



# 20

## YEARS AND BEYOND

### ADVANCING CHILD RIGHTS IN RWANDA



**CRC@25** CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD



**unicef**   
unite for children

## **20 Years and Beyond: Advancing Child Rights in Rwanda**

National Commission for Children and UNICEF Rwanda

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# Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion

## FOREWORD



**“ Over the past 20 years, the Government of Rwanda has consistently invested in its most valued resource-its PEOPLE ”**

As we celebrate the 10th National Children's Summit, we also commemorate 20 years of achievements in advancing child rights since the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, as well as the 25th anniversary of the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in Rwanda.

To mark this grand achievement, it is my pleasure to present this magazine, especially dedicated to showcasing the efforts of the Government of Rwanda and its stakeholders in protecting and promoting the rights of children.

Rwanda's achievements elaborated in this edition include the ratification of several regional and international conventions, national laws, policies and child's rights-related programmes as well as their successful implementation. This edition serves to highlight success stories, especially from the view of ordinary Rwandans, the positive impact of pro-children policies and programmes initiated by our government.

Indeed, the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF), through the National Commission for Children (NCC) and local government structures have made significant progress to protect the rights of all, setting Rwanda on an upward trajectory over the years.

However, despite this progress more has to be done to continue on this path. It is in this regard that the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion and the Government of Rwanda acknowledge the support of its development partners, international and national NGOs and civil society on this journey. For this, we would like to extend our gratitude and welcome continued partnership.

I would like to thank the children of Rwanda themselves, their parents, guardians, communities, law enforcers, teachers, service providers and many others who have played a role in protecting and promoting children and their rights.

There's a proverb that says "If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go farther, go together." In this light I would like to urge all stakeholders to never tire in working together to ensure a conducive environment for the development of our children. I believe that together we can realize our vision to live in a Rwanda where children continue to be protected and are able to realize their own dreams.

I thank you.

Oda Gasinzigwa  
Minister of Gender and Family Promotion

# Contents

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- 1** Foreword from Honorable Minister of Gender and Family Promotion
- 5** Message from Mr. Lamin Manneh, UN Resident Coordinator
- 6** Message from Noala Skinner, UNICEF Representative
- 10** Legal and Policy Framework to Protect and Promote Children's Rights
- 11** The National Commission for Children: Policy Implementation, Coordination and Partnerships
- 12** Implementation of the integrated Child rights policy
- 14** INTEGRATED CHILD RIGHTS POLICY IN ACTION
  - 14 Education
  - 16 Family and Alternative Care
  - 18 Survival, Health and Standards of Living
  - 20 Identity and Nationality
  - 22 Protection
  - 24 Justice
  - 25 Child Participation
- 26** Voice of Adults
- 27** End Note
- 28** Acknowledgement

## Message from Mr. Lamin M. Manneh, UN Resident Coordinator



2014 is indeed an important year for children. We are pleased to unite in commemorating two significant milestones on advancing children rights: 25th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the 10th Anniversary of the National Children's Summit.

The Convention changed the way children are viewed and treated –as human beings with a distinct set of rights instead of as passive objects of care and charity. The unprecedented acceptance of the Convention clearly shows a wide global commitment to advancing children's rights. Children are the future of all families, societies and nations at large.

Rwanda ratified the convention in 1990 and has since not looked back on its commitment on children's rights. Mr. Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director said "Children's rights are brought to life not through pronouncements, but through sustained political commitment." This quote holds true for Rwanda.

In 2011, the Government adopted the Integrated Child Rights Policy, a natural progression on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Another example of high level commitment is the annual landmark event: the National Children's Summit – a significant platform on supporting the participation of children in upholding their rights, and giving them a voice. Held first in 2004, the children's summits have been able to integrate young people's recommendations into Rwanda's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy.

As we join in the global celebrations of the 25th Anniversary of the CRC combined with the 10th Anniversary of the Children's Summit, the One UN in Rwanda stands committed and united to ensure the realisation of rights of all children in Rwanda.

## Message from Noala Skinner, UNICEF Representative

When UNICEF began its work in Rwanda in 1986, and in the immediate years after the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi, the focus of UNICEF's interventions revolved around emergency programming, projects and recovery. With the passage of the Rwanda Aid Policy and the momentum around the Aid Effectiveness Agenda, combined with the decision to include Rwanda as one of the eight original pilots for the UN Delivering as One, UNICEF's strategic approach evolved.

We believe that nurturing and caring for children are the cornerstones of human progress and we see that reflected in Rwanda's vision for the present and the future. UNICEF's mission is to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

As an operational agency, working together with our sister UN agencies to maximize our collective strengths to support the delivery of results, UNICEF has a strong presence on the ground through which we model interventions for national scale up that support the strengthening of systems and the delivery of services for children.

This is combined with our commitment to the long-term accompaniment of the Government for transformation of Rwanda, which is translated into engagement in policy dialogue that impacts on the lives of children, operational research for evidence and impact, and a strong predictable presence in the country.

Taking the lead from the "Foundational Issues" of the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy II (2013-2018) upon which the current UNICEF programme is largely mirrored, our work takes an integrated approach along the continuum of a child's life, from pregnancy through adolescence and in the context of a strong loving family environment.

We believe that the early years of a child's life quite literally present the opportunity of a lifetime. What happens, or does not happen to a child through its early childhood can influence the entire course of that child's life, for better or for worse.



Noala Skinner,  
UNICEF Representative



*"Every child has the same right to a happy, healthy, safe and secure childhood filled with learning, no matter who they are, where they come from or what they've been through. In Rwanda, this is not only understood, it is acted on."*

The Government of Rwanda is a trailblazer of progress for children in this regard. Rwanda has facilitated policies and programmes that support women to have healthier pregnancies, strong ante-natal care, assisted delivery, and newborn care ... and most recently, access to integrated early childhood development and family services. Efforts to reduce stunting and eliminate chronic malnutrition are at the peak of their momentum.

The family is recognized as the nucleus of support for the optimal development of the child, which is why investments are focused on positive parenting, ECD, and facilitating every child, regardless if they have parental care, to grow up in a loving family environment.



*UNICEF Representative interacting with a child in Kayonza ECD&F centre*

UNICEF Rwanda is proud that our programmes, supported through our core and donor provided resources, allow us to support these priorities and achieve measurable results, both on the ground and at the policy table. From “Rapid SMS” to “TMM” to the “1000 days” initiative we are committed for the long haul and results for children.

Every child – every girl, every boy, has the right to a quality education.

Every child has the right to access to clean and safe water. Every child has the right to grow up in dignity, free from violence and exploitative labour, able to play, learn and develop to his or her full potential. Every child has the right to participate in matters affecting him or her, in accordance with their age and maturity. Every child, regardless of ability or background has the same inalienable rights.

These rights, enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, are translated into policies, programmes and realities in Rwanda – from the National Children’s Summit and Children’s Forums in the districts that actively include children with disability, to the “Best Performing Girls” programme from Imbutu Foundation to the WASH programme that recently brought clean water to half a million people for the first time, to the Justice for Children policy adopted in October 2014.

UNICEF together with our sister agencies and partners on the ground has been privileged to be part of the journey of delivering results with equity and accountability for the children of Rwanda. For we are dreamers and we are do-ers.

As 2014 marks the 10th anniversary of the Children's Summit as well as the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is a unique opportunity to celebrate the advancement of child rights in the country, and provide children with an opportunity to express their views on national policies and issues that impact the lives of all children in Rwanda and make recommendations for action to the Government of Rwanda and its partners.

Annual Summits for children are organized where representatives of children from grass root level sit to discuss and provide advice and recommendations to the government on how to exercise their rights. So far, nine children summits have been organised from 2004 to date.



*Freedom of expression and respect for the views of children are central to fulfill their right to participation.*

In addition to national events, children are empowered through children platforms at local level, such as Children's Fora, Children Clubs and Networks that allow them to voice their opinions on issues within their communities.

To further empower children and young people, and to involve them in decision-making, Centers for Youth and Children are being scaled up in all districts to promote community dialogue and interaction among peers.

In schools, Leadership Clubs will continue to be promoted to increase engagement of young people and create dialogue.



## THE MINISTRY OF GENDER AND FAMILY PROMOTION

### Promoting And Protecting Child Rights



*Family is a natural and cultural basis of the Rwandan society*

The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) aims at promoting the family, as a natural and cultural basis of the Rwandan society and providing a conducive environment for the overall development of the nation's children according to internationally agreed standards and principles.

The Ministry's vision stipulates that all children, without any discrimination, receive full support and protection needed to enjoy their rights and to develop the utmost possible their capacities with the objective to provide contribution to family and community development in general.

MIGEPROF's key functions include developing and disseminating policies, strategies and programs

regarding gender, family promotion, protection of children's rights and child development; drafting laws related to gender and family promotion; developing institutional and human resources capacities in the sector; monitoring and evaluating the implementation of sector policies, strategies and programs; overseeing the institutions under its supervision and mobilizing resources for the development of gender and family promotion and related programs.

The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion is mandated to provide support to all children with emphasis on the most vulnerable through a minimum package of services which includes; health, nutrition, education, shelter, protection and psycho social support.

## LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The constitution of the Republic of Rwanda (2003) as amended to date, reaffirms the adherence to the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as it entitles every child for special measures of protection by the family, society and Government.

Significant child-sensitive policies and strategic plans have therefore been adopted in the last two decades, such as the Orphans and Vulnerable Children Strategic Plan (2007), the Early Childhood Development Policy, the Integrated Child Rights Policy (2011), the Social Protection Policy (2012), Strategy for National Child Care Reform (2012), the Justice for Children Policy and the National HIV/AIDS strategy (2014).

To ensure the implementation of these policies, several laws were developed and adopted over the past 20 years and new institutions were established, including the National Commission for Children (NCC).

Rwanda's tremendous progress in ensuring children's rights and protection over the past 20 years has been driven by the Government of Rwanda's commitment to address human rights issues. The ratification of numerous international conventions and adoption of national laws and policies have built a strong protective legal and policy framework for children.

On 26 January 1990 Rwanda was among the first countries in the world to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified on 19 September 1990. The two optional protocols on children in armed conflict, and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography were then ratified in 2002. Child rights were further strengthened through the signature of The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 1991. In addition to these two landmark conventions, Rwanda is also signatory to a number of other international conventions, declarations and treaties on child rights that reflect the political will to place children's rights on the forefront of national agenda.

A significant milestone in improving the legal framework for protecting children in Rwanda was the revision of the law No. 27/2001 on child protection which resulted into the adoption of the Law No. 54/2011 on the Rights and Protection of the Child in 2012.

This new law reinforced the universality of rights of all children irrespective of their birth status. It also highlighted the right of all children to be raised in a family environment.

### Ratified International Conventions

#### Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1991

Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 2000

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, 2002

The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child abduction, 2008

The Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, 2008

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant workers and Members of their Families, 2008

International convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities, 2008 convention on the Protection of Children and cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, 2010

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 2011

# THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN

## POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

To ensure that all children's related policies and programmes are properly coordinated and implemented, the Government of Rwanda established the National Commission for Children (NCC) in 2011

### VISION

“Children enjoying their rights and empowered to be worthy and patriotic citizens”.

### MISSION

Under the supervision of the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF), NCC oversees all child related interventions through the local government structures and non- government institutions, with an overall objective of giving Rwanda's children the opportunity to enjoy their rights and to develop into productive and responsible citizens.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Ensure that children know and apply national values, enjoy their rights and are aware of their responsibilities as Rwandan citizens;

Ensure participation of relevant national partners (including families and communities) in promoting child rights and national values;

Ensure the implementation of the Hague convention on protection of children and cooperation in the interest of the child;

Ensure that all children including children with special needs enjoy the right to a family and are protected against all forms of violence with special attention to sexual violence and abuse;

Ensure mainstreaming of child issues in the National policies, plans and programs;

Ensure availability of relevant information on the situation of the child rights and on the implementation of national laws and international child-related conventions ratified by Rwanda;

Ensure NCC institutional, technical and financial capacity to achieve its mission;

Promote partnership and cooperation at National, regional and international levels.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTEGRATED CHILD RIGHTS POLICY



*Madam Zaina Nyiramatama,  
Executive Secretary of NCC*

Recognising the need for coordination and consistency in Government interventions for children, the Government of Rwanda, through the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) adopted the Integrated Child Rights Policy in 2011. It is a comprehensive national document, detailing Rwanda's vision and commitment to all children.

The vision of the Integrated Child Rights Policy is to create an environment in which child development, survival, protection and participation are ensured through a well coordinated and multi-sector approach, where the welfare of Rwandan children is ensured, their dignity and right to reach their full potential are guaranteed, and their responsibilities are fulfilled.

### ICRP Principles

The Integrated Child Rights Policy creates an environment in which child development, survival, protection and participation are ensured through a well coordinated and multi-sector approach, where the welfare of Rwandan children is ensured, their dignity and right to reach their full potential are guaranteed, and their responsibilities are fulfilled. Among principles that guide the Integrated Child Rights Policy is:

#### Every child matters

Every Rwandan child is important to the Government and the people of Rwanda.

#### Children are priority

every action by Government and non Government parties that affect children is preceded and guided by an assessment of its impact on children. The actions should be furthering the best interests of children and not impacting them negatively.

#### Children deserve the best

Every child will be supported to achieve the highest attainable levels of survival and development. The aspiration will be for good physical and mental health and mere absence of disease; for good quality and excellence in education and for highest attainable standards of living

#### Children can and should participate

They can participate as they have opinions and are capable of understanding and participating in decision making in matters directly and indirectly affecting children, they are informed and consulted.

### Abuse, exploitation and violence against children are intolerable

Children are protected from abuse, exploitation and violence, they are protected in their homes, be it with or without parents, in schools, in communities, in their place of work, in prisons, in institutions, on the streets and wherever they may be.

### Government and duty bearers are accountable

All duty bearers in the various spheres where children are involved: government, parents, guardians, communities, law enforcers, teachers, service providers are accountable for protecting and promoting children and their rights.

### Actions to implement this policy will be well coordinated

All wings of the Government work in coordination and cooperation with each other to ensure implementation of this policy. A mechanism was put in place for the management, coordination of implementation, monitoring and review of this policy.



*Every Child matters*



Rwanda has one of the highest primary school enrolment rates in Africa (97 per cent) and is on track to achieve universal access to primary education by 2015 (MDG 2). In 2013, 96% of boys and 97.5% of girls were enrolled in primary school. In recent years, the Government has focused attention on increasing access to a full cycle of primary and secondary education, with the introduction of the Nine Year free Basic Education (NYBE) Programme, launched in 2006 and then the 12 year basic education programme. This initiative abolished school fees for lower secondary students (primary fees were already abolished in 2003) and prompted investments to increase access and reduce drop out and repetition rates for all children.

In 2009, the Government accelerated this reform, by placing increased emphasis on schools' capacity to absorb more students and by increasing spending on education in the national budget.

With Rwanda's success of achieving near universal access to primary education, a strengthened focus has been placed in recent years on improving the

quality of education and on ensuring equitable access to quality education, including early childhood education services and pre-primary programmes.

Further to this, programmes such as the One Laptop per Child were put in place to enhance primary education through the introduction of technology in primary schools. This programme allows primary school students early access to computer skills and computer science understanding while expanding their knowledge on specific subjects like Science, Mathematics, languages and Social Sciences through digital content and online research.

To ensure that adolescents have skills and knowledge that align with the modernization of the labour market, Rwanda is investing in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). TVET programmes serve to strengthen post-basic education, higher education and teacher education. The number of students enrolled in TVET schools has increased with time, increasing the availability of technical skills available in the job market. The

Government plan is that 60% of all students in the upper secondary level pass through the TVET stream by 2017.

Several initiatives have been identified to consolidate and further advance attainment of learning outcomes in the education sector, such as the development and implementation of a competency-based curriculum, continued focus on quality teaching and learning through a skilled and motivated teaching, training and lecturing workforce, a focus on post-basic education (PBE) to streamline the transition between education and the labour market.

In addition to this efforts have been made to promote equity in education aimed at ensuring quality education for all in Rwanda; in this regard, the establishment of the Girls' Education and Special Needs Education Policies have contributed to eliminating gender disparities and discrimination in education.



Rwanda is investing in TVET to strengthen post-basic education, higher education and teacher education.



Alex Murenzi-17 (President of National Children's Forum)  
Gisozi, Gasabo

*Alex: "For every country, children need to go to school. Education will help us to develop ourselves. When you finish school you get a job, a salary, to help your family. This will help [you] to become an entrepreneur, and employ more people and then develop the country. [Education] also gives us good leaders".*



## 2 FAMILY AND ALTERNATIVE CARE

The Government of Rwanda places great emphasis on the role of the families as the first circle of protection for children.

In 2007, the Malayika Mulinzi network, which can be translated as “Guardian Angels” network was initiated by Imbuto Foundation, a non-profit-organization headed by the first lady Mrs. Jeannette Kagame. The network aims at creating a protective environment for children without appropriate care, by promoting adoption and foster care.

Informed by Rwandan traditional cultural values, the ‘Malayika Mulinzi’ initiative consists of a network of more than 3,000 adults across the country who have shown remarkable compassion and selflessness in accepting to take care of abandoned children.

In 2012, the Government of Rwanda adopted a landmark Strategy for National Child Care Reform, which aims to transform orphanages and other residential institutions and reintegrate children into sustainable family-based care as an entry point to building sustainable child care and protection systems.

To implement the Strategy for National Child Care Reform, the Government of Rwanda in partnership with UNICEF, together with Hope and Homes for Children and Global Communities Rwanda, have developed a national framework : the Tubarerere Mu Muryango Programme (‘Let us raise children in families’) that operationalizes the key objectives of the strategy such as; the recruitment and training of professional social workers in child care and protection, the creation of community-based family services and social protection supports to facilitate the family reintegration of these children, and the prevention of unnecessary removal of other children



from their families.

2,395 children out of 3,323 children living in institutions have been reintegrated into families since 2011.

In 2013, the Government of Rwanda introduced the first-ever cohort of government social workforce – social workers and psychologists- to implement the Tubarerere Mu Muryango Program. Following thorough pre-service and in-service training 48 social workers and psychologists have been deployed across districts in the country to support the child care reform process. By 2015, there will be 68 certified social workers and psychologists protecting children in need and assisting their families across the country; constituting the first cadre of a social workforce dedicated to children and representing the cornerstone of the national child protection system.

### **Early Childhood Development**

Early Childhood Development (ECD) has been a national priority on Rwanda's development agenda over the past few years. Significant commitment of Government, United Nations and non-Governmental actors have increased access for children in Rwanda to ECD & Family (ECD&F) services. This will ensure they benefit from physical, cognitive, social and emotional development in early years in order to achieve their full potential. Services focus on providing children with a safe and stimulating environment, where mothers, fathers and community members play a key role in nurturing children.

The programme is designed to transform children's lives by changing the way their caregivers interact, nurture and care for children and by providing a multi sectoral package of high-impact services to children, families and communities.

This new model was opened in Kayonza in 2013 with a focus on family engagement.

The Government of Rwanda is planning on scaling-up the ECD&F model across the country to offer child care services to children in the age group 0-6 years.

In the future, Government and partners are planning to extend early learning opportunities and increase access of young children to pre-primary school.



**Christian, 14,  
Rubavu**

Christian: “When you don't have a family you lose your mind. A family is like a tree with many branches”



### 3 SURVIVAL, HEALTH AND STANDARDS OF LIVING

The commitment of Rwanda to fulfill the rights of children can also be illustrated by the remarkable achievements in the area of survival, health, and standards of living over the past twenty years. To reduce maternal mortality, child mortality and malnutrition, health facility-based and community-based interventions are implemented with an objective to:

- Promote good practices of Maternal and Child Health across the country through mother support programs.
- Support the safe motherhood initiative and reproductive health using evidence based Programs.
- Encourage facility-based delivery through the provision of Maternal and Child Health high impact services.

Support newborn care in hospitals. The improvement of maternal and child health and nutritional status is among the top national health priorities and is also in line with the achievements of Vision 2020, EDPRS and the Millennium Development Goals to reduce child mortality (MDG4) improve maternal health (MDG 5).

Rwanda has achieved one of the highest improvements in child survival in East and Southern Africa with under-five mortality falling by two-thirds since 1990, from 103/1,000 in 2005 to 54/1,000 in 2012. The country is on track and has already attained the MDG4. Maternal mortality rate has also considerably reduced from 1,071 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 476 in 2010.

Rwanda has achieved close to universal immunization for all children under 5 years of age, keeping children in Rwanda alive and healthy by protecting them against diseases. The country has also recorded significant results in the prevention of infectious diseases. Between 2005 and 2010, Rwanda reduced malaria incidence by 70%.

These achievements are a result of an integrated approach to service delivery providing a continuum of care both at the levels of community and health facility. This is paired with a nationwide coverage of health insurance for Rwandans, increasing their accessibility to health services.

The Government of Rwanda ensures that every child is born healthy and free of diseases. Community Health Workers at village level play a key role in providing women with the necessary support and follow-up during and after their pregnancy. They also sensitize families on basic health and maternal and new born care. More than 45,000 Community Health Workers are providing their services in villages across the country.

To strengthen the monitoring of the health sector activities, an **e-health** programme has been initiated and is in use. Two individual health record information systems have been rolled out: OpenMRS and RapidSMS: OpenMRS (Open Medical Record System) aims at improving primary care service.

As of June 2013, more than 250 sites are using the minimum package of OpenMRS to track HIV/AIDS.

In Kigali, Kacyiru Police Hospital is already using the full package of OpenMRS.

Community Health Workers use the RapidSMS system across 14,837 villages in the country to monitor, follow-up and properly respond to health-related events and risks during the course of a woman's pregnancy.

In districts, one CHW per village was trained in RapidSMS. The system has been upgraded to accommodate new features to be able to track 1000 days of mother and child health, from pregnancy up to 2 years of age.

An innovative community based health insurance (CBHI) system with nationwide coverage has also been introduced allowing almost 100% membership. At least one health insurance scheme is mandatory for every Rwandan. Antenatal consultations are carried out at least four times before childbirth.

The coverage of improved water supply and sanitation in Rwanda was estimated at 74% and 74.5%, respectively in 2011/12. Rwanda has also taken concrete steps to strengthen the enabling environment for accelerating access to water and sanitation and promote safe hygiene practices.

These include strengthening decentralized service delivery through institutionalization of Imihigo or performance contracting at the district level; adoption of the Environmental Health Policy 2008 and the National Policy and Strategy for Water.

In the case of eliminating malnutrition, a National Nutrition Strategic Plan (NNSP) was adopted including District Plans to Eliminate Malnutrition (DPEM). The inter-sectoral DPEM package aims at implementing the NNSP at district and community level.

The Government of Rwanda and its partners also launched a unique campaign called "Thousand Days in the Land of a Thousand Hills" in 2013. The first 1000 days are critical to a child's long-term mental and physical development. The goal of the campaign is to improve the feeding practices of the vulnerable population for children under two years, pregnant and lactating mothers.



*Rwanda feeds children through the "One Cup of Milk per Child" programme*

Community Health Workers further play a role in the implementation of Community-based nutrition programmes (CBNP), such as the emergency plan to eliminate malnutrition through the screening of all children under the age of 5 years.

Effective programs for feeding children are also in place, including school feeding programmes for children aged 0 – 6 years through the "One Cup of Milk per Child" programme and One Cow per Family

Significant resources are also invested to ensure that adolescents stay healthy with a focus on HIV/AIDS prevention, sexual and reproductive health, and the Prevention of Maternal to Child Transmission of HIV (PMTCT).

In Rwanda, 92 percent of HIV-positive pregnant women attending health services receive drugs for PMTCT. Pregnant adolescent girls are specifically supported during their pregnancies with adequate pre- and post-natal care, while appropriate strategies are developed to assist adolescent mothers in taking care of their children

The Government of Rwanda is aiming at circumcising 700,000 males by the end of 2016 through non-surgical adult circumcision to reduce the risk of HIV infections. This is line with Rwanda's commitment in achieving a HIV-free generation by 2015, and continue to empower adolescents with comprehensive knowledge on HIV prevention and adolescent health

## INTEGRATED CHILD RIGHTS POLICY IN ACTION

In regard to implementation for the ICRP policy, the following are the key achievements in regard to its seven pillars



### 4

#### IDENTITY AND NATIONALITY

Birth registration with the civil authorities represents an important administrative vehicle for the protection of children's rights in Rwanda. A child will be ensured a name, a nationality, and recognition by his or her parents. Moreover, children who are registered can access social assistance, for instance, health insurance, through the parents.

The provision of a birth certificate is key to ensuring that children are known to their Government, and that they have access to health, education and social welfare services. The Government of Rwanda recognizes this importance, and is committed to registering all children born in Rwanda, or those who find themselves in the country without parents and known nationality of parents. Relevant officers at the

appointed administrative service are responsible for ensuring that all children born in their jurisdiction are registered and parents, adoptive parents or guardians are provided with registration certificates.

In the last twenty years, Rwanda has made great advancements in registering births to provide children with their first right to protection. Birth registration was decentralised from the district to sector level where an officer in charge is appointed. According to the 2012 census, 79% of children have been registered at birth. This is a significant increase compared to the 2002 Census results, where only 65% of children had been registered.

To further reach out to families, communities and children, the Government of Rwanda has increased efforts to remove barriers to birth registration, most notably through improved service delivery and information sharing, and innovation in registration processes.

In later stages, the government provides adolescents with National Identification Cards at the age of 16. This facilitates access to essential services, including health, education and civil registry.

The goal of the Government of Rwanda is to establish a fully operational Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) System by the end of 2018. This system will be web-based, and hold statistical information on the occurrence of birth, death, marriage, divorce and adoption rates. The system will also allow for monitoring and follow-up of individual cases, and improve linkages and information sharing between health facilities and sector level.

Paired with innovations in the CRVS system, the Government will conduct regular awareness raising campaigns on birth registration, strengthen capacities of all actors involved in Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS), and strengthen coordination and collaboration among key Government institutions.

“All children born in Rwanda have the right to Rwandan nationality.”

**The goal of the Government of Rwanda is to establish a fully operational Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System by the end of 2018**



### **Hortence, 16, Rubavu**

Hortence: “My name means a flower. Everyone should know my name and know how to call me. Rwanda is my home country and I feel peace in this country.”

“Protection means to be free and also secure. We should look after each other to avoid quarrels and rows.”



Rwanda is committed to establishing a national child protection system that protects children from violence, abuse and exploitation and allow them to grow to their fullest potential.

The country has also introduced innovative homegrown initiatives to fight child abuse and gender-based violence that are recognized internationally.

Since 2005, Rwanda National Police (RNP) and Rwanda Defence Forces (RDF) have established gender desks in order to sensitize and train staff as well as the population on the prevention, response and the fight against Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

Moreover they have trained more than 5000 security personnel and have also formed close to 3,650 Anti & GBV clubs at community level in all districts across Rwanda to foster effective prevention and support community policing in response to GBV crimes and child abuse. The Ministry of gender and family promotion and partners established GBV and child protection committees from the grassroots to the national level.

In addition, the National Commission of Human Rights introduced an Observatory for the Rights of the Child to ensure the respect of children rights all over the country. This Observatory of the Child Rights

has committees in which children are represented at all levels.

Rwanda was among the first countries in Africa to establish One Stop Centers to provide comprehensive response, care and support services for victims of gender-based violence and child abuse.

The Isange One Stop Centre established in 2009 at Kacyiru National Police Hospital in Kigali has provided free medical, legal and psychosocial support to more than 8,000 victims of violence, abuse and exploitation. Today, as part of the national scale up programme of the Isange One Stop Center model that foresees the establishment of One Stop Centers in each district, 11 One Stop Centers are operational.

The protection of victims of child labour, street children living in centers, or refugee children has also been strengthened through targeted and community-based interventions. Significant advancements made in the social protection sector are illustrated by the sharp decline in the poverty rate in the past decade.

Child-sensitive social protection measures, such as the Ubudehe and VUP programmes, will continue to

play an important role in the national child protection system to ensure that families have sufficient resources to satisfy their children's basic needs. The innovative introduction of community-based child and family protection volunteers known as Inshuti z'umuryango (Friends of the Family) is expected to make a major difference in the lives of children.

By 2018, more than 32,000 Inshuti z'umuryango should be operational at village, cell and sector levels to assist children and families within their communities, empower and transfer knowledge to care-givers and be the first port of call of referring children to professional service providers.



*Rwanda's one cow per family programme has improved rural livelihoods.*



*Vision 2020 umurenge programme (VUP) has helped reduce poverty among rural families*

"Community-based child and family protection volunteers, or Inshuti z'umuryango (Friends of the Family) are expected to make a major difference in the lives of children"



Rwanda has made remarkable progress in promoting justice for children by establishing a system that combines fair, accessible and restorative justice measures.

The Government of Rwanda has adopted in 2014 a new Justice for Children Policy that promotes participatory decision-making for reconciliation, restitution and responsibility by involving children, family members, victims and communities in both civil and criminal matters. The policy which will be implemented over the next 5 years will improve service delivery of friendly and responsive justice for children.

Also successfully established by the Government and its partners were child-friendly legal service at district level across the country, known as Maison d'Accès à la Justice (MAJ). Each MAJ office employs three legal service providers, of which one is specialized in child protection and gender-based violence.

This ensures that children in need of legal support and victims of gender-based violence have access to appropriate legal assistance.

The Kigali Bar Association also avails pro bono lawyers to assist all children in the conflict with the law, and since 2012 an annual one-week event is organized where individuals and children have the opportunity to receive free legal aid and advice. In court houses, special chambers for children exist to ensure legal procedures are occurring in a

child-friendly manner. In the communities, Abunzi mediators serve as a local mechanism to address issues, and add an extra venue to provide accessible community based mediation.

For grave offences by minors, the Nyagatare rehabilitation center allows children to have access to key services that are conducive to a child's development. This includes access to equipped classrooms, vocational training workshops and playgrounds that are separated for boys and girls.

Children's right to property inherited from their biological and adoptive parents is also highly respected. Taking over property or inheritance of children is penalized.

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“Justice for Children Policy promotes participatory decision-making for reconciliation”





**F**reedom of expression and respect for the views of children are central to fulfill their right to participation.

In Rwanda, the Government has created opportunities and an enabling environment to ensure that children are informed and consulted in the development of policies and programmes that affect their lives directly and indirectly.

The Government developed national guidelines for the participation of children and facilitated the creation and strengthening of platforms for children and young people participation from the village to the national level. At national level, various events are organized such as the Annual Children's Summit which is held every year since 2004 as a consultative forum that brings together children's delegates from all of Rwanda's administrative sectors.

The Summit provides children with a special opportunity to express their views and wishes about nation building, what is being done or planned for them, about their country's policies and programs, about their rights, their country's economic and social development, challenges and their own role in all that concerns them.

*Freedom of expression and respect for the views of children are central to fulfill their right to participation.*



# ELDERS' INSPIRATIONS

What do you think about child rights in Rwanda today?

"My father was a blacksmith and I found myself doing the same job informally. A child is a king nowadays; there is no longer domestic corporal punishment. They access medical treatment; children put on shoes us we didn't. Their schools are close to their homes; where as for us we used to walk a long distance".

**Eliphaz, Karongi district**



"I joined retail sector to provide my children with an education. In our country, parents have understood that education is a right and that a child's health, development and welfare are essential. As parents our responsibility is to safeguard these rights".

**Mukaneza, Kinazi sector**

"I have been fishing since 1982. Regarding the issue of child rights protection in Rwanda: things have changed a lot - in my time we didn't go to school, today's children are enjoying numerous rights including the right to education".

**Aloys, Gikomero sector**



"The most significant change has been democratization and equal access to education. Before the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, education in Rwanda was reserved for the privileged few, but over the last 20 years access to education has increased tremendously."

**Pascasie, Gasabo district**

## END NOTE

This publication has provided a detailed account of Rwanda's journey towards advancement of child rights during the past 20 years of the country's liberation and 25 years of UN CRC adoption. This journey has been possible thanks to the political will and the partnership of different stakeholders.

Notable among the achievements is the landmark child care reform which has facilitated reintegration of children from institutions to families. The renowned Malayika Mulinzi (Guardian Angels) network of compassionate and selfless men and women championed by Imbuto Foundation, has transformed children's lives through foster care. As a result, 2,395 out of 3,323 children were integrated in families since 2011.

Rwanda has made commendable improvements in reducing under-five child mortality (MDG4) from 103/1000 in 2005 to 54/1000 in 2012. The country has one of the highest primary school enrolment rates in Africa (97%) in the track of MDG2.

These and other achievements mentioned in the text require sustainability. The children are the future of our country and must be nurtured and protected to ensure a conducive environment for their development. Together we will continue to work harder to ensure that children's rights are promoted and protected in a sustainable manner so that they (children) are able to realize their own dreams.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Government of Rwanda would like to extend its gratitude to all its partners who are contributing to promote and protect the rights of children. Achievements made in the last twenty years could not have been realized without strong partnerships between Government institutions and International and National NGOs, faith-based and civil society organizations as well as the private sector. The Government of Rwanda is convinced that this fruitful cooperation will continue, and as new partners join this journey, the rights of children in Rwanda will remain at the forefront of our action.



## NOTES

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