



UNITED NATIONS
RWANDA



TURI KUMWE

Newsletter | 2024 Quarter 3



Dear colleagues and partners,

Welcome to the third Edition of Turikuwe!

As we approach the finalization of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2025-2029, we are reminded of two key tenets:

1. The configuration of the UN Country Team (UNCT) is vital in developing the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), as it ensures a cohesive, aligned, and well-resourced approach to achieving national priorities. A well-structured UNCT fosters collaboration, leverages diverse expertise, and drives impactful results, maximizing the UN's support for sustainable development.

2. The new UNSDCF will seek to drive transformative progress, ensuring sustainable development. Partnerships will remain key to unify efforts, resources, and expertise toward shared national development goals. By fostering strong and inclusive alliances the UNSDCF enables coordinated action and resource mobilization, for impactful development outcomes for Rwanda's future.

In the elaboration of this new UNSDCF I am grateful for the active engagement of all our Partners, reaffirming their commitment to Rwanda's leadership and strategic priorities, which remains central to our shared vision.

This edition also showcases initiatives that demonstrate the power of collaboration in advancing Rwanda's development agenda.

From launching a joint program amplifying digital technologies in cross-border trade to enhancing animal health with digital tools under the One Health approach, we witness the transformative potential of innovative solutions. We also celebrate the increased representation of women in leadership, with 63.8 percent of women in the Chamber of Deputies, underscoring Rwanda's commitment to gender equality.

Rwanda's resilience shines in other sectors as well. In education, internet connectivity is improving learning outcomes, while the nation's rich culinary heritage is spotlighted in a new book on gastronomy. In the justice sector, the inauguration of the ADR Center marks a new era of accessible justice. Additionally, this quarter's UNCT Field visit to Bugesera district, Eastern Rwanda, brought us to the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM), where stories of hope and safety from refugees and asylum seekers reinforced the center's critical role.

These collective efforts, strengthened by partnerships, underscore Rwanda's transformative journey toward sustainable development. I thank all our Partners and look forward to our continued impactful collaboration.

Enjoy!



Mr. Ozonnia Ojelo
UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR



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UN staff listening to Ozonnia Ojielo, UN Resident Coordinator, as he sets the tone during the Results Framework Workshop.



SHAPING A BOLD FUTURE: THE NEW COOPERATION FRAMEWORK (2025-2029)

For the past six months, the UN Country Team in Rwanda has been diligently working on developing the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2025-2029. The elaboration of the UNSDCF is led by the Resident Coordinator and the UN Country Team, with technical leadership of the Programme Management Team (PMT). This Framework is designed to guide the UN's support for the next 5 years to support the country achieve its goals in alignment with Agenda 2030

Once validated, the UNSDCF will be the strategic tool to foster partnerships and collaboration, and a coordinated approach to address key socio-economic challenges in the country.

"We're doing something different and innovative this time," said Ozonnia Ojielo, UN Resident Coordinator. "We've created a process to clearly define where the UN can make the most impact. It's not just about programmes and projects; our role is broader—focusing on advocacy, convening, and bringing people together to support the Government in driving its strategic priorities. This new Framework will serve as a partnership document."

"Our approach is inclusive—we value every idea and expertise within the system," said Mutinta Nseluke Hambayi, Deputy Country Director of WFP and Chair of the PMT. "I believe this new Cooperation Framework will be closely aligned with Rwanda's National Strategy for Transformation."

The ongoing elaboration of the UNSDCF coincides with Rwanda's recent approval of the 2nd National Strategy for Transformation (NST2, 2024-2029), a five-year plan aimed at transforming Rwanda into a prosperous, inclusive, and resilient nation. NST2 prioritizes job creation, export growth, quality education, reduced stunting, and enhanced public service delivery, setting the stage for Rwanda's ambitious economic growth.

A major milestone in this process was the development of the Theory of Change (ToC). A Workshop on the formulation of the ToC was held in August, which identified key areas of focus, strategic areas of investments, and drivers that will shape the UN's work from 2025 to 2029. Equally critical is the ongoing formulation of the Results Framework which translates these insights into a practical plan for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

"Rwanda aims for sustainable, stable economic growth, with a target of at least 9.3% annually," said Prime Minister Dr. Edouard Ngirente during his presentation of NST2 to Parliament.

The UNSDCF aims to drive economic transformation in Rwanda through inclusive, resilient, and diversified growth that prioritizes the livelihoods of vulnerable groups. By leveraging innovative financing, public-private partnerships, and climate finance, it supports job creation and sustainable natural resource management. The framework emphasizes capacity building in employable skills, digital technologies, and value chain competitiveness to boost productivity and resilience, particularly among micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). It also aims to enhance disaster risk management, green technologies, and climate adaptation strategies to ensure the economy remains sustainable and shock-responsive.

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DP Group Meeting



DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS POSITION FOR AFS SUMMIT 2024: TRANSFORMING FOOD SYSTEMS, DRIVING INNOVATION, AND UNLOCKING INVESTMENTS IN KIGALI

At their regular monthly gathering on Friday 16th August 2024, the Development Partners Group convened for their first meeting following Rwanda's recent general elections and the swearing-in of the newly elected President, Prime Minister, and 80 Members of Parliament, including the new Speaker.

The meeting set the stage for renewed collaboration between Development Partners, as the country advances into its next phase of growth and transformation, it is poised to harness new opportunities while addressing emerging challenges. *“On behalf of all Development Partners in Rwanda, I would like to say hearty congratulations to His Excellence President Paul Kagame on his inauguration for another term in office,”* said Ozonnia Ojielo, UN Resident Coordinator.

Agriculture: The Backbone of Rwanda's Economy

With the realization of the crucial role of the agriculture sector in social transformation, women's economic empowerment, and youth employment, the DPs held a policy dialogue to unpack how to better position their efforts in building resilient and sustainable Agri-food Systems.

During the Development Partners meeting, Dr. Olivier Kamana, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources made a presentation on the key elements of the new Rwanda's Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (PSTA5).

“The strategies that we had before were only tailored to Agriculture, taking agriculture and livestock development as one sector.

But now we are taking a wider multisectoral approach and considering agri-food systems and integrating climate resilience,” he said.

The Ministry states that Agriculture development has contributed to about two-thirds of the poverty reduction achieved between 2001 and 2017. In 2023, the sector accounted for 27% of GDP and about 34% of exports. Whilst nearly 69% of households are engaged in agriculture, and an estimated 400,000 people are employed in agri-food systems.

“Our focus at the AFS Summit is to create opportunities, leveraging the deal room for different kinds of stakeholders and potential investors in Rwanda. As a UN system it is important that we enhance engagement through the hosting and or participation to side events,” said Coumba Sow, FAO Representative.

The PSTA5 emphasizes sustainability, resilience, and nutrition through three key priorities: modernizing agriculture and animal resources, improving market linkages and post-harvest management, and strengthening enablers for effective food systems. It aims to scale up climate-smart agriculture, expand irrigation, improve nutrition and storage, enhance extension services, drive research, and commercialize agriculture. AgriHubs and Animal Hubs will foster synergies among stakeholders, while digital technologies and strong partnerships are essential for progress. As the Africa Food Systems Summit approaches, Partners are urged to align efforts, establish legacy programs, and engage in a collaborative approach to shape Rwanda's sustainable agri-food future.

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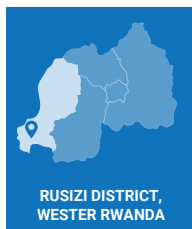


One of the women cross-border traders who sells fruits at Rusizi II, the border between Rwanda and the DRC.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



ITC, IOM, UNCDF, UNCTAD, RCO AND THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA LAUNCH PROGRAMME TO AMPLIFY DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN CROSS-BORDER TRADE

A new joint initiative called Amplifying Digital Opportunities in Cross-Border Trade, virtually launched on October 11, is set to economically empower Rwanda's small-scale cross-border traders, particularly women, youth, and persons with disabilities, through digital inclusion and regional integration.

The programme is supported by contributions from the European Union and the Government of Spain under the United Nations SDG Digital Transformation Funding Round, and implemented by Participating United Nations Organizations (PUNOs) involving the International Trade Centre (ITC) as lead implementing agency, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO), which plays an oversight and coordination role, ensuring the delivery of a unified 'One UN' approach.

"While developing good policies is essential, it is key that those policies be adapted and translated into effective services. Rwanda has already demonstrated that digital transformation can be fast-tracked, and this programme builds on that progress, empowering thousands of small-scale traders to access new markets and services through user-centric, digital solutions" said Ms. Ndèye Aissatou Masseck Ndiaye, Resident Coordinator ad interim during the virtual launch of the Joint Programme.

The new programme is a key component of the UN Joint SDG Fund's Digital High-Impact Track designed to harness digital innovation, data analytics,

and emerging technologies to drive sustainable development. By leveraging these tools, the programme aims to maximize its impact, providing small-scale cross-border traders with access to digital platforms, financial services, and new markets, to improve their livelihoods and promoting inclusive economic growth.

With women representing over 70% of small-scale cross-border traders, the programme places a strong emphasis on gender equality and on empowering female traders as agents of social and economic transformation. It focuses on dismantling barriers that hinder women's participation in digital trade, providing them with access to digital tools, financial literacy training, and market opportunities. By prioritizing gender-sensitive, digital policy reforms and digitally empowering cross-border traders, the Amplifying Digital Opportunities in Cross-Border Trade programme aligns with Rwanda's National Strategy for Transformation (NST-I and II), SMART Rwanda Master Plan and Vision 2050.

The ADO-CBT programme also directly contributes to the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC) Agenda, advancing Rwanda's integration into regional markets. Through enhanced digital infrastructure and policy harmonization, the initiative promotes smoother cross-border trade, improved logistics, and greater economic cooperation between Rwanda and its neighbours.

At the launch the European Union highlighted the importance of supporting digital transformation efforts in the Great Lakes Region.

 [Read more](#)





Abdallah, his wife Babeker, and their three kids make a lively family team



BUGESERA DISTRICT,
EASTERN RWANDA

HOPE AND SAFETY FOR REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS THROUGH THE EMERGENCY TRANSIT MECHANISM

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UNHCR, the Government of Rwanda (GoR) and the African Union (AU) established, with the support of the European Union, the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) Centre in Gashora Sector, Bugesera District, Rwanda in 2019. In August 2024; UNCT, jointly with DPs, had the opportunity to visit and experience a globally unique multistakeholder refugee protection response mechanism.

While running their shop in Sudan, Abdallah and his wife Babeker, together with their three children, never imagined that they would one day become asylum seekers. *“I was living a simple life, thinking of the future of my family, of my children”* Abdallah recounts to members of the UN Rwanda Country Team and partners during their field visit to Bugesera District on 30th August 2024.

The joint UNCT field visit served as an opportunity for the Team to gain a greater awareness of the purpose of the ETM in Rwanda and the needs of refugees and asylum seekers evacuated there. And to better understand the complementarity of UN interventions in Rwanda and how UN joint programmes can relate to the population hosted at the ETM.

The arduous journey of Abdallah’s family from Sudan to Rwanda

War erupted in their homeland in 2023, and Abdallah’s family was forced to flee Sudan leaving everything behind. In search of safety, they took a long and exhausting journey crossing the Sahara Desert on their way to Libya. But safety was nowhere to be found. They faced gunfire, bandits, and constant threats along the way, with no relief even as they made it into Libya. *“In the Sahara, I faced a lot of challenges and troubles with my little children,”*

the 31-year-old father recalls. His wife Babeker adds that *“the journey was very difficult. But there was no other solution but to leave Sudan.”*

After registering with UNHCR in Libya, the UN Refugee Agency, Abdallah and his family were eventually evacuated to Rwanda through the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM). Following months of uncertainty and hardship, they arrived at the ETM Centre in Gashora in November 2023, hoping for a fresh start and a safer future.

The transit centre in Gashora, with capacity to accommodate 700 evacuees at a time, was established in September 2019 by UNHCR, the Government of Rwanda and the African Union, with the support of the European Union. Since its establishment, over 2,400 refugees and asylum seekers from Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Guinea, Cote d’Ivoire, and Mali have been evacuated from Libya.

“Rwanda has welcomed us as refugees and done so much for us. It opened its doors to us,” Abdallah points out. *“When we arrived here in Rwanda, we felt the safety, security, and stability.”*

Asiya, a Somali lady evacuated from Libya to Rwanda, shares similar feelings to those of Abdallah.

“We are currently living a life that is much better than the one we had in Libya, where we faced extremely low living conditions and trauma,” she explains. *“Since arriving here, we have been able to restart our lives with new hopes, and we have been given the opportunity for resettlement. We have been welcomed warmly, and today we are living a good life.”*



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



Alphonsine Muhawenimana, a neighbor of Nyarubuye Primary School, uses her smartphone to access educational resources to teach her children through the school's internet connection.

THE POWER OF INTERNET CONNECTIVITY ENHANCES LEARNING

Improving the quality of education is one of the five key priorities outlined in Rwanda's new Strategy for Transformation (NST2). Education and digital connectivity are also transformative entry points or key transitions that can have catalytic and multiplier effects across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As UN Rwanda develops the new Cooperation Framework, aligning with the country's priorities and global needs to accelerate the SDGs is paramount.

When it comes to blending quality education with digital connectivity, UN Agencies in Rwanda, together with partners, are walking the talk. Take the Airtel-UNICEF Reimagine Education programme as an example, which empowers students, teachers, and families to learn online in Rwanda.

It is lunchtime at Nyarubuye Primary School and ecstatic screams fill the school yard as the children have fun. The grounds are alive with green-clad students engaging in different activities; some play football, some tag, and some swing on the low branches of small trees that spot the compound. Friendly and curious smiles from the active students add warmth to an already sunny day in Rwanda's Rwamagana District.

Eric, 13, is one of the students playing football. He deftly leaps and dribbles as his opponents on the field attempt to steal the ball. One succeeds, and Eric takes a break, panting and smiling. His joy and enthusiasm are palpable, and it so happens that he carries the same positive attitude to class.

"I love attending classes. I ask many questions during the classes, which makes my friends laugh and they tease me, but I don't mind," he says cheerfully. "I come from a poor household. My parents aren't always able to afford my school fees, but the school always finds a way to keep me here, so I always try to make the most of it."

Eric's inquisitiveness allows him to be always among the top five in all subjects, and he expects to perform even better now that his school has undergone an internet transformation.

Through UNICEF's inter-regional partnership with Airtel, "Reimagine Education", thousands of schools across 13 countries in Africa are being connected to the internet. More than half of primary and secondary schools in Rwanda are not connected to the internet. Thanks to the partnership, 21 schools are already using the internet provided by Airtel, with 200 more to be connected soon. In Nyarubuye Primary school, teachers and students could not be more ecstatic.

"Internet is expensive. It is tough to afford internet bundles daily," says Theodomir Gatete, an English teacher at Nyarubuye who has been in the profession for 20 years.

The internet was installed at this school two terms ago. Since then, Theodomir feels more confident in the quality of the education he is now able to give to his students.

"When I prepare lessons, I can research and find current, relevant, and detailed information that benefits my students. I can also access resources that demonstrate to me different and innovative techniques of teaching them certain topics, which I then practice with my students" he explains.

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©President's office.

Some of the newly elected women members of the lower house during the swearing in ceremony.

5 GENDER EQUALITY

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

KIGALI CITY, RWANDA

RWANDA REAFFIRMS ITS UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY WITH 63.8 PER CENT OF WOMEN IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

In a remarkable stride towards gender equality, Rwanda has once again demonstrated its unwavering commitment to gender parity in its latest 2024 legislative election results. The percentage of women's representation in the Chamber of Deputies increased from 61.3 in 2018 to 63.8 per cent of seats in 2024. According to the Constitution, at least 30 per cent of the lawmakers in the lower house must be women. That means that the percentage quota allocated to women corresponds to 24 MPs as the Chamber of Deputies has a total of 80 members. Other special categories include youth and people living with disabilities and for the first time, people living with disabilities are represented by a woman.

This achievement not only cements Rwanda's status as a global leader in women's representation but also underscores the nation's dedication to creating a more inclusive and equitable society. These figures are more than just numbers; they reflect the country's ongoing commitment to empowering women and ensuring their voices are heard at the highest levels of decision-making. UN Women proudly acknowledges and commends this significant milestone, which serves as an inspiring example for countries around the world.

Rwanda stands out globally for its efforts in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), particularly in political participation, leadership and other sectors. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2023, Rwanda together with other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa such as Namibia and South Africa, along with 13 other countries, have closed more than 70% of the overall gender gap, the sixth-highest among the eight regions at 68.2%, ranking above Southern Asia and the Middle East and North Africa.

Beyond the legislative arena, Rwanda has also made significant strides in achieving gender parity within its executive branch, further showcasing Rwanda's commitment to creating a balanced and inclusive government. By ensuring that women are represented at all levels of governance, Rwanda is not only promoting equality but also fostering a government that is reflective of its diverse population.

Rwanda's achievements in gender parity are not just a result of political will but also the outcome of comprehensive policies and programmes designed to support women's empowerment. The country's efforts to implement various initiatives aimed at increasing women's participation in politics, including gender quotas, capacity-building programmes, and awareness campaigns, have been instrumental in creating an enabling environment where women can thrive as leaders and decision-makers.

"When women are included in decision-making processes, policies and legislation are more likely to address the needs and concerns of all citizens, leading to more inclusive and effective governance. Rwanda's example demonstrates that gender parity is not only achievable but also beneficial to society as a whole," said Jennet Kem, UN Women Rwanda Representative.

"As the world continues to grapple with the challenges of achieving gender equality, Rwanda's success story offers valuable lessons. It highlights the significance of political commitment, the implementation of gender-responsive policies, and the need for sustained efforts to break down barriers to women's participation in leadership," she added.

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Government officials and partners gathered for a group photo to celebrate the opening of the ADR center



RWANDA USHERS IN NEW ERA OF JUSTICE WITH THE INAUGURATION OF THE ADR CENTER

In August 2024, Rwanda marked a historic milestone with the inauguration of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Center in Kigali. The event was a collaborative effort between Rwanda's Justice Sector, UNDP, and the Legal Aid Forum, and it signals a new chapter in the country's commitment to accessible and efficient justice.

Presided over by the Hon. Chief Justice Dr. Faustin Ntezilyayo, the ceremony was attended by key government officials, including the Minister for Justice and Attorney General, Dr. Emmanuel Ugirashebuja, the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Dr. Ozonnia Ojielo, development partners, and various stakeholders from the justice sector. The newly renovated ADR Center provides essential community-focused services such as mediation, conciliation, negotiation, and plea-bargaining, creating an environment where disputes can be resolved outside of the formal court system. This marks a significant step toward reducing court congestion and promoting peaceful conflict resolution.

In his remarks, the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Dr. Ozonnia Ojielo, emphasized the strategic importance of ADR in fostering peace: *"ADR is a quicker, more cost-effective method of resolving disputes that preserves relationships and strengthens communities. It aligns perfectly with our broader goals of sustainable peace and development."*

Minister for Justice, Dr. Emmanuel Ugirashebuja, reiterated the significance of the center in fostering harmony within communities, stating that ADR offers a transformative approach to justice that fosters trust and cooperation among people. He emphasized the center's potential to bridge gaps in access to justice, particularly for the underserved.

The Chief Justice Dr. Faustin Ntezilyayo referred to the new facility as a "Multi-Door Center," a beacon of hope in delivering swift and high-quality justice. He proudly shared that over 2,300 civil cases were settled through mediation in courts of law last year, with an impressive 13,000 criminal cases resolved through plea-bargaining. These outcomes represent not just numbers but lives positively impacted by a justice system that is increasingly responsive and efficient. He added that in only 38 cases that were settled in court mediation, they had all together a value of over 7 billion Rwandan Francs, and these cases were settled in a span of not more than 3 weeks at most, which in the ordinary process would have taken close to 5 years clogged in court dockets.

People that have benefitted from ADR services have attested to the power of the initiative.

"The mediation process allowed me to resolve a debt dispute with my neighbour without the emotional toll and financial burden of court proceedings. It's a solution that brings peace," shared Claudine, a Kigali resident.

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Participants posing for a group photo



RWANDA'S ANIMAL RESOURCES OFFICERS EQUIPPED WITH DIGITAL TOOLS TO EFFECTIVELY COMBAT ANIMAL DISEASES IN THE CONTEXT OF ONE HEALTH

The health of animals and humans are intertwined, and Rwanda's Animal Resources Officers (SAROs) play a crucial role in safeguarding public health. To enhance their ability to detect and respond to animal diseases, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC), Rwanda Agricultural Board (RAB), USAID and Clinton Health Access Initiative organized a series of cascade trainings on the use of the animal Electronic Integrated Diseases Surveillance & Response (e-IDSR) system. This initiative builds on RBC's strong capacity in human e-IDSR. With the rising threat of emerging and re-emerging diseases, this multi-stakeholder collaboration within the One Health framework, aims to strengthen early detection and response to diseases affecting both humans and animals.

The e-IDSR system, initially developed for human health, has been adapted for animal health, empowering SAROs to collect, analyze, and digitally report data on animal health, and take timely and appropriate action. By leveraging this technology, Rwanda is making significant strides in improving disease surveillance and response, linking both human and animal health.

"Before the training, we used to do paper-based monthly reporting that took a lot of our time. This electronic system will help us veterinary officers to instantly report the occurrence of animal diseases, and for RAB and other institutions to immediately review the information and take timely and appropriate action to combat diseases." said Dr. Abdon Nteziryimana, veterinary officer in Nyarugenge District.

The training aimed to equip SAROs with the skills necessary to effectively utilize the e-IDSR system, enabling them to play a more proactive role in protecting animal health. The cascade training provided SAROs with knowledge and skills in data entry, analysis, reporting visualization and use. Through hands-on exercises and group discussions, participants gained practical experience in using the system to identify and track disease outbreaks, and inform public health interventions.

"Disease outbreaks can overwhelm weak health systems in any country that lacks the tools, infrastructure, policies, and systems to keep communities healthy and safe. To efficiently respond to these public health concerns, a well-functioning disease surveillance system is urgently needed for early detection and quick data exchange, enabling a rapid response using a One Health approach." said Dr. Mushayija Jean Paul, FAO Epidemiologist.

A total of 315 veterinary researchers at central level and veterinary officers at national, district and sector level were trained on the use of the e-IDSR system. Furthermore, with support from USAID, WHO, and FAO 315 tablets were provided to RAB to enable the trained veterinary officers to access and use the e-IDSR system in disease surveillance from data entry in the field to data analysis, reporting and taking timely and appropriate action.

"We appreciate the invaluable support of USAID, WHO, FAO, CHAI, whose contributions have been instrumental in making this initiative possible. This collaborative partnership demonstrates the power of leveraging our respective comparative strengths to deliver impactful products and programs." said Dr. Solange Uwituze, Deputy Director General of RAB.

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WFP and The Rockefeller Foundation support 30,000 children like Silvia in Rwanda with fortified wholegrain maize.

FORTIFIED WHOLEGRAINS: A CATALYST FOR CHANGE IN RWANDA

“My favourite meals are Ugali (a type of porridge made from maize flour), fruits and dried fish mixed with vegetables,” says Silvia, a student at Kibirizi school in Nyamagabe district in southern Rwanda. Maize is a staple food for most families in Rwanda and can be eaten as a porridge or served as an accompaniment to meat, vegetables, and beans. However, much of the maize flour consumed in Rwanda is refined, unfortified and lacks vitamins. Yet, fortifying wholegrain maize flour can cost the same – or less – as refined versions and needs less processing.

The World Food Programme (WFP), together with the Ministry of Education and The Rockefeller Foundation are playing a key role in changing nutritional attitudes and behaviour by replacing fortified refined maize meal with its wholegrain counterpart for school children in Rwanda. What started as a pilot initiative supporting 14,000 children in 18 schools in 2021 now reaches 30,000 school children in 32 schools in Burera, Gasabo and Kayonza districts in 2024. The Ugali is a favourite among students.

“I really enjoy having lunch with my friends here at school, especially on the days when we eat Ugali,” says Apollinaire, A P6 Student at EP Kibirizi. In line with the Government of Rwanda’s National School Feeding Programme, and in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education,

WFP provides daily nutritious school meals through its homegrown school feeding programme to 30,000 children in 32 schools in 3 of Rwanda’s most food insecure districts. Healthy and well-nourished school children are able to concentrate better and therefore learn better in school.

Access to nutritious foods is a key component of the Government of Rwanda’s priority to reduce malnutrition rates in the country from 33 per cent to 20 per cent by 2030. Wholegrains provide more protein, fibre and micronutrients than refined maize meal, while the fortification process adds other important vitamins and minerals such as vitamins A and B as well as zinc and iron. These are crucial for children’s physical and cognitive growth and development. The nutritional benefit of the fortified wholegrain maize brings peace of mind to parents like Charlotte, whose son Ishimwe, goes to Giheta school. *“The children eat healthy food which helps them stay at school and get a better education,”* she says.

There are gains for the economy too. The fortified meal is purchased from local millers who buy the maize from smallholder farmers throughout Rwanda. “We shop from the nearest markets, at fair prices which helps the people in the neighbourhood to get some income,” says Emmanuel Bizimana, the President of the school feeding committee at Kibirizi school.

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Participants and the officials pose for a group photo during the workshop



FAO PROJECT TO BOOST FINANCIAL LITERACY, CAPITAL FOR MSMEs IN AGRIBUSINESS

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Rwanda and its partners have implemented a project to boost financial literacy for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in agribusiness. This includes developing interventions to connect them with financial institutions for inclusive growth.

Around 100 enterprises in agribusiness in food processing, farming and trading of livestock, fruits, grains and vegetables growing are set to benefit from the project. The MSMEs in agribusiness from Huye, Gisagara, Nyamagabe, Nyanza, Kamonyi, Muhanga, Nyaruguru, Ruhango, Rulindo, Musanze, Burera, Gakenke and other districts, gathered in Kigali on August 14 during a workshop to validate a study which assessed financial inclusion gaps and challenges they face.

The study validation workshop was graced by Alex Kabayiza, Chief Technical Advisor at the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM), who pledged support and partnership with FAO to uplift MSMEs in the agriculture value chain. *“As we are gearing up to implement National Strategy for Transformation-NST2 in the next five years, projects like this will help us achieve targets we have set to develop SMEs in Rwanda,”* he noted.

Mehnaz Ajmal Paracha, Senior Programme and Policy Advisor from FAO Rwanda, on behalf of FAO Representative, Coumba Dieng Sow, said that the challenges affecting MSMEs in agribusiness are related to technology, regulatory compliance, market competition, limited resources and access to finance. *“The project aims to raise small enterprises to be able to develop quality products and have access to finance,”* she said.

Birasa Nyamurinda, a researcher who led the team that carried out the research on MSMEs’ needs, said that the study was developed in partnership with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, UN Women, and UNECA among others.

He said the micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) were targeted given that they account for 98 per cent of all businesses and over 70 per cent of all jobs created in Rwanda.

They also contribute around 33 per cent to the GDP.

The research findings demonstrated that agri-SMEs in Rwanda confronted a number of challenges, including inadequate working capital, lack of market for their products, and limited access to finance and low margins of profit.

Why particular support is needed for women and youth

According to the study, women and youth SMEs were particularly targeted in the project and research considering that they are more affected. Males dominate females in terms of running Micro-Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) with statistics showing 65 per cent are men and 35 per cent are women.

There are several factors contributed to their increased vulnerability. *“Women and youth SMEs are more affected, and several factors contributed to their increased vulnerability. Women and youth entrepreneurs often face greater challenges in accessing financial resources compared to their male counterparts. A significant proportion of women and youth entrepreneurs operate in the informal sector characterised by low job security, limited social protection, and a lack of formal contracts.”* he said.

[Read more](#)



HIGH-LEVEL UN MISSIONS TO RWANDA AND COURTESY VISITS.



*Ms. Alice Wairimu Nderitu, UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Advisor to UN Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide.
22-23rd July 2024*



*Mr. Earle Courtenay Rattray, UN SG's Chef de Cabinet, and Mr. Li Junhua, USG for Economic and Social Affairs.
4-8th August 2024*



*Amb. Emmanuel Claude Cohet, French Special Envoy for the Great Lakes
23rd August 2024*



*Ms. Afshan Khan, Assistant Secretary-General, Coordinator of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement
2nd September 2024*



*Ms. Amina J Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations
5-9th September 2024*



HIGH-LEVEL UN MISSIONS TO RWANDA AND COURTESY VISITS.



*Mr. Ozonnia Ojielo's Courtesy visit to Rwanda Investigation Bureau
18th September 2024*



*Amb. Dag Sjöögren, Ambassador of Sweden in Rwanda
24th September 2024*



*Ms. Ashita Mittal, Regional Representative of The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
27th September 2024*



*Amb. Alexander Polyakov, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Rwanda
27th September 2024*



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