for continued attention include increasing women's representation in academia, local public administration, and senior roles within the private sector; addressing the prevalence of domestic violence; and confronting entrenched patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes that can undermine women's full participation in society. Further efforts are also needed to reduce the gender pay gap, overcome horizontal and vertical segregation in the labour market, and alleviate the disproportionately high levels of poverty among women. By addressing these challenges with targeted, data-driven, and inclusive strategies, Rwanda has the opportunity to accelerate its journey toward comprehensive gender equality ensuring that all women and girls can fully contribute to and benefit from national development.
10. Rwanda's health policies are inclusive, with no formal restrictions on access to reproductive health services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and other (LGBTQI+) individuals. This inclusive policy framework lays an important foundation for ensuring that all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, can access essential health services without discrimination. To build on this progress, there is an opportunity to address perceived and experienced societal barriers that may affect equitable access in practice. For instance, a 2022 survey conducted by the local NGO *Health Development Initiative*—covering 499 LGBTQI+ individuals and 1,243 respondents in a public perception study—revealed that around two-thirds of participants had encountered at least one form of discrimination. These experiences were most commonly reported in religious settings (44.9%), cultural events (41.7%), and housing access (30%). By fostering greater public awareness, promoting inclusive service environments, and strengthening community engagement, Rwanda can further reinforce its commitment to leaving no one behind—ensuring that every individual is treated with

⁵ Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda (2015), Article 16: <https://www.parliament.gov.rw>

⁶ <https://www.parliament.gov.rw/women-representation>

⁷ <https://www.statistics.gov.rw/statistical-publications/gender-and-youth/gender/national-gender-statistics-report-2024>

dignity, respect, and equality in both policy and everyday life.

11. On historically marginalised persons, in February 2025 the Committee on Economic and Social Rights recommended that Rwanda should take measures to address the disparities affecting the Batwa⁸ in the enjoyment of their economic, social and cultural rights, including by implementing targeted interventions to tackle the administrative, financial, material and other barriers that they face with regard to access to land, livelihoods, education, healthcare, employment, social protection, food, housing and water and sanitation.⁹
12. Rwanda has made meaningful strides in strengthening its legal framework to prohibit various forms of discrimination. Notably, the recent consolidation of two key family laws the Law Governing Persons and Families and the Law Governing Matrimonial Regimes, Donations, and Successions, into a single, modernized statute (*Law No. 71/2024 of 26/06/2024*) reflects the country's continued commitment to legal reform and the protection of individual rights. Among the progressive provisions, the new law allows individuals aged 18 and above to marry under special circumstances, provided they submit a written application to the District Registrar.
13. While this is widely seen as a positive development that reinforces personal agency and family autonomy, there remains an opportunity to further clarify the definition of "reasonable grounds" to ensure consistent and equitable application. At the same time, Rwanda can build on its achievements by enhancing the accessibility and effectiveness of mechanisms for addressing discrimination. Expanding access to specialized courts, strengthening legal aid services, and promoting alternative dispute resolution mechanisms would offer timely and appropriate remedies for victims, reinforcing trust in the justice system and ensuring that protections against discrimination are not only enshrined in law but fully realized in practice.

⁸ Regarding reference to *Batwa*: There are no programmes specifically targeting the Abatwa community. Instead, existing interventions fall under general social protection programmes, including Classic Public Works, Expanded Public Works, Direct Support, Financial Services, Old Age Grant, and Nutrition-Sensitive Direct Support. Programmes are designed to support all poor and vulnerable Rwandans without discrimination. The Government of Rwanda does not recognize ethnic minorities and considers everyone as just Rwandan (Source: MINALOC)

⁹https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=E%2FC.12%2FRWA%2FCO%2F5&Lang=en

III. Civil and Political Rights

Right to Life and Prohibition of Torture

14. Rwanda is party to both the Convention Against Torture and its Optional Protocol, which requires State Parties to establish a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) responsible for investigating allegations of cases of torture in detention facilities. In Rwanda, the NCHR is designated by law to play the role of NPM. In its 2021 UPR recommendations, the Working Group urged Rwanda to strengthen national capacities to ensure the effective investigation of allegations of extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, and torture.¹⁰
15. To address incidents of torture in correctional facilities, in a 2024 landmark trial, Rwandan authorities charged and convicted nine prison officials, including a prison director, with torture and other abuses at Rubavu prison.¹¹ This trial marked a significant step towards addressing impunity for human rights violations in the country. The case highlighted allegations of severe ill-treatment, including beatings and other forms of torture, within the prison system. The trial emphasized the need for comprehensive investigations into such practices across detention facilities. This case has been seen as a pivotal moment in holding officials accountable and ensuring compliance with Rwanda's human rights obligations under the ICCPR.¹²

Freedom of Expression and Association

16. The 2021 UPR Working Group made several recommendations urging Rwanda to strengthen media pluralism and the safety of journalists and human rights defenders by ensuring that all legislation comply with international democratic standards and to revise all the provisions that may undermine freedom of expression as well as freedom of assembly and association and effectively protect journalists and media operators against harassment and intimidation.¹³ Since it received the 2021 UPR recommendations, Rwanda committed itself to improving the existing media laws and ensure that the environment enables independent journalism without fear of reprisals. In commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights in December 2024, one of the pledges¹⁴ that was adopted by the state party was to reform its current media laws by 2029.
17. In July 2024, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and other UN experts expressed concern on the cases of arrest and detention of youtubers Théoneste Nsengimana and Dieudonné Niyonsenga and highlighted allegations of solitary

¹⁰ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/rw-index> para. 134.27.

¹¹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/east-africa-the-horn-and-great-lakes/rwanda/report-rwanda/>

¹² <https://www.sundaynews.co.zw/rwanda-torture-illtreatment-in-detention/>

¹³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/rw-index> paras. 134.50 and 134.53

¹⁴ https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/udhr/publishingimages/75udhr/Rwanda_EN.pdf

confinement, allegations of torture, solitary confinement, and denial of medical attention. According to the UN Special Rapporteurs, the arrest and trials of these youtubers seem to be directly related to their work as independent bloggers and human rights defenders.¹⁵ On the other hand, however, the National Prosecution accused them facing charges of forming a criminal association and conspiring to commit offenses against the government or the President. In June 2025, Victoire Ingabire leader of the unregistered DALFA-Umurinzi party was arrested by the Rwanda Investigations Bureau (RIB) over allegations of playing a role in mobilizing a group accused of plotting to incite public unrest and disturb national order.¹⁶ Ingabire joins in detention seven members of her unregistered party who were arrested in October 2021 and whose trial is ongoing.

18. In June 2024, Parliament passed Law n° 058/2024 of 20/06/2024 governing non-governmental organisations.¹⁷ The Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity expressed concern about some of the provisions of the law that had potential of interfering with freedom of association¹⁸. In the same way, civil society organizations expressed concerns that these provisions could limit civic space and grant authorities excessive control over NGO operations.¹⁹ The Parliament, after pressure from civil society organisations and cooperation partners, engaged in consultations with civil society organisations on the law, and incorporated some of the civil society concerns, even though the final version of the law adopted did not fully meet the expectations of civil society. In addition, the Rwanda Governance Board has expressed the desire to continue the dialogue with civil society with a view to finding consensus on the parts of the law that civil society still has concerns.

19. In July 2024, the Rwanda Governance Board closed a total of 7,700 places of worship for allegedly operating illegally or failing to comply with the law governing the organisation and functioning of faith-based organisations or to meet essential requirements such as academic qualifications, infrastructure, and safety standards.

Right to a Fair Trial

20. Rwanda continues to demonstrate its commitment to strengthening the rule of law and enhancing access to justice. As part of its ongoing reform agenda, the Government has prioritized the

¹⁵ <https://srdefenders.org/rwanda-criminal-prosecution-and-detention-of-journalists-and-human-rights-defenders-theoneste-nsengimana-and-dieudonne-niyonsenga-joint-communication/>

¹⁶ <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/article/27392/news/crime/victoire-ingabire-arrested-over-alleged-plot-to-incite-public-disorder>

¹⁷ <https://www.minijust.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=102273&token=6755cc1503c163ca10cf88f3123595df8ae5aa69>

¹⁸ <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29179>

¹⁹ <https://gateteviews.rw/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/ICNL-comments-on-Rwanda-NGO-Law-No.-058-of-2024-1.pdf> and https://www.newtimes.co.rw/article/16097/news/rwanda/rwanda-wants-80-of-ngos-budget-to-directly-reach-vulnerable-people/amp?utm_source=chatgpt.com

independence and effectiveness of the judiciary recognizing these as essential pillars of good governance and human rights protection. Through its second-generation National Strategy for Transformation (NST2, 2024–2029), Rwanda has set forth ambitious targets and reforms aimed at improving judicial efficiency, reducing case backlogs, and ensuring timely justice for all, including addressing the needs of children in pre-trial detention and minimizing prolonged detention. While the 2021 UPR session included recommendations such as Recommendation 134.39 encouraging the country to continue safeguarding judicial independence and the right to a fair trial, Rwanda’s strategic policy commitments under NST2 signal a clear and proactive response. By translating these commitments into action, Rwanda has an opportunity to further enhance public trust in the justice system and solidify its position as a regional model for judicial reform and human rights compliance.

Rights of Persons Deprived of Liberty

21. Rwanda is party to international and regional human rights treaties, including the ICCPR, which obligates the government to investigate and address enforced disappearances. Although the country has not ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED), the country has in the past engaged with the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (UN-WGEID) and submitted reports on its efforts to address such cases and has as well accepted UPR recommendations on this issue.²⁰
22. Rwanda has taken commendable steps to improve the conditions of detention in line with international standards, reflecting its broader commitment to upholding the dignity and rights of persons deprived of liberty. Significant reforms have been undertaken within the Rwanda Correctional Service (RCS), including enhanced oversight and accountability measures. Notably, Rwanda has demonstrated a willingness to pursue justice even within its own institutions, as seen in the conviction of a former prison director and other individuals implicated in a 2019 incident at Rubavu Prison. These actions reinforce the principle that no one is above the law.
23. Building on these efforts, there is an opportunity to further strengthen compliance with international human rights standards by addressing specific challenges. These include the need for more consistent application of legal definitions such as torture under national law, and improving detention conditions for minors. Ensuring that children aged 14 to 18 are not held with adult detainees in pre-trial facilities would further protect their rights and reduce the risk of secondary harm while in custody.

Participation in Public Affairs and Electoral Rights

²⁰ <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/47/14>

24. Rwanda's Constitution guarantees the right of every citizen to participate in Government, either directly or through freely chosen representatives, with explicit protection against discrimination. The country has earned global recognition for advancing women's political participation—mandating a 30% quota for women in all elected bodies. This commitment has led to impressive levels of female representation across government institutions, positioning Rwanda as a leader in gender-inclusive governance.
25. To consolidate these gains, Rwanda can continue working toward strengthening political inclusiveness for all voices in society. While recent reports, including those by Amnesty International, highlighted instances of restrictions on opposition parties during the 2024 elections²¹, the country's strong legal and institutional frameworks provide a solid foundation for enhancing electoral transparency, civic space, and democratic participation.
26. Rwanda's ongoing efforts to improve the prison system demonstrates a clear intent to align with international standards, such as the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules)²². Reforms have addressed issues of oversight and accountability, with continued improvements noted in several correctional facilities. Looking ahead, further progress can be made by tackling persistent challenges such as overcrowding, access to healthcare, sanitation, and overall living conditions. These improvements would not only enhance the humane treatment of detainees but also support Rwanda's broader goals of justice reform and social reintegration for persons deprived of liberty. By prioritizing these areas, Rwanda reaffirms its commitment to a justice system that upholds both accountability and compassion.

IV. Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

27. According to the seventh Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (EICV 7)²³, poverty in Rwanda dropped from 39.8% in 2017 to 27.4% in 2024, lifting about 1.5 million people out of poverty, while extreme poverty also fell from 11.3% to 5.4% over the seven-year period. According to the UN Special Rapporteur (SR) on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, who visited Rwanda in May 2025, despite the strides made by Rwanda to reduce poverty, challenges persist, including higher poverty levels in rural areas compared to urban areas, as well as significant income inequality in cities like Kigali. To avoid losing the gains made, Rwanda has been urged to maintain or increase social protection funding because budget cuts could harm the most vulnerable populations and emphasized the importance of targeted support and increased investment in human capital to ensure equitable development.²⁴

²³ <https://statistics.gov.rw/data-sources/surveys/EICV/integrated-household-living-conditions-survey-7-eicv-7>

²⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/poverty/sr/statements/2025-05-30-eom-sr-poverty-rwanda-en.pdf>

28. Rwanda's sustained economic growth—averaging an impressive 7.5% over the past decade—stands as a strong testament to the country's effective economic planning and resilience. Driven by robust performance in agriculture, services, and tourism, this growth has been central to lifting millions out of poverty and positioning Rwanda as one of Africa's fastest-growing economies. The Government's bold ambition to become a middle-income country by 2035 and a high-income country by 2050 is supported by far-reaching reforms, strategic investments, and a commitment to inclusive development. Notably, GDP per capita has shown a steady upward trajectory, rising from US\$769 in 2018 to US\$1,004 in 2023, reflecting progress in improving livelihoods and economic opportunity.²⁵
29. As Rwanda moves forward, maintaining the momentum of this growth will require continued emphasis on inclusive economic policies, human capital development, and enhanced value addition across sectors. Ensuring that the benefits of growth reach all segments of society—particularly youth, women, and rural communities—will be key to sustaining progress and achieving the country's long-term development vision.
30. As the country continues to strengthen its social protection systems, the inclusion of refugees in the Imibereho Social Registry System presents a critical opportunity in identifying households for social assistance and services and support the broader objectives of the graduation approach and self-reliance strategies, while reinforcing Rwanda's commitment to the Global Compact on Refugees.

Economic inclusion initiatives

31. Vulnerable groups are integrated in social-economic programs and their rights are extended to every sector of the country, whether in the political activities a (political parties, access to education and freedoms of religion. As part of the social protection programme, the Government has expanded social protection programmes such as Ubudehe, Vision Umurenge Programme (VUP), One Cow per Family program (Girinka) and community health programmes which are aimed at benefitting the most vulnerable including the elderly and Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) and vulnerable groups. There is a need to deploy tailored approaches for youth, especially those not in education, employment or training. Some youth in rural areas face limited access to entrepreneurship support, vocational training, and financial services, which limits their participation in economic development programs. Although women are among the primary beneficiaries of social protection programs, structural barriers remain. These include unequal access to land and productive assets, unpaid care responsibilities, and gender-blind program design. This limits the ability of women, especially in rural settings, to fully benefit from development programs like Girinka and VUP.

²⁵ <https://www.statistics.gov.rw/publication/2114>

32. Following the 2021 UPR recommendations, Rwanda adopted a four-year Strategic Plan for the inclusion of PWDs (2021-2024)²⁶ which aims to guide the implementation and coordination of interventions that promotes the full inclusion and participation PWDs in all sectors. The policy intends to subsidize the provision of assistive devices and disability related health care services to PWDs and Promotion of inclusive technology to PwDs.
33. The National Union of Disability Organizations in Rwanda (NUDOR), states that some components of the policy remain largely unimplemented. Some areas that need further improvement include the promotion of inclusive technology to PWDs. In addition, PWDs are still faced with challenges in terms of their integration and inclusion in all the sectors of national life. There is a need to establish specific indicators to measure inclusion of PWDs in several Government programs such as Vision Umurenge Programme and One Cow per Family program.
34. There is still a need for increasing the budget for social safety nets and accessibility for vulnerable groups especially in remote rural areas. The UPR Working Group in 2021, while commending Rwanda for the efforts to integrate vulnerable groups and communities into mainstream development programs, recommended that the Government continue efforts to integrate vulnerable people, including refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, into the development process.²⁷

Right to health

35. Rwanda has also achieved substantial gains in educational attainment, health services delivery, and access to basic services. According to the 2022 Population and Housing Census (RPHC5), life expectancy rose from 51 to 69.6 years between 2002 and 2022. Progress in healthcare includes reduced child mortality and improved maternal health, the fertility rate declined from 6.1 to 3.6 in 2022 and Maternal Mortality Ratio from 1,071 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 203 per 100,000 live births in 2020.
36. However, the recent situational analysis during the fifth Health Sector Strategic Planning (HSSP V 2025/2029) reveals that 72% of maternal deaths are preventable, with 83% of maternal deaths occurring in hospitals, with a significant indicating potential quality of care. Postpartum haemorrhage, hypertensive disorders, infections, and abortion complications are among the top five leading causes of maternal deaths in the country. Delays in seeking, reaching, and receiving care, necessitate urgent and targeted interventions.
37. A 2021 rapid (Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care) EmONC Needs Assessment highlighted the limited functionality of existing EmONC facilities, with only 18% meeting the recommended standards as well as a shortage and turnover of health professionals. According to a Ministry of Health report for FY 2021/2022, malnutrition is

²⁶https://www.minaloc.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/Minaloc/National_Policy_on_Disability_and_Inclusion_final.pdf

²⁷ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/rw-index>

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.²⁸

38. As part of its commitment to improving maternal and child health, the Government of Rwanda has introduced a Nutrition-Sensitive Direct Support programme targeting pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers with children under two years of age. Through this initiative, eligible beneficiaries receive RWF 30,000 every three months, helping to ease financial barriers to proper nutrition during this critical period of early development.
39. A study carried out in 2023 by the University of Rwanda and the College of Medicine in Kigali showed that 64.5% of the participants over the age of 65 identified as meeting the criteria for geriatric depression. This rate is higher than developing countries (40.78%) and in developed countries (17.05%). Results also indicate that female participants are more vulnerable to geriatric depression than men.²⁹
40. While success has been registered in attaining the 95-95-95 UNAIDS targets, Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) are more at risk with 1 out of 4 new HIV infection coming from females aged 15 to 24. Overall, females are disproportionately affected amounting to 63.5% of the total number of people living with HIV in the country with an HIV prevalence of almost double compared to the HIV prevalence among men.³⁰ The National Institute of Statistics reported over 19,000 teenage pregnancies in 2023.³¹ This reflects the volume of exposure by girls to the risk of acquiring HIV. While progress has been reported in achieving the 95-95-95 UNAIDS targets of HIV testing, and treatment and care coverage among adults, only 71% of children living with HIV in Rwanda know their status.
41. Refugees living in urban areas have been successfully integrated into the national Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI) scheme, representing a significant step toward inclusive and equitable access to healthcare. Building on this progress, the Government has pledged to extend CBHI coverage to refugees residing in camps, with notable advances and preparations currently underway. UNHCR is advocating to support the payment of premiums for refugees as part of responsibility sharing.
42. Despite the adoption of national strategies on mental health, service provision remains limited, particularly in rural health centers. These efforts are challenged by widespread stigma around mental illness, and a shortage of trained professionals to support early detection and treatment of mental health conditions. Young girls face barriers in obtaining modern contraception, comprehensive sexual education is limited to in-school children, and confidential services, contributing to high rates of teenage pregnancy and vulnerability to HIV.

Right to work

²⁸ MINISANTE, Health Sector FY 2021/2022 Backward-looking Joint Sector Review Report, October 2022, p. 7.

²⁹ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370267262_Prevalence_and_Family_Determinants_of_Geriatric_Depression_Among_Elderly_People_in_Elderly_Support_Groups_in_Rwanda.

³⁰ https://sustainability.unaids.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Rwanda_-_Executive-Summary-May-2024.pdf

³¹ <https://alpha.statistics.gov.rw/statistical-publications/gender-and-youth/gender/national-gender-statistics-report-2019>

43. Although Rwanda has made significant investment in addressing unemployment, a 2023 World Bank report notes that many Rwandan firms find it difficult to hire workers with the right skills³². Low post-graduation employment rates and surveys indicate the low relevance for employers of skills learned in public universities and technical and vocational training institutes. Efforts to increase employment opportunities for women and persons with disabilities need to be strengthened³³. Other labour and employment challenges include a high youth unemployment rate, significant informal sector employment lacking protections, and outdated minimum wage policies.
44. While rural poverty is well-covered in Rwanda's social protection , the urban poor, including informal workers and youth in cities, are often excluded from coverage due to unclear eligibility criteria and lack of formal registration. This is a growing blind spot as urban informal employment expands. Furthermore, the Social Protection Strategic Plan is working to create safe and accessible environments for children with disabilities, train social care providers, and implement a new Disability Grant within the Vision Umurenge Program.³⁴

Right to education

45. Rwanda has achieved notable success in the education sector, with one of the highest net enrolment rates in Sub-Saharan Africa at 95% of children enrolled in primary school and gender parity in basic education³⁵. Although nearly every child enrolls into primary school, only 71% of children complete their primary education, and 13% of students who start primary one successfully complete basic education in 12 years³⁶. Classrooms are often too crowded, with an average of 60 students per classroom compromising the quality of education and leading to high rates of dropouts especially for young girls and gender disparities secondary and tertiary education.³⁷
46. The Rwanda Education Sector Analysis in 2023 found that only 37% of students in primary schools achieve the minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics.³⁸ Repetition rates have been persistently high, especially at the primary level (29.7%), underscoring a need for continuous professional development to enhance teacher competencies, especially in effective pedagogies and digital skills³⁹. Only 70% of children with disabilities are enrolled in primary school, and many schools lack appropriate materials and accessibility⁴⁰. According to recent data, the dropout rate in primary schools reduced from 5.5% in 2021/2022 to 5.2% in 2022-2023⁴¹. Secondary school dropout rates also improved from 7.4% to 4.4% during the same period. Factors

³²<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099110723091032710/P181050081072a080ac2209cfd2df2180d.docx>

³³https://webapps.ilo.org/static/english/emplab/download/nep/rwanda/rwanda_national_employment_policy_2019.pdf

³⁴ MINALOC, SSP 2024-2029

³⁵<https://www.mineduc.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=123716&token=d67b88abed7ff24796f67eccd727ef58e2ebb6e0>

³⁶ 2023/2024 Statistical Yearbook for the School Year Ended in July 2024: Ministry of Education, May 2025.

<https://www.mineduc.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=123716&token=d67b88abed7ff24796f67eccd727ef58e2ebb6e0>

³⁷ <https://www.unicef.org/rwanda/education>

³⁸ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/01/17/rwanda-submission-un-committee-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>

³⁹ <https://www.unicef.org/rwanda/media/5346/file/UNICEF%20Rwanda.pdf>

⁴⁰ <https://www.globalpartnership.org/results/country-journeys/rwanda-making-strides-equity-and-inclusion>

⁴¹<https://www.mineduc.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=123716&token=d67b88abed7ff24796f67eccd727ef58e2ebb6e0>

contributing to these rates include economic hardship, lack of school readiness, and the cost of transitioning to secondary education⁴².

47. Adolescent pregnancy (15-19 years), which also contributes to dropout among girls, dropped from 7.3% in 2015 to 5.2 in 2020.⁴³ Adolescent pregnancy presents a preventable and yet a major challenge to social and economic development, including perpetuating inequality. There is need to increase investment in a robust life-skills programme for schools, teachers and parents in support of children's education.
48. Significant strides have been made to promote rights of children with disabilities, including the publication of an adapted curriculum for learners with cognitive challenges and developmental disabilities including a curriculum for learners with intellectual challenges developed in 2021 and the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2018/2019-2023/2024 which prioritizes increased participation and achievement for children with disabilities. The Special Needs and Inclusive Education Strategic Plan 2018/19-2023/24 further solidifies this human rights-based approach, ensuring equal access to learning opportunities. Rwanda has also made substantial progress in integrating refugees into the national education system. A key milestone in this effort is the recent inclusion of the Kiziba refugee schools into the national system.
49. However, there is limited disability inclusion in TVET and workforce development. Although disability policies exist, TVET and entrepreneurship programs rarely provide adapted curricula, tools, or workplace linkages for youth and adults with disabilities, limiting their access to meaningful livelihoods despite the growing emphasis on skills training.
50. There are gaps related to mental health and psychosocial support in schools and the health system to address mental health support for adolescents and youth, particularly related to stress, anxiety, and trauma. There are few school-based counselling services, and mental health remains stigmatized and underfunded across the health sector.

Rights related to name, identity, and nationality

51. Rwanda has made notable progress in addressing issues related to statelessness, particularly through the implementation of the National Action Plan. A significant milestone was the introduction of new Nationality Legislation in 2021, which provides for the acquisition of Rwandan nationality on the grounds of statelessness. Further progress has been observed in the implementation of Rwanda's pledges made during the High-Level Segment on Statelessness, with six out of the eight pledges having been completed.

⁴² <http://www.rencp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/DROPOUT-STUDY-FULL-REPORT.pdf>

⁴³ <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR370/FR370.pdf>