



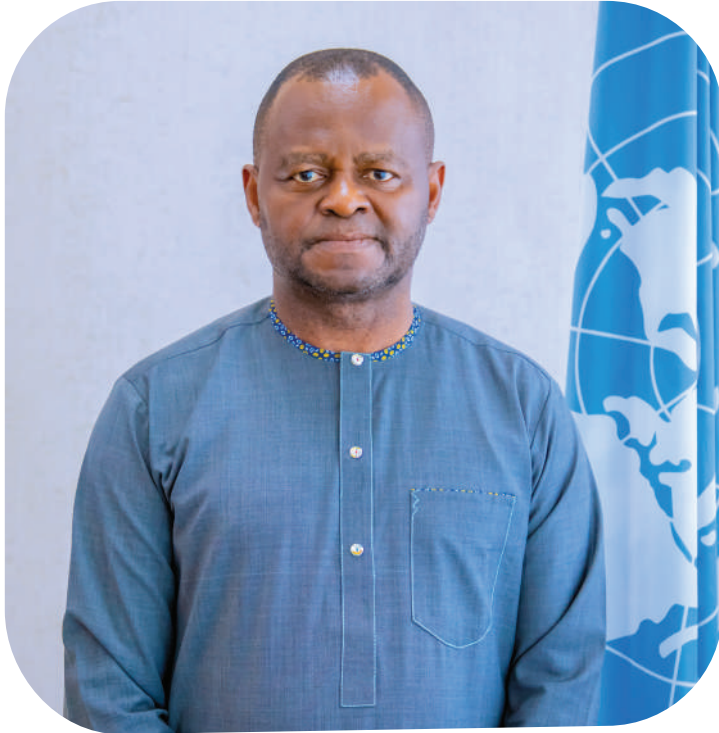
UNITED NATIONS
RWANDA



TURI KUMWE

Newsletter | 2024 Quarter 1

FOREWORD



© UNRCO / Aristide Muhire

Mr. Ozonnia Ojielo UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR

Dear Esteemed Partners, as we come to the close of yet another quarter, I extend a heartfelt welcome to each and every one of you to the first edition of our quarterly newsletter, TURIKUMWE, for the year 2024.

It's so motivating that each passing quarter brings with it new opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and progress. Our collective efforts, as the United Nations Country Team are dedicated to harnessing these opportunities to their fullest potential, driving positive change and advancing the well-being of all Rwandans. The pages of this newsletter bear testament to the remarkable work undertaken by our dedicated team, alongside our partners and stakeholders, across various sectors and domains.

From fostering partnerships for sustainable development, to championing health of local communities, promoting inclusion and supporting people living with disabilities and Leaving No one Behind, the newsletter elaborates how our interventions in different sectors benefit local Rwandans from all works of life reflecting our unwavering commitment to the principles and objectives of the United Nations.

Among the interesting conversations we had during this quarter was on the creative industry where an international event code-named Kigali Triennial was organized and attracted various industry players from different countries. This clearly shows that the creative sector can be transformative when we unite our efforts to support the younger generation.

As we navigate the complex challenges and dynamic landscapes of development, our resolve remains steadfast. Together, we stand poised to confront the present and shape the future.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those who contributed to our collective efforts and accomplishments. Your dedication, passion, and collaboration are the driving forces behind our shared success.

I hope that the stories and insights shared within these pages inspire us to continue our journey with renewed vigor and determination. Together, let us forge ahead on the path towards a more prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable future for Rwanda.



Agnes Nibakure poses for a photo with the baskets ready to sell to the local market.



A BEACON OF LIGHT FOR AGNES: INVESTING IN RURAL WOMEN FOR INCOME GENERATION

As the sun curved in over the hilly landscape marred by frequent landslides – a clear sign of the impact of climate change – in southern Rwanda, a team of the UN Joint Programme for Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE) met Agnes Nibakure, a 43-year-old woman participating in the programme supported by Norway, Sweden and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. *“The family journey had been marked by some conflicts, rooted in a lack of self-confidence to manage the little resources we have including the livestock and food at home,”* she said.

Hailing from Rango village, in Nyaruguru district, Agnes married and started a family at a tender age of 16, with limited knowledge of women’s empowerment. She is now a member of Amahoro (peace in the local language) cooperative, comprising 20 resilient women and 10 supportive men who are experiencing life-changing transformations thanks to the JP RWEE.

After receiving JP RWEE training on equality and women’s empowerment Agnes expressed, *“My life was transformed as I and my colleagues were enlightened, we are no longer victims of domestic violence”*, she reported.

Agnes found new strength within herself, after she and her husband, Emmanuel Bacumi, had lost their entire house and livelihood in one fell swoop of a landslide in 2022 igniting even more severe conflicts between them.

The turning point came when Agnes joined the savings group formed as part of the JP RWEE initiative. With a small loan of Rwf 10,000, about (USD 8) from the savings group, Agnes kick started a small-scale business involving potatoes, selling baskets, and plastic containers in the village market. In just three months, Agnes not only repaid the loan but also doubled a profit of Rwf 10,000

With her entrepreneurial spirit ignited by JP RWEE, Agnes had bigger dreams. After losing land and a house in the valley, Agnes rented a small piece of land and cultivated beans, yielding 30 kilograms for home consumption. Earning a steady income from her various ventures. She proceeded to register her business, create a brand, and ultimately became a recognized entrepreneur in Rwanda.

 [Read more](#)



Welcome to MADE IN Rwanda

Made in Rwanda, Produced and managed by Women



© Sokokuu Africa



HOW IDRIS YUSUF MANAGED TO BEAT THE CURSE OF UNEMPLOYMENT WITH SOKO KUU PLATFORM.

When Idris Yusuf reflects on unemployment in Africa, his mind is flooded with memories of the years he spent wandering the bustling streets of Lagos, Nigeria, contemplating what his future might hold.

Little did he know that he would stumble upon a transformative initiative spearheaded by AeTrade and partners, ultimately altering the course of his life forever.

“AeTrade Group gave me the opportunity to be a vendor on the Sokokuu Platform and also as an Affiliate. As a vendor I am able to list my Made In Africa products and ship across Africa to any buyer that needs the products” He explains.

He narrates that as an Affiliate, he is part of the AeTrade shared prosperity model offered to Affiliates. With this, he’s able to earn 50% of subscription fees, of paying vendors.

“These two have direct benefits to my life, to be engaged on something tangible (and futuristic) that eventually brings a return or income”.

Soko kuu is an eCommerce marketplace built to operationalize the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and create jobs and prosperity for more Africans.

“I now know that great things are possible at the African Level. Sokokuu can help serve as a distribution channel to our items. Also as this is a decent work, and also one that is Scalable. I just need to put in more effort on my side”. He reflected.

The issue of unemployment in Africa presents itself as a complex and multifaceted challenge, deeply intertwined with various social, economic, and political dynamics. At its core, the pervasive nature of unemployment not only undermines individual livelihoods but also poses formidable barriers to overall societal progress and development across the continent.

The AeTrade Group has an ambitious goal to catalyse the creation of 24 million jobs over the next five years, through country programmes in ten countries. This is the first phase with the ultimate goal to create 80-125 million by 2037, thus contributing towards the eradication of extreme poverty in Africa.

[Read more](#)





© FAO Rwanda

Chef Phiona Ninsiima is optimistic about the new recipe book.



TRADITIONAL CUISINE IS BEYOND THE MEAL: IT'S ABOUT CONNECTING WITH HERITAGE-CHEF NINSIIMA

Preparing and savoring a delicious meal is always fascinating, but there's something truly unforgettable about crafting and enjoying a natural, traditional cuisine. For Chef Phiona Ninsiima, it's not just about the flavors; it's about connecting with heritage, honoring traditions, and experiencing the rich cultural tapestry woven into each dish.

From gathering fresh ingredients to following age-old recipes passed down through generations, every step is a journey through history and a celebration of authenticity. In fact, according to her, It's more than just a meal—it's a profound experience that leaves an indelible mark on the senses and the soul."

Chef Phiona and others are so enthusiastic about the new recipe book that will impart more knowledge about preparing traditional cuisine thanks to the UN Rwanda joint initiative under the FAO and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that have partnered with the Rwanda Arts Initiative to develop a recipe book aimed at promoting Rwandan traditional cuisine.

"For any culture to be full, food needs to be at the core of it. That's one of the reasons the new recipe book will show our identity, not to mention that our own local dishes are very nutritious," – Chef Phiona Ninsiima

The objective of this initiative is to preserve Rwanda's culinary heritage while advocating for the utilization of local ingredients, which have historically been overlooked or underutilized despite their nutritional value.

Implemented under the nutrition programme, the recipe book will showcase traditional crops and recipes that represent Rwandan culture and will include a three-course meal using native ingredients such as sorghum, millet, taro, sweet potatoes and others.

According to Ms Coumba D. Sow the FAO Country Representative, Rwanda is fortunate to have an abundance of high-quality produce from agriculture, livestock, fisheries, and non-wood forest products, including mushrooms adding that this presents a fantastic opportunity for food lovers to explore and experiment with various cooking techniques and recipes.

 [Read more](#)





© WFP/JohnPaul Sesonga

Jean-Claude and Vestine have benefited immensely from the Gender Action Learning Systems.



HOW THE GENDER ACTION LEARNING SYSTEM IS IMPACTING LIVES.

Soon after sunrise in Rwanda's Ngoma and Nyaruguru Districts, Vestine and Jean-Claude walk from their home to their garden, holding hoes in their hands. The married couple work efficiently – and happily – side-by-side, tending to their beans and maize crops. It's a renewed partnership and a product of the UN Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE) programme approach.

When asked about the past, Vestine recalls a disrupted domestic life "characterized by conflict, poverty and lack of confidence in my personal decisions," which caused the couple to separate temporarily.

The Gender Action Learning System (GALS), a key methodology used by the JP RWEE, enables women and men to critically reflect on their relationships and household gender dynamics and jointly plan livelihood strategies.

As part of the wider JP RWEE programme activities, Vestine enrolled in trainings on agricultural productivity held in the Terimberesake cooperative where the JP RWEE also provided solar-powered irrigation equipment. She reported learning a range of new skills during the training sessions.

In Rwanda, a climate mitigation component was integrated into the Gender Action Learning System. This was a new approach to the traditional methodology, recognizing the link between advancing women's economic empowerment and building resilience to climate change. This involved identifying climate challenges and solutions specific to women and men and collaborating to implement these solutions collectively.

"I applied skills acquired through GALS, which not only increased my self-confidence and self-efficacy but also my skills in climate change adaptation and mitigation practices and now I started applying good agricultural practices learned from the programme," she explained.

Jean-Claude also enrolled in the programme and learned how to set up and operate a small-scale mobile phone business while trading goats to expand his income and reinvest in the business.

Now, Jean-Claude and Vestine harvest their maize and beans together. Their yields have more than doubled since enrolling in the programme. The couple generated enough income from selling their crops that they could afford to renovate their home.

 [Read more](#)





Jean Claude is now happily settled in Canada.



A JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE: FROM EASTERN DRC TO WINNIPEG, CANADA - THE STORY OF JEAN CLAUDE

Jean Claude was just 10 years old when he and his sister fled their village in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo due to conflict. Seeking refuge in Rwanda, they eventually found shelter in Nyabiheke Camp in 2008.

After settling down, Jean Claude began to fill his days with school, eventually taking classes at Kibogora Polytechnic in pursuit of a bachelor's degree in accounting.

In 2019, he received news that both he and his sister were eligible to begin the resettlement process. In Rwanda, the United Nations prioritizes vulnerable resettlement cases. Currently, ten resettlement countries offer quotas for refugees in Rwanda.

After undergoing interviews, assessments, submissions of application, the selection process, and medical screenings; in November 2023, Jean Claude and his sister were finally ready to be resettled in Canada.

Excited for the new opportunities that awaited them, Jean Claude expressed,

"Moving with my sister is beyond my expectations. It has been my dream to make it to another country like Canada, where I can learn new things and develop myself. When I get to Canada, my dream is to complete my studies in accounting and find a good job."

Despite the excitement, there was also trepidation as he bid farewell to friends and loved ones who would remain in Rwanda. *"To my friends and people I'm leaving behind, I want to tell them to stay positive and not lose hope. I want Canadians to know there are still many refugees here, and they also need resettlement opportunities."*

Though Jean Claude and his sister have safely arrived in their new home in Winnipeg, they will never forget their time in Rwanda. *"I'm thankful for our time in Rwanda; we were lucky to meet people who share the same language so we could communicate easily. It helped us feel at home there, and I hope it will be the same for us in Canada."*

Jean Claude and his sister are among the refugees resettled through programmes jointly implemented by the UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

 [Read more](#)





©UNICEF

Shamim Uwitonze a mother of twins in Kicukiro District, Gikondo Sector, was motivated by the Health Promotion Officer's personal touch to make an informed decision to vaccinate her children against novel oral poliomyelitis vaccine Type 2



EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES FOR INFORMED HEALTH CHOICES: POLIO VACCINATION AWARENESS IN KICUKIRO DISTRICT

Traveling along the serpentine roads of Kicukiro district one of the districts within the City of Kigali, reveals picturesque landscapes of rolling hills and steep valleys.

Villages such as Kagugu, and Kigarama - Bwerankoli - Nyenyeli witnessed hesitancy among Rwandans during the first round of polio vaccination in July 2023.

The reluctance stemmed from limited information about the oral polio vaccine and misconceptions perpetuated by religious influencers during the nationwide campaign.

Recognizing this challenge, District Health Officer Ms Emerance Ufitinema initiated a five-day awareness campaign, hoping to address the hesitancy prevalent among residents of the Gikondo sector in Kicukiro District regarding polio vaccination.

She employed interpersonal communication skills and an unconventional, community - centered approach to deliver accurate educative messages about novel oral poliomyelitis vaccine type 2.

She shared, *"I wanted our residents to have the right information to make informed decisions about their children's health."*

Residents of Gikondo Sector responded positively to the campaign. Shamim Uwitonze, a resident with young twins reflected on her and her peers' participation in the sessions saying, *"I saw that health-seeking behavior is motivated by different things, from personal experiences to a sense of communal purpose."*

In Gikondo, residents value interpersonal communication channels, favoring small group settings where accurate awareness messages are relayed through one-on-one interactions. Shamim Uwitonze, after one such awareness session, emphasized the importance of heart-to-heart communication before consenting to vaccinate her children. She reflected, *"The personal touch in these discussions influences our decision-making regarding our children's health."*

 [Read more](#)



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

©UN



Digital payment has the potential to accelerate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



PROMOTING DIGITAL PAYMENT TO ACCELERATE THE SDGS

In the lush hills of Rwanda, where tea farming sustains livelihoods and communities thrive, a quiet revolution is underway. It's a transformation fueled not by machinery or magic, but by the power of responsible digital payments.

Picture this: once a realm of cash transactions and lengthy waits, tea farmers now find themselves embracing a new era of efficiency and transparency. Thanks to the adoption of digital payment systems, their financial dealings have become streamlined and secure, setting the stage for unprecedented growth and empowerment.

For the women who form the backbone of rural economies, this shift holds particular promise. With digital payments, they gain newfound autonomy over their finances, unlocking opportunities for prosperity that were once out of reach.

But the impact extends beyond individual farmers. Across the tea value chain, from field to factory, stakeholders reap the rewards of this digital revolution. Reduced payment timelines mean faster access to funds for farmers, while factories enjoy lower costs and heightened productivity.

Behind this transformative wave stands the United Nations, through the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), offering support and guidance to navigate the complexities of modernization.

Their partnership with Rwanda's tea sector has yielded staggering results: Payment timelines slashed by 87%, worker costs reduced by 10%, and productivity soaring by 30%. In the tea sector, scaling up responsible digital payments to farmers could result in a saving of USD 8 million over ten years - funds that could be reallocated to address climate change and other critical issues.

"We are committed to working closely with all stakeholders in the Rwandan tea sector to address the gaps that remain for scaling responsible digital initiatives. In particular we see our engagement with the National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB) as critical for exploring sustainable and scalable solutions for the tea sector." Jenny Costelloe, Executive Director, Ethical Tea Partnership

These benefits could bring much wider impact if responsible digital payments were embedded across the whole agricultural sector in Rwanda, with the potential to reach 3.8 million farmers, including 2.1 million women.

 [Read more](#)





©UNRGO

Members of the private sector in Rwanda, along with leaders from UN Rwanda and the Global Compact, engaged in a productive dialogue aimed at advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



PARTNERING WITH RWANDA'S BUSINESS COMMUNITY FOR SDG ACCELERATION

For the effective implementation and realization of the SDGs, it is imperative that all stakeholders, including civil society organizations, the private sector, government agencies, academia, international organizations, and local communities directly engage in the process.

By actively engaging in initiatives aligned with the SDGs, such as promoting environmentally-friendly practices, fostering social inclusivity, and investing in community development projects, businesses can make meaningful contributions towards achieving the nation's sustainable development objectives.

The call was made during the Breakfast meeting with the business community players in Kigali organized by the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) to deliberate on the collective endeavors to advance the SDGs. The Chief Executive Officer of Rwanda Private Sector Federation Mr. Stephen Ruzibiza, underscored the need for the urgent participation of the business community in order to create a conducive environment for the SDGs to be achieved.

"The easiest way to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals is through collaboration and working together as stakeholders. There are quite a lot of opportunities for the business community and I would urge our members to join the journey," he said.

The UN Resident Coordinator in Rwanda, Ozonnia Ojielo, stated that the private sector is the key driver of the economy, adding that UN's ambition is to harness and support the private sector momentum. *"We cannot achieve the SDGs if the private sector is not in the driver's seat. It's imperative for sustainable development. The SDGs speak to our bottom-line profits and shareholders' interests, but they also pave a path for government revenues to provide public goods."* said Ozonnia

Ncomile Ndlovu, the UNGC Africa Regional Coordinator, expressed enthusiasm about the forum where participants discussed uniting and working together to advance the SDGs.

"What came out as a key element is how companies can contribute to the SDGs and how they can at the same time benefit from this contribution to rescuing the SDGs. It's not a matter of just the government, civil society, or the private sector; it's everyone who's involved in rescuing the SDGs. I look forward to the future engagement and the growth of the UN Global Compact in Rwanda," she said.

The panel discussion titled "Positioning Rwanda's Private Sector to Drive the SDGs Achievement," gave rise to many notable moments, touching on sustainability as the new business as usual and not as an exception, the significance of collaborative work and partnership to reach the target goals, and the benefits of embedding SDGs in corporate strategies for the economic growth of Rwanda.

[Read more](#)



© UNFPA



Youth corner initiative has greatly contributed to information sharing among the Youth

INFORMATION SHARING CENTRES HAVE TRANSFORMED OUR LIVES –NYIRANSHIMIYIMANA

Rose Nyiranshimiymana, a resident of Rubengera is a regular patron and one of the beneficiaries of the established youth centers. She passionately shares her sentiments as a young woman who has benefited immensely for the Centres.

“Here, we not only receive vital information regarding sexual health but also find solace and support in times of distress, especially when confronting the harrowing realities of gender-based violence (GBV). The center’s dedication goes beyond mere education; it extends to providing comprehensive medical assistance and a nurturing environment where we feel heard and empowered to seek help when needed.” She testified.

Nyiranshimiymana like many other young women, is now a beneficiary of the establishment of the health centres that provide comprehensive information on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

Prior to this, the insufficiency of comprehensive information on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) presented a critical concern, creating a scenario where young individuals encounter increased vulnerabilities.

This inadequacy significantly hampers endeavours to reduce the risk of youth exposure to various threats, such as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) including HIV, early and unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and the looming spectre of Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

As a solution, UN Rwanda through UNFPA and other partners, including Korea International Cooperations Agency (KOICA), and the Embassy of the Republic of Korea embarked on a project dubbed the 'Healthy and Empowered Youth Project.' This initiative, aimed at bridging critical knowledge and service gaps in SRH, as well as combat GBV among adolescents and youth in select regions and refugee camps in Rwanda.

Innocent Dusabimana, the head of Rubengera Health Center, expressed the positive impact of the youth corner initiative, emphasizing its contribution to the community. *“There’s an increased engagement of youth since the establishment of the youth centre. We offer various valuable services, including educating youth about their bodies, providing medical assistance, offering access to high-speed internet, and delivering essential mental health counselling.”*

 [Read more](#)





© WFP/JohnPaul Sesonga

Divine's life has been transformed through the power of a simple kitchen garden.



DIVINE'S KITCHEN GARDEN AND THE UN'S NUTRITION TRANSFORMATION IN REFUGEE CAMPS

In the heart of Mahama refugee camp, we find Kabageni Divine, a 35-year-old mother who has transformed her life through the power of a simple kitchen garden. A one-by-one-meter plot of fresh vegetables next to her house has become a source of life and joy for Divine and her five children.

Divine's journey is linked to the support under the Nutrition joint programme that involves various agencies including the WFP, UNHCR, WHO, FAO and UNICEF in close collaboration with the Government through the Ministry in Charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA).

Through skill-building initiatives undertaken in partnership with Plan International, Divine has cultivated her kitchen garden, ensuring her family has a ready supply of fresh produce.

The establishment of over 10,000 kitchen gardens in the five refugee camps across Rwanda, coupled with green vegetable nurseries in host communities, has aimed to combat chronic malnutrition, averaging at 19.4 per cent across all camps.

The prevalence of anemia, particularly among children and pregnant women, remains a challenge, prompting concerted efforts by the government, supported by the UN, to address this issue.

Kitchen gardens play a pivotal role in providing refugees with access to fresh vegetables, contributing to improved dietary diversity. "In the past, I lacked knowledge on how to feed my children," said Divine. *"With knowledge I gained from the nutrition programme, I now feed my children well,"* she added.

The UN's nutrition as well as social and behaviour change programmes, focus on sustainable solutions to empower refugee parents like Divine with the necessary skills and knowledge about child nutrition.

"A diet rich in vegetables has significantly improved nutrition in camps," said Phocas Murwanashyaka, a nutrition project coordinator from Plan International serving as UN implementing partner on nutrition activities in refugee camps. *"Balanced diet promotes good health, protects children and breastfeeding mothers against diseases, and promotes children's healthy growth,"* he added.

 [Read more](#)





Despite challenges, Oswald bravely confronted the isolation, stigma, and ignorance surrounding disabilities, mostly in environments that weren't designed for inclusivity.



NAVIGATING THROUGH STIGMA AND IGNORANCE - COLLECTIVE EFFORTS TOWARDS DISABILITY INCLUSION

Oswald's journey began shortly after birth when polio left his legs paralyzed. This presented many challenges, including mobility issues and societal exclusion. However, the biggest struggle was the lack of resources; his family couldn't afford a wheelchair. They improvised by creating makeshift solutions, digging holes in their home and garden to help him sit with stability.

Despite these challenges, Oswald's determination, resilience, and the unwavering support of his family propelled him forward as he pursued his education against all odds. He bravely confronted the isolation, stigma, and ignorance surrounding disabilities, mostly in environments that weren't designed for inclusivity.

His time at one university in a developed country was particularly challenging. The physical infrastructure was not designed with accessibility in mind, with buildings lacking ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms. Students with mobility impairments like Oswald struggled to navigate campus, attend classes on upper floors, or even enter certain buildings.

The university also lacked inclusive policies and support services for students with disabilities. This led Oswald to embark on a mission to foster change. He founded an association, leveraging his roles within the student union to champion the introduction of accessible facilities at the university.

In Rwanda, the 2022 population and housing census revealed that there are over 390,000 persons with disabilities, comprising 3.4% of the total population. Despite strides in inclusivity, challenges persist in inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, including the scarcity of essential assistive technologies like wheelchairs and braille machines.

Oswald's advocacy was hinged on responding to such challenges. He did not stop at university reform. When he returned to Rwanda, he founded an inclusive school in Kamonyi District, that started with just eight pupils in 2018 and has since grown to serve over 300 learners. *"Having disabilities should not be a barrier."* Oswald says.

[Read more](#)





UNITED NATIONS
RWANDA



@UNRwanda



UNRwanda



United Nations Rwanda



One UN Rwanda



United Nations Rwanda



rwanda.un.org