

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



**MINISTRY OF GENDER
AND FAMILY PROMOTION**

**REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOLEMN
DECLARATION ON GENDER EQUALITY IN RWANDA 2019**

February, 2020

INTRODUCTION

The Government of Rwanda is pleased to present Rwanda's fourth report under the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004). The report covers the year 2019.

The fourth report was prepared in accordance with the African Union Reporting Template Synthesis of Member States on the Implementation of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) adopted in 2018.

This report directly focuses on the areas where there have been significant new developments since the last report. Thus, the report does not duplicate information provided in the previous reports. However, the data and statistical information in the last reports serve as the baseline for the current report.

The report is a result of cross-institutional consultation where all key institutions that are involved in the implementation have also contributed in the report elaboration process. The report has eleven sections. Besides this introductory part and a brief conclusion at the end, the report has nine sections on substantive operative articles which are HIV/AIDS and other related infectious diseases; peace and security; child soldiers and trafficking; gender-based violence; gender parity; women's rights; land, property and inheritance; education; and Maputo Protocol.

ARTICLE 1: HIV/AIDS AND OTHER RELATED INFECTIOUS DISEASES

As explained in state's previous reports, the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda of 2003 revised in 2015¹, prohibits any kind of discrimination on any grounds including HIV/AIDS. To implement the Constitutional provisions, the law n°.68/2018 of 30/08/2018 determining offences and penalties in general, specifically in article 163 criminalizes any forms of discrimination.

A part from the above mentioned laws, the Governemnt of Rwanda (GoR) wishes to bring to the attention of the African Union Commission (the Commission) that while during the period under review there has not been new laws adopted in particular field, nevertheless the GoR continues to implement the existing laws.

At macro-economic level, the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1), commits to strengthen disease prevention awareness and reduce Communicable and Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) including HIV treatment for all, as one of its priorities. This will be achieved through undertaking community mobilization to prevent diseases, promoting physical exercises for all age groups, regular health checkups and scaling up

¹ The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, article 16.

screening services in communities and health facilities. Furthermore, this will be reinforced by sustaining the universal access to Tuberculosis (TB), Malaria, HIV treatment for all, ensuring availability, accessibility and affordability of quality care and treatment for NCD patients.

In addition, the GoR adopted the Fourth Health Sector Strategic Plan (2018-2024), which acknowledges that women and men have specific health needs at all stages of life that are related to both physical differences and their societal roles. It therefore provides that the health sector will eliminate gender barriers to receiving essential health services.

In October 2019, Rwanda published, for the first, a National Household Based Survey called Rwanda Population-Based HIV Impact Assessment (RPHIA) to measure both national HIV incidence and viral load suppression (VLS). According to this survey, the HIV/AIDS prevalence among women stands at 3.7% against 2.2% of their male counterparts.

The survey shows also that among diagnosed adults living with HIV, 97.5% were on Anti-Retroviral Treatment (based upon self-report or the detection of ARVS), 97.6% of HIV-positive women and 97.2% of HIV-positive men. Furthermore, the achieved Viral Load Suppression among adults was at 92.4% of HIV-positive women and 85.4% of HIV-positive men. These statistics indicates that Rwanda has achieved the ambitious treatment target (90-90-90 goals among HIV- positive adults by sex) of the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), to help end the AIDS epidemic.

Further, new approaches were introduced in Rwanda such as self-testing, index testing and partner notification, HIV case-based surveillance and decency testing, consistent zero transmission to babies born from HIV positive mothers, combined multiple strategies to scale up voluntary male circumcision, retention on treatment and viral load monitoring among others.

Furthermore, the GoR with its partners is committed to fight malaria. Over the fiscal year 2018-2019, a total number of 180,023 Long-Lasting Insecticide Nets (LLIN) were distributed to pregnant women through Ante-Natal Care services while 276,248 LLINs were distributed to children under one out of 340,296 children of nine month attended MR1(81% of coverage). In addition to the community mobilization campaigns against malaria, through Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS) Coverage, 3,733,375 people were protected. Malaria incidence in Rwanda reduced from 389 per 1,000 people per year in 2017-2018 to 321 per 1,000.²

² National Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases Annual Report 2018-2019

A part from the above mentioned mechanisms to prevent and control HIV/AIDS and Malaria, Rwanda continues to devise innovative strategies and policies to mitigate other communicable and non-communicable diseases. Rwanda, in 2019 launched a 5-year Hepatitis C elimination plan. It has negotiated the reduction of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) treatment cost from 780 to 60 USD per individual cure dose to ensure Rwandan population access to treatment. Under this framework, 430,221 people were screened for Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) and HCV through mass campaign and blood donors screening, 1,930 people were initiated on HBV lifelong treatment while 2,140 patients were treated for HCV. Over 97% of children were vaccinated against Hepatitis B Virus, 93% of girls were vaccinated against Human Papilloma virus (HPV), as well as national wide campaigns on physical exercises (such as car free day) to prevent non-communicable diseases.

In regard to financing, total budget of \$127,265,342 was allocated to HIV/AIDS for the Fiscal Year 2018/2019. The Global Fund grants for AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM) have contributed \$ 53,411,756; whereas the contribution from the United States Government (USG) amounted to \$ 52,226,093. The Government of Rwanda contributed a budget of \$ 20,105,341 and lastly the one UN with \$ 1,522,152.³ The total budget for the Malaria and Other Parasitic Diseases Programs during the last FY 2018-2019 was 79,502,525 USD.

Rwanda will continue to implement its home based initiatives such as community based health insurance, the use of Rapid SMS by Community Health Workers, extension of health facilities at more decentralized levels, which have proven to be effective in ensuring universal access to quality health services.

ARTICLE 2: PEACE AND SECURITY

According to the 6th Edition of Rwanda Governance Scorecard of 2019, the Safety and Security is winning citizens' confidence at 94.29%.

Rwandan women have contributed and played a vital role in the development of their country in all spheres including those related to peace building and peace keeping at national, regional, and international levels. A robust legal and policy framework as well as, institutional mechanisms to create and sustain a peaceful and conflict-free nation has been set.

In 2019, Rwanda launched a second National Action Plan (2018-2022) on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 1325). Currently, women constitute 21% in Rwanda National Police, about 27% in Rwanda

³ National HIV and Viral Hepatitis, Annual Report, 2018-2019

Investigation Bureau and 24% in Rwanda Correctional Service. Women in security organs actively participate in peace building initiatives at both regional and international levels. Also Rwanda is among the leading contributors of female police officers in peace keeping missions and the number has been growing progressively.

Women are also fairly represented in other relevant organs: They occupy 54% of commissioners at the National Unit and Reconciliation Commission; 49.7% as Judges, 46.5% as prosecutors and 55.7% in office of Ombudsman.

At the grass root level, women are playing a visible role in conflict management through justice structures including community mediators (Abunzi) and Access to Justice Bureaus (MAJ). They also contribute to providing free legal services to citizens including victims of GBV and child abuse.

The GoR is still committed to further deploy more efforts to ensure effective participation of Rwandese women in peace processes and enhance their position and role as decision-makers in conflict prevention, crisis management and peace building activities.

ARTICE 3: CHILD SOLDIERS AND TRAFFICKING

Rwanda abides by its national and international obligations concerning the prevention of involvement of children in armed conflict and trafficking in persons. In this regard, the Presidential order N° 22/01 of 21/10/2016 Establishing Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) Special Statute, in its article 8 sets out conditions for recruitment into RDF. One of the conditions is that the applicant for recruitment into RDF must be at least 18 years of age. Similar conditions are applied to the recruitment into Rwanda National Police and Rwanda Correctional Service.

Also, the Ministry of Public Service and Labor (MIFOTRA) adopted Ministerial Instructions no.01/2017 of 17/11/2017 relating to Prevention and Fight against Child Labor, in its article 9, lists out forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict among worst form of Child labor.

There are no cases of recruitment of child soldiers in Rwanda. However, the Government of Rwanda is implementing a number of initiatives to prevent any tendency to recruit Rwandan children in armed groups from neighboring countries.

Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (RDRC) closely collaborate with MONUSCO in disarmament process and share information with RDRC for the repatriation process of children withdrawn.

Again, Rwanda has put much attention on the fight against human trafficking in general and child trafficking in particular by adopting Law N° 51/2018 of 13/08/2018 relating to

the prevention, suppression and punishment of trafficking in persons and exploitation of others. The law n° 71/2018 of 31/08/2018 relating to the protection of the child was also enacted to reinforce the child's rights protection. In addition to the National Steering Committee against human trafficking was established by the Ministry of Justice.

In July 2019, the MINIJUST published a study on "Understanding Human Trafficking in Rwanda: Causes, Effects and Impact". In the year 2018-2019, 20 cases of human trafficking were decided by courts, 15 out of which were convicted, representing 75% of conviction rate.

In 2018, Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB) has got a specific anti human trafficking directorate, GBV crime and child protection Division to deal specifically with transnational crimes including human trafficking. Furthermore, a joint operation between Rwanda National Police and the Directorate General of Immigration and Emigration, a daily control of movements at all borders and individual checking of every passenger aimed at reducing human trafficking victims and other cross borders related crimes.

The Government of Rwanda will continue collaboration with other countries to fight against trafficking in person through different channels but also continue raising regular awareness and trainings to different categories of people and service providers on human trafficking as well as mobilizing resources for human trafficking prevention and response activities from different stakeholders.

ARTICLE 4: GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

The Government of Rwanda has made progress in prevention and elimination of all forms of gender-based violence (GBV). There has been progressive legal and policy improvement that represent a decisive step towards gender equality and creating a more conducive environment for preventing and responding to GBV. Specifically, GBV has been criminalized and is therefore punishable under Rwandan laws. Law n° 69/2019 of 08/11/2019 amending the law n° 68/2018 of 30/08/2018 determining offenses and penalties in general prescribes heavy punishment for child defilement, marital rape, sexual violence and harassment of a spouse. Also, law N° 51/2018 of 13/08/2018 relating to the prevention, suppression and punishment of trafficking in persons and exploitation of others, protects women and girls against human trafficking and article 24 specifically prohibits sexual exploitation. The new law n° 66/2018 of 30/08/2018 regulating labor in Rwanda prohibits sexual harassment at the work place under article 8. Again, in an effort to ensure access to justice by victims of S-GBV are exempt from court fees.

In a bid to protect and rehabilitate GBV survivors, an affordable timely comprehensive support to victims of GBV and those of child abuse is in place. Currently, 44 IOSCs

have been established and operationalized across the country and to further bring IOSC services close to the community as well as grounding GBV prevention and response interventions, the Government further scaling- up IOSCs basic services in 495 health centers across the country. Isange One Stop Centers provide comprehensive services to victims of GBV under the same roof and free of charge on 24 hours/7 days basis. These services include medical care, psychosocial support, legal services, relief and re-integration.

Hot-lines are provided to report cases of violence and these are operational 24 hours a day. This has increased the number of GBV and child abuse cases that are reported. Gender desks have been established in different institutions such as Rwanda Defense Forces (RDF), Rwanda National Police (RNP), Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB), and National Public Prosecution Authority (NPPA) whose role is to address GBV issues in their respective mandates and contribute to GBV prevention and response.

In a bid to enhance planning, monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management, communication and dissemination of data and ICT use to collect GBV data across all sectors, a user-friendly and robust –GBV Management Information System (GBV-MIS) was developed as web based platform that will collect GBV data across all IOSC.

In the year 2018-2019, a total of 1,673 cases of defilement were prosecuted, out of which 1,222 of accused were convicted, representing 73% of conviction rate. Regarding rape, 201 cases were prosecuted, among them, 142 accused were convicted which represents 70.6% of conviction rate.

To enhance quality service delivery, male and female investigators were trained on handling and dealing with GBV with the required attention. At decentralized administrative entities, community structures and initiatives including Friends of Family, community policing, Child Protection Committees from the village to the district levels have been introduced and trained to raise awareness on GBV consequences, the importance of reporting GBV and referral processes in case of GBV related abuse, among the population.

Other initiatives which bring together men and women to discuss issues affecting their communities, including GBV and child protection, have also been implemented. A case in point is the “Parents’ Evening Forum”, community work serve as magnificent platforms to discuss and resolve family conflicts, creating awareness on GBV and child abuse cases in terms of prevention, reporting and available response mechanisms. In regard to generation of scientific evidence to support prosecution of GBV related cases, Forensic Laboratory continues to play a vital role in DNA testing.

In order to increase community awareness on GBV and gender related injustices, a community based mechanism to account to gender equality called Gender Accountability Days were held in different districts. Regular campaigns, Radio & TV talk shows are being conducted to raise community awareness.

The Government of Rwanda has taken a zero tolerance stance in the fight against GBV and is still committed to do so till the problem is eradicated.

ARTICLE 5: GENDER PARITY

Empowering women and ensuring gender equality remains country's priority. As a result, Rwanda continues to make great progress regarding gender equality in decision making structures. The Global Gender Gap Report 2020 ranked Rwanda as the 9th country worldwide and the first in Africa in terms of closing gender gaps.

As indicated in the previous report, legal, policy and institutional frameworks have been put in place. In addition, a National Gender Policy of 2010 is under review to strengthen and enhance gender parity in all sectors at all levels.

Rwanda has the highest representation of women in Parliament (Chamber of Deputies) with 61.25% of the seats, Judiciary (49.7%), ministerial positions (50%). At decentralized level women are fairly represented as illustrated by the following figures for the key administrative structures: women represent 55.9% in the Bureau of the Districts and City of Kigali Councils; 30% District Mayors; 42.7% in the Sector Councils and 34.5% women members of Cells Councils. Women are also represented from Village to National level through National Women Council Committees.

With regard to the Private Sector, efforts are being deployed to ensure fair representation and participation in this particular sector. By March 2019 female representation in the Private Sector stood as follows: within the Executive Committees of Private Sector Federation (PSF) Chambers at National Level, women occupied 30% of Presidency positions, 10% of the 1st Vice-Presidency positions and 70% of the 2nd Vice-Presidency positions. At Provincial level, women were not represented at Presidency positions, while they occupied 20% and 80% at the positions of 1st and 2nd Vice-President Positions respectively. At the District level, women occupy 6.7% of the Presidency positions while they occupy 13.3% and 80% of the 1st and 2nd Vice-President positions⁴

⁴ The state of Gender Equality in Rwanda: From Transition to Transformation, Gender Monitoring Office, March 2019.

In the media sector, women representation stood at 21.5% in 2018. 24.5% women are Accredited Journalists, 12.4% are Chief Editors, 14.1. % are Owners or Managers of media houses.

ARTICLE 6: WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Rwanda recognizes that women's rights are human rights; that attaining equality between women and men and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women are fundamental human rights in any country governed by the rule of law. In Rwanda, the respect, protection and fulfilment of women's rights have remained among the country's top priorities for the last two and half decades.

Rwanda's previous reports under the Solemn Declaration have consistently elaborated on the status of women's rights in Rwanda. Updates on legal, policy and institutional frameworks have been brought to the attention of the African Union Commission through the same mechanism.

For the sake of this report, only key new developments since the last report are highlighted. The new developments are mainly observed in the protection on women's rights on reproductive health and rights (SRHRs).

Firstly, in August 2018, Rwanda adopted the law N°68/2018 of 30/08/2018 determining offences and penalties in general. The law replaced the 2012 penal code and is progressive in matters of access to safe legal abortion, and .have brought positive changes whereby child pregnancy was added on the grounds for accessing legal abortion.

Secondly, with a view to implementing the relevant provisions of the above stated law, the Ministry of Health adopted in April 2019, the Ministerial order n°002/MoH/2019 of 08/04/2019 determining conditions to be satisfied for a medical doctor to perform an abortion. This Ministerial Order is comprehensive, thus regarded as a key milestone in the GoR's commitment to ensure that women have access to good-quality post-abortion care services.

Thirdly, in April 2019, His Excellency, President Paul Kagame exercising his prerogative of mercy pardoned 367 women and girls convicted and imprisoned for the offences of abortion, complicity in abortion and infanticide. In October 2019, 52 more women were pardoned. This brought a total of women pardoned for the same crime to 841 since 2016.

Fourthly, recently in December 2019, Rwanda took decision to exempt Value Added Tax (VAT) on sanitary pads. This will immensely contribute in making sanitary products affordable especially for girls from vulnerable families.

Women's rights on the land and other economic resources including matrimonial regime contributed to their access to finance and economic empowerment in general. In addition, Rwanda observes International Days and Campaigns such as International Human Rights Day, International Women's Day, International Day of Girl Child and 16 Days of Activism. These events are used as platforms to increase public awareness on human rights in general and women's rights in particular.

Rwanda will continue to embark on mainstreaming gender and GBV issues in the existing accountability oversight mechanisms, to ensure due diligence of all actors and women's rights promotion for sustainable development.

ARTICLE 7: LAND, PROPERTY AND INHERITANCE

In order to continue supporting women and girls to actively participate in economic development, the Government of Rwanda and partners have introduced multidimensional program and initiatives to allow women and girls access productive economic resources. Access to land remains an instrumental factor in enabling women's productive capacities. Both the land law and inheritance law have enabled more women to own land. Women can now make decisions over land, including using it as collateral for bank loans. Indeed, data shows that about 39.9% of women have acquired loans and credit using their land as collateral and 25.5% women accessed agriculture loans using their land as collateral. Thus, land ownership has been very instrumental in contributing to women's access to finance and hence improved women's contribution to the economy.

The above information presents tremendous shift compared to the period before, when women were denied land ownership rights. Currently, 24.63% of land in Rwanda is only owned by women, 14.27 % by men, 59.99% by married couples and 1.10% by other owners. Land ownership has also enabled women to play key role in agriculture sector, producing for both home consumption and the market. Women's participation stands at 32%, about 36% have benefited from irrigation investment, 36% accessed improved seeds, 32% used fertilizers, and 11% have benefited from artificial insemination services. In addition, the second Agriculture Gender and youth mainstreaming strategy has been developed to address gender issues in agriculture sector.

The government continues the implementation of gender commitments as enshrined in agriculture gender mainstreaming strategy. The strategy focuses on increasing economies of scale from the land use consolidation, increasing use of agricultural inputs, improving agriculture marketing and extension services.

ARTICLE 8: EDUCATION

There has been a solid legal and policy framework aimed at protecting and promoting the rights to education of the child, in particular the girl child. In this respect the law n^o 71/2018 of 31/08/2018 relating to the protection of the child guarantees equal rights to girls and boys and prohibits any form of child exploitation.

The law n^o. 36/2018 of 29/06/2018 determining the organization of education in Rwanda eliminates all grounds and obstacles that hinder the development of girls and women's education and any other groups that need special attention. This is consistent with regional and international legal instruments and national policies related to child protection.

In terms of policies, the special needs & inclusive education policy and its Strategic plan (2018/19-2023/24) was adopted in October 2018. The policy puts in place coordinated and appropriately resourced special needs and inclusive education services, underpinning the education sector goals, as well as the national strategies with respect to education for development. Subsequently, the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2018/19- 2023/24 commits to promote access to education at all levels, improving the quality of education and training as well ensuring that the disadvantaged groups have access to meaningful learning opportunities.

The government of Rwanda has also prioritized early childhood development (ECD). The ECD policy was adopted in 2016 to ensure a holistic child development process that addresses the healthy, physical, social and emotional aspects of child growth.

As result of policy implementation alongside other program in education sector, the status of girls' education has tremendously improved at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education. The gender parity has been stable at primary and secondary level with current girl's enrollment rate at 49.7% and 53.2% respectively, while it was estimated at 42.6% for tertiary education in 2018. Furthermore, female students with disabilities increased to 43.6% 2018 in primary level and 47.8% at secondary level of education.⁵

In respect to awareness rising among the community, parents in Rwanda are continuously sensitized on the importance of girl's education. They are rallied to support the girls' education by fighting all causes of school dropout.

The initiatives to promote girls' education are largely being employed and these are for instance; role model approaches, Boys for Change campaign, as well use the male gender champions to mobilize communities on embracing positive masculinity.

⁵ Statistical Year Book 2018.

In order to increase women's employment opportunities and diversified skills, Rwanda has continued to strengthen demand driven Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) programs to close the skills gap as stated in HeForShe Rwanda's impact commitments. Female enrollment in TVET level has increased from 41.8% (2015) to 43.8% (2018).

Initiatives like "*Inkubito z'Icyeza*" (awarding the best performing girls and scholarship schemes for girls) under Imbuto Foundation that support girls from vulnerable families to access school and pursue their dreams and participate in traditionally male dominated science fields like Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), Information Communication Technology (ICT) for increased levels of employability.

The girl child participation in national development is promoted through child's forum established from the village to the national level. Since 2004, representatives of children including girls participate in the annual National Children Summit and advocate for issues affecting them.

In November 2019, the 13th children summit brought together 500 children from across the country, under them "The Role of the Child on Positive Parenting".

ARTICLE 9: MAPUTO PROTOCOL

Rwanda has committed to gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in its development agenda and this is demonstrated in setting enabling legal, policy and strategic frameworks. From the legal perspective, the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda of 2003, revised in 2015, constitutes the main reference for the entire legal reform to ensure women's fundamental human rights and freedoms.

At policy level, National gender Policy of 2010 has been revised to cope with the new changes and to engage men/boys in the journey of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment. The National Strategy for Transformation (NST1), women are expected to contribute significantly to the overall economic production and envisages further increase of women's access to economic opportunities through mainstreaming gender equality in all productive sectors and also through elimination of any kind of violence and discrimination. Similarly, Rwanda has embarked on integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in its planning framework and tools, including those specific to achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls (SDG#5).

The Government of Rwanda will continue creating conducive environment for the advancement of gender equality and women empowerment the full realization of the provisions of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol).

CONCLUSION

“The fight for gender equality is really common sense. Women are our mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters.....Whenever women gain, everybody gains and nobody loses.” **H.E. Paul KAGAME, the President of the Republic of Rwanda, at opening of 2019 Global Gender Summit, 25th November 2019, Kigali.**