STRATEGIC NOTE

Rwanda

2026-2029

Policy Advice Meets Catalytic Programming to Transform Institutions and Systems for the Advancement of GEWE in Rwanda

UN WOMEN

FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

STRATEGIC NOTE

Rwanda

2026-2029

UN Women
Kigali, February 2026

2026 UN Women. All rights reserved.

Cover Photo: UN Women/ Rwanda

INTRODUCTION

RWANDA'S GENDER EQUALITY LANDSCAPE

COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

Rwanda aspires to achieve upper-middle-income status by 2035 and developed country status by 2050[i] by fostering inclusive growth through Economic, Social, and Governance transformation under the National Strategy for Transformation-NST2 (2024-2029).With a population of 13.8 million[i], (52.5% women and 27% youth)[ii], the country prioritizes agrifood systems, infrastructure, manufacturing, social protection, and digitalization anchored in principles of gender equality, inclusivity, and sustainability. The NST2 also prioritizes skilling and job creation, especially for women and youth. The country's economic growth remains robust, reflected in sustained GDP growth of 8.9% in 2024 from 8.2% in 2023, driven by a strong performance in services, construction, and food crops[i]. It is however projected to drop to 7.5% in 2026 due to the possible contractionary effects of fiscal consolidation and tighter external financing conditions[ii].

---

[i] Rwanda Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and National Bank of Rwanda, Rwanda Economic Bulletin | Vol 1, May 2025

[ii] Idem

[i] National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), The Fourth Population and Housing Census, Youth Thematic Report, 2025

[ii] National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), The Fourth Population and Housing Census, Youth Thematic Report, 2025

[iii] NISR, Integrated Household Living Condition Survey (EICV 7), Gender Thematic Report, 2025

[iv] NISR, Integrated Household Living Condition Survey (EICV 7), Gender Thematic Report, 2025

[i] Republic of Rwanda, Five years government programme: National Strategy for Transformation (NST2) 2024-2029

GENDER EQUALITY SNAPSHOT

As per the 2024 World Economic Forum report, Rwanda ranks 39th globally on closing gender gaps, second in Africa, and maintains the first position globally on the share of women in parliament. Following the 2024 elections, women's representation in Parliament increased from 61% to 63.75%. Women also represent 53.8% in the Senate, 52% in Cabinet, and 46% in district councils.

Its Constitution guarantees equal rights for women and men, and it has ratified key international women's rights frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), among others, with commendable efforts to translate them into national policy and legal instruments. Rwanda has strengthened gender data systems including through the Gender Data Lab, National Gender Statistics Reports and the periodic 'State of Gender Equality Report' which have expanded the availability of sex-disaggregated data across sectors.

Despite progressive policies and strong legislative frameworks, significant gender disparities persist due to entrenched social norms, limited capacity, and resource constraints. Women continue to face structural barriers to economic participation, with lower labor force participation rates and higher unemployment, particularly among young women.

They are disproportionately concentrated on informal employment and remain more reliant on informal financial services, despite near-universal financial inclusion.

Women also shoulder a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work, limiting their economic opportunities and productivity. Similarly, gender-based violence remains widespread and socially normalized, with rising levels of intimate partner violence and continued acceptance of harmful practices among both women and men.

These persistent inequalities reflect deeply rooted structural and cultural drivers that undermine gender equality. Addressing them, therefore, requires sustained and transformative action to translate policy commitments into meaningful and lasting gains for women and girls. Moreover, the analysis, communication and use of gender data and statistics need to be strengthened for evidence-based decisions, policies, plans and programming across national governance and socio-economic agendas.

Women`s representation in governance structures

Parliament	63.75%
Senate	53.8%
Cabinet	38.2%
District Councils	46%

Labour force participation by sex

56.6% Women

71.1% Men

Unemployment rates by sex

17.6% Women

12.6% Men

Representation in informal economy by sex

Women **91.6%**

Men **89.3%**

Unpaid care and domestic Work

WOMEN
23.1 hrs/week

MEN
12.6 hrs/week

Physical and intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence increased from **40%** in 2014 to **46%** in 2019

Physical violence since age 15 increased from **35%** in 2014 to **37%** in 2029

Teenage pregnancy increased from **5%** in 2019 to **8%** in 2025

Social norms and wife beating: **65% women** and **39% men** aged 15–49 consider "**wife-beating**" justifiable under certain circumstance.

ABOUT THE UN WOMEN STRATEGIC NOTE

The Strategic Note (SN) articulates the multi-year strategy, rationale, envisioned results, targets, and resource requirements for a UN Women Office. In essence, the SN provides a roadmap for improving the lives of women and girls in the context where UN Women operates. It is developed in consultation with key partners and in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), UN Women's Strategic Plan and key national, regional, and global gender equality priorities. SNs are funded by a combination of core (loosely earmarked) and non-core resources (earmarked).

UN WOMEN`S CONTRIBUTIONS

UN Women Rwanda has been a key partner in supporting Rwanda's commitment to implementing international and regional GEWE norms and strengthening national legal and policy frameworks.

Established in the country since 1996 as a UNIFEM Programme office, it is one of the longest-standing UN Women presences in the region. Working across diverse contexts from post-genocide recovery and peacebuilding to resilience and sustainable development, the Office brings deep experience and a strong record of transformative gender equality results.

The Country Office has supported the development and implementation of progressive, gender-responsive laws, policies, strategies and institutions, while strengthening national capacities and advancing women's leadership at local and national levels. Through its integrated operational, normative, and coordination mandate, the office has contributed to measurable shifts in attitudes and perceptions, systems, and practices that advance gender equality and women's rights.

UN Women Rwanda has delivered tangible results across key areas such as women's leadership, the prevention of gender-based violence and women's economic empowerment. Women have accessed new economic opportunities, communities and service providers have strengthened prevention and response mechanisms, and time and labour-saving technologies have enhanced women's safety, productivity, and resilience. During the previous Strategic Note (2019-2025) period, UN Women Rwanda focused its programming on the following priority areas:

- Governance and Leadership
- Women Economic Empowerment
- Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
- UN System Coordination

UN Women Rwanda's Key Achievements (2019-2025)

Normative

Supported the adoption of gender responsive national laws, policies & strategies through advocacy and technical contributions e.g. The Revised National Gender Policy, Gender Mainstreaming and Accountability Minimum Standards, National Men Engage Strategy, Gender Mainstreaming Strategy in Sports Sector, PSTA 5, Guidelines for addressing GBV in the sports sector.

Contributed to the translation of global and regional commitments into national actions and reporting on commitments under CEDAW, BPfA, Maputo Protocol, GEF etc.

Capacities strengthened for insitutionalisation of gender-responsive budgeting incl. OL/2022 on PFM leading to notable increase in gender budgets

Coordination

GEWE effectively integrated into the Common Country Analysis (CCA), UNSDCF 2025-2029

Multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms and coordination mechanisms including national gender accountability days and the NGFC strengthened

UN joint programs with standalone and cross-cutting GEWE priorities designed and implemented.

Operational/Programmatic

Parliamentarians' enhanced GEWE knowledge and leadership skills to advance Rwanda's transformational gender agenda.

Expanded pipeline of women leaders at local and national levels through mentorship and internship programs

Increased income stability for women engaged in cooperatives and agribusiness

Strengthened the establishment of women-owned businesses, increasing from 18.5% to over 25%

Scaled provision of time-saving and care solutions that enabled women to reallocate time to income-generating activities

Empowered 5,000+ rural women to create and access income-generating activities, finance, and markets.

Improved capacities of 48 Isange One Stop Centres (IOSCs) countrywide, 4 GBV shelters, and 7,883 service providers (3,627 women &4,256 men) to effectively handle GBV cases and provide victim-centered and human rights-based services.

Shifted mindsets and behaviors through gender transformative approaches such as GALS and Men Engage

OUR PARTNERS

UN Women Rwanda acknowledges the following partners for their valued support towards the transformative results highlighted above.

Republic of Rwanda

UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office

Sweden Sverige

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Gates Foundation

Canada

german cooperation
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

Government of the Netherlands

From the People of Japan

UNAIDS

The Government of the Republic of Korea

RWANDA'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2026-2029

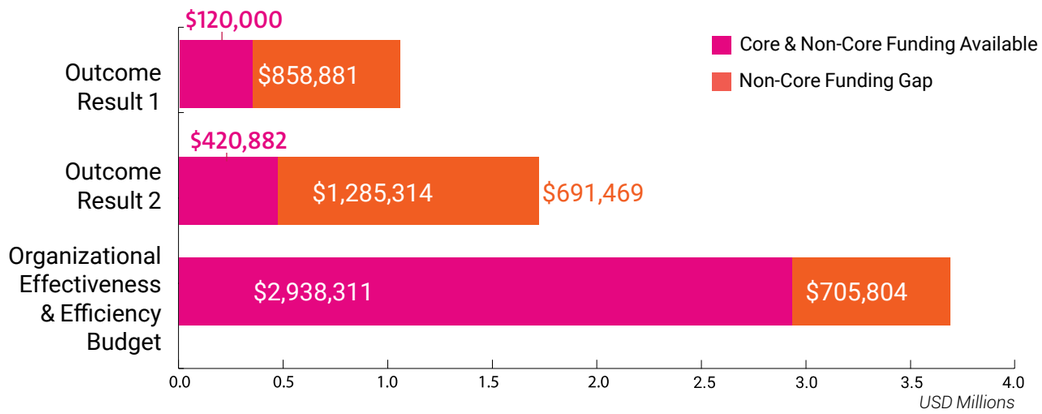
Amid a rapidly shrinking development financing landscape, gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) interventions continue to face disproportionate resource constraints globally and nationally. While Rwanda has demonstrated strong political commitment to advancing GEWE, the institutionalization of sustainable and predictable financing for gender equality within national systems and budgets remains a work in progress. This evolving context calls for more strategic, catalytic, and systems-oriented approaches to ensure that gender equality gains are sustained and scaled.

Guided by its Strategic Note (2026–2029), UN Women Rwanda is intentionally shifting its programmatic model from primarily project-based interventions toward upstream policy advisory, institutional capacity strengthening and catalytic programming that helps unlock public and private financing for GEWE. This shift responds to the evolving development financing landscape and Rwanda's continued transition toward nationally led, systems-driven development. It positions UN Women to unlock high-impact, scalable solutions that strengthen institutional systems, expand economic and leadership opportunities for women and girls, and accelerate inclusive and sustainable development outcomes.

The UN Women Rwanda Country Office`s Strategic Note directly contributes to the achievement of two UNSDCF priorities (Outcomes 1 - Economic Transformation & 3- Governance Transformation), while Outcome 2, (Social Transformation) will be indirectly contributed to through interventions under Outcomes 1 and 3. In so doing, the SN fully aligns with the three pillars of Rwanda's NST 2 namely, Economic Transformation, Social Transformation and Transformational Governance. NST 2 flagship priorities include job creation, expanding exports and private investment, strengthening education and skills development, enhancing health and social services, and advancing digital transformation and infrastructure.

These strategic priorities are fully aligned with UN Women's Strategic Plan 2026-2029. Through the implementation of its SN, UN Women Rwanda will primarily contribute to the realization of SDGs 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), while also generating broader crosscutting impact across other SDGs.

SN 2026-2029 RESOURCE OUTLOOK & REQUIREMENTS



- Total Outcome Result 1 Budget: **$978,881**
- Total Outcome Result 2 Budget: **$1,706,196**
- Total OEE budget: **$3,644,120**

Total Funding Gap = **$2,849,999**

2026-2029 IMPACT STATEMENT

All women and girls in Rwanda are able to reach their full potential and influence transformation towards a more equal society that promotes human rights, accountability, peace, unity, and economic resilience.

COLLECTIVE CONTRIBUTION

(Priority results under UNSDCF 2025-2029)

BY 2029, PEOPLE IN RWANDA BENEFIT FROM TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE THAT FOSTERS INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION, HUMAN RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY, UNITY, PEACE AND SECURITY.

BY 2029, PEOPLE IN RWANDA, ESPECIALLY THE MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS, HAVE IMPROVED LIVELIHOODS AND BENEFIT FROM COMPETITIVE, DIVERSIFIED AND RESILIENT INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH THAT PROMOTES GENDER EQUALITY, SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION.

UN WOMEN RWANDA SN 2026-2029 RESULTS

Government institutions have models and capacities to adopt and implement national laws, policies, strategies & plans in line with regional and international commitments on women's rights, peace and security.

GEWE advocates and stakeholders including WROs, CSOs, NGM, UN agencies have strengthened capacities, evidence and platforms for enhanced coordination and accountability for gender equality, women's rights and empowerment.

Relevant institutions, sectors, UN Agencies, and the Private Sector have the capacity, frameworks and prototypes to translate economic policies into women economic empowerment programmes.

Women leaders, women's organizations, cooperatives, networks and unions have the capacities, models and other tools to advocate for women and girls' access to and benefit from socio-economic resources, services and assets.

UN WOMEN DELIVERY OFFERS ACROSS PRIORITY RESULTS

Integrated Policy Advice: Providing tailored technical advice and assistance to the government and key stakeholders to design, implement, and monitor gender-responsive legislation, policies, and budgets, ensuring gender equality is effectively mainstreamed across all sectors.

Capacity Building: Strengthening the skills, knowledge, and systems of government institutions, UN agencies, CSOs, the private sector, development partners and other GEWE stakeholders to plan, implement, and sustain high-impact GEWE interventions.

Gender Data, Thought Leadership and Knowledge Management: Generation of gender data and statistics to inform decision making at all levels, documenting and disseminating Rwanda's proven GEWE approaches/models and facilitating south south learning exchanges exchanges to enable adaptation, replication, and scaling of these best practices across sectors and countries.

Strengthen Coordination and Accountability: Revitalizing multi-stakeholder platforms to enhance policy dialogue, joint programming, and pooled financing, and by leveraging existing GEWE accountability mechanisms to strengthen compliance, coherence, and accountability to global, regional, and national commitments.

Modelling Innovative, Transformative and Catalytic Programmatic Approaches: Co-create and pilot gender-transformative models, prototypes, concepts and frameworks that could be scalable through national systems, then influence and strengthen government and other stakeholders for ownership and sustainability.

CHALLENGES TO BE ADDRESSED

Gender-based violence, continues to undermine the physical and psychological well-being of women and girls.

Deeply entrenched discriminative gender norms and stereotypes sustain patterns of violence and limit women's voice, agency, and leadership.

Barriers in access to and control over economic resources.

Climate shocks disproportionately impact women and girls.

Limited access to high-value economic opportunities due to women's high concentration in informal sectors thus increasing their vulnerability.

Disproportionate care work, which limits their time for paid employment or entrepreneurial activities.

Underrepresentation in upper secondary education, technical and vocational training, and STEM disciplines limiting girls' access to digital driven skills for decent work and innovation.

Underrepresentation in private sector leadership, senior management, and decision-making roles across key economic sectors.

UN WOMEN RWANDA'S STRATEGY

OUTCOME RESULT 1:

By 2029, people in Rwanda benefit from transparent and accountable governance that fosters inclusive, equitable socio-economic transformation, human rights, gender equality, unity, peace and security. (CF Outcome 3).

UN Women Rwanda will leverage its coordination and normative mandates to strengthen institutional capacity and advance evidence based policies, plans, budgets, programs, and multi-stakeholder accountability for the implementation of national and international GEWE commitments.

By leveraging its convening power, UN Women will amplify Rwanda's leadership and commitments across key norm-setting and global accountability platforms, while driving national policy dialogue, advocacy, and public awareness through strategic moments such as key international days.

UN Women will also advance the implementation of and accountability under key national legal and policy frameworks, and will provide evidence, policy advice, and thought leadership towards legislative reforms and the development of new frameworks that respond to emerging development priorities and expand women's rights and opportunities.

It will drive systemic change by strengthening gender-responsive public finance and institutional accountability. By scaling gender-responsive budgeting in priority sectors and piloting innovative social norms interventions with men and youth, UN Women will address structural and socio-cultural barriers, accelerating progress toward equality, women's empowerment, and inclusive development.

Additionally, UN Women will strengthen Rwanda's gender data systems to support evidence-based policy, planning, and accountability for GEWE.

Through technical assistance, UN Women will contribute to the strengthened collection, analysis, and use of gender statistics and integrate gender indicators across national data systems.

It will also reinforce inclusive and coordinated gender governance by empowering civil society and women's networks with data and tools to monitor GEWE commitments, while supporting the private sector to adopt gender-responsive practices. Through strengthened coordination with national oversight bodies and UN inter-agency mechanisms, UN Women will promote joint advocacy, coherent programming, and harmonized reporting, ensuring women's voices inform national and local development priorities.

Finally, UN Women will strengthen women's leadership by building the capacity of women leaders and women's organisations to influence policies, drive accountability, and lead gender-responsive governance.

OUTCOME RESULT 2:

By 2029, all people in Rwanda, especially women, girls and other vulnerable groups have improved livelihoods and benefit from competitive, diversified, and resilient inclusive economic growth that promotes gender equality, sustainable production, and consumption. (CF Outcome 1)

UN Women will leverage its technical and catalytic programming expertise to support the Government of Rwanda and partners to implement laws and policies that address barriers to women's economic empowerment, promote equal opportunity and access to land, education, financial resources, assets and services, ensuring no woman is left behind.

UN Women will provide catalytic evidence-based technical support to develop gender-responsive strategies that strengthen women's and girls' economic justice, empowerment, and resilience. Efforts will focus on expanding access to skills, finance, decent jobs, and assets, while promoting investments in unpaid care work reduction, gender-responsive climate-smart agriculture, and digital innovation for decent jobs and social protection.

It will support government institutions to mainstream gender equality across sector strategies and promote a gender-responsive integrated ecosystem in partnership with financial institutions and development actors. It will also scale private-sector engagement through the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), promoting tailored financial products and services that expand women's access to finance and entrepreneurship.

UN Women will also advocate for and secure meaningful participation of women's rights organizations (WROs), gender advocates, and civil society in the design and implementation of joint programmes led by government, the UN system, and partners. Their perspectives will shape catalytic interventions that address discriminatory social norms, prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, advance women's economic rights, reduce unpaid care work, and expand access to socio-economic services.

Finally, UN Women will strengthen grassroots women's networks with skills and tools to drive inclusive, climate-resilient agricultural value chains and expand women's access to resources and services. It will document and scale successful pilots on mentorship, job placements, and digital skills for girls, working with government partners to embed these models in national systems. UN Women Rwanda will strengthen women's rights organisations and women leaders by building their capacity, amplifying their voice in national policy processes, and supporting scalable, evidence-based programmes that expand women's access to decent jobs, social protection, and climate-resilient value chains.

UN Women's Comparative and Collaborative Advantages

UN Women's comparative advantage lies in its unique triple mandate (normative, coordination, and programmatic) which positions it as the lead UN entity for gender equality and women's empowerment. Given its global convening mandate including as the secretariat for CSW, BPA, and GEAP, UN Women Rwanda is uniquely positioned to bring together UN agencies, government, development partners, and civil society to strengthen coherence, compliance, and accountability on GEWE commitments, including CSW, BPfA, Gender Equality Acceleration Plan (GEAP), etc., and to drive gender mainstreaming across policies, plans, budgets, and joint programmes through coordinated advocacy and evidence-based support. UN Women Rwanda is a recognized GEWE leader with strong technical capacity and is a trusted partner providing expertise to support national processes and influence key gender equality policy frameworks.

Delivering Transformative GEWE Results Through Integrated Partnerships

Becoming a funding partner

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 calls for transformative, collaborative action. Strategic, innovative, and efficient funding partnerships are essential to realize UN Women's vision of a gender-equal world, articulated in the Strategic Note.

How can funding partners engage with UN Women's SN?

Partners may provide SN direct funding, which is softly earmarked by geography (regional or country SN). These funds are flexible and catalytic; they enable UN Women to choose the highest-impact use of the funds in the country in which it operates. SN funding is also predictable, as commitments are often made for the full SN time span, better enabling transformative results for women and girls.

Importantly, SN direct funds strengthen UN Women's ability to respond to emerging needs in response to unforeseen contextual changes, including humanitarian needs (e.g., to prioritize the safety of women and girls in a crisis or in response to the adverse effects of natural disasters).

Furthermore, these funds can be reallocated when emerging evidence suggests a new approach is needed to produce the desired result more efficiently or effectively. They can be used for diverse types of costs and can therefore draw funds to areas that are often unfunded— yet crucial—such as advocacy for behavioural change, UN Coordination, etc., supporting the organization's effectiveness.

Funding partners may also provide project funding, which is tightly earmarked for a specific project or initiative in the SN. These funds are not flexible. Reporting on the use of such funds is done against the specific project but not against the full SN.

SN funding represents an ambitious, targeted, and smart investment in gender equality and women's empowerment.

To learn more about UN Women Rwanda`s funding partners landscape visit our Transparency Portal

UN WOMEN EXISTS TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS.

As the lead UN entity on gender equality and secretariat of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, we shift laws, institutions, social behaviours and services to close the gender gap and build an equal world for all women and girls. Our partnerships with governments, women's movements and the private sector coupled with our coordination of the broader United Nations translate progress into lasting changes. We make strides forward for women and girls in four areas: leadership, economic empowerment, freedom from violence, and women, peace and security as well as humanitarian action.

UN Women keeps the rights of women and girls at the centre of global progress – always, everywhere. Because gender equality is not just what we do. It is who we are.

UN WOMEN

KG 7 Avenue #51, 3rd Floor,
Ebenezer House, Kigali Rwanda

africa.unwomen.org unwomen unwomenrwanda unwomen unwomenrwanda