



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties
under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

**Replies of Rwanda to the list of issues and questions in
relation to its tenth periodic report***

[Date received: 6 May 2024]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Visibility of the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the committee's general recommendations

Reply to paragraph 1 of the list of issues and questions (CEDAW/C/RWA/Q/10)

1. Highlighted in paras 43 of Tenth periodic report submitted by Rwanda, the state party has not organized the leadership retreat but the national gender machinery institutions meet once a month in a Senior Management Meeting (SMM) and each quarter the three sub-clusters of the National Gender machinery meet each all in all to discuss issues pertaining to the promotion of the visibility of the convention and strategies to promote gender equality at large. The state party also promotes the visibility of the convention by (1) conducting community outreaches on gender equality and it convenes local leaders and representatives of special groups; (2) Organizing gender dialogues in higher learning Institutions; (4) organize radio and TV shows and talks meant to disseminate the convention and its optional protocols to the general public; (5) conducts training of religious leaders to guarantee gender transformative evangelism in the State party.

2. In the paras 64 of Rwanda's report, the state party implements various gender transformative programs such as Bandebereho and Indashyikirwa models meant to maximize men's and boys' engagement in gender equality promotion as highlighted in 5th priority area of Rwanda's gender policy 2021. A national gender transformative strategy engaging men and boys for gender equality has also been developed.

3. Considering the paras. 73 of Rwanda's report, the state party continues to popularize the convention by gender dialogues in higher leaning Institutions meant to challenge stereotypes and negative social and gender norms in schools.

4. The paras. 108 of Rwanda's report stipulates the anti-trafficking in person and in addition the state party developed a Policy framework which is waiting for cabinet approval, but in the same vein in January 2024, the campaign against the crime of human trafficking had been carried out for two months across the country and was completed.

5. As per 124 and 125 paras of country report, the state party continues to promote gender equality through capacity building workshops whereby planners and business development personnel from 30 districts received training on gender mainstreaming into national and district development planning and employment promotion. 200 personnel from districts and central governments also received a package called "Gender Economic Policy Management Initiative (GEPMI) aimed to strengthening their skills in mainstreaming gender into planning and budgeting and Monitoring and Evaluation of interventions.

6. Reported in paras 129, the state party regularly continues to mainstream gender in media sector by organising workshops of chief editors from public and private media houses to ensure gender responsive and GBV-free in the media coverage and reporting as well as the women representation in media sector.

Women's rights and gender equality in relation to the pandemic and recovery efforts

Reply to paragraph 2 of the list of issues and questions

7. The State party has undertaken several measures to address long-standing inequalities between women and men and to prioritize gender equality in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Some of these measures include: (1) Legislative reforms enforcing gender equality, protection against gender based

violence and promotion of women rights, closely working with the Business Development Fund (BDF) which mission is to help small and medium enterprises get funding through various channels at low prices; (2) Promoting women's economic empowerment through initiatives such as access to credit, entrepreneurship with start-ups, training, and support for women-led businesses thanks to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which accelerates intra-African trade and boosting Africa's trading position in the global market by strengthening Africa's common voice and policy space in global trade negotiations; (3) Encouraging and supporting women's participation and representation in political and decision-making processes at all levels; (4) Supporting different institutions to develop and implement policies and programs aimed at addressing gender disparities in various sectors such as in education, employment, healthcare, and political representation.

8. **COVID-19 crisis response and recovery efforts:** In 2020, GoR¹ developed and the cabinet approved the Economic Recovery Plan aiming at guiding the Government on required key interventions and fiscal policies across sectors that would provide support to households, boost employment and growth towards COVID-19 recovery process.

9. To contribute significantly to Rwanda's crisis response and economic recovery, Rwanda established *Economic Recovery Fund (ERF) /Access to Finance for Recovery and Resilience Project (AFIRR)* co-financed by the World Bank (WB) to support businesses in the sectors hit by the pandemic so they can survive, resume work, create and safeguard employment, and expand domestic production.

10. ERF/AFIRR is implemented by the Development Bank of Rwanda Ltd (BRD) and the Business Development Fund (BDF) under the coordination of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN). AFIRR² consists of four components namely (1) Liquidity and recovery facility aims at alleviating the short and long-term financial constraints of firms and adjusting their business to the post-COVID-19 Scenario; (2) Risk-sharing facility aim at enhancing, scaling up, and expanding existing risk sharing solutions with the objective of reaching small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in sectors most hit by the COVID-19 pandemic; (3) Institutional strengthening and implementation support consists of strengthening firms' capacity for resilience & recovery; institutional strengthening; and project management and monitoring and (4) Contingency emergency response component (CERC) to address any emergency.

11. Gender mainstreaming was reflected in recovery and resilience measures. Considering key constraints faced by women including limited access to information, limited business skills training and development, limited finance, limited property ownership and issues related to negative social and gender norms; GoR in collaboration with BRD³ developed a Gender Action Plan (GAP) to ensure effective gender mainstreaming and integration of a consistent gender perspective in the Access to Finance for Recovery and Resilience Project (ERF/AFIRR).

Constitutional and legal framework

Reply to paragraph 3 of the list of issues and questions

12. Recent amendments were made to the country's labour law cited as Law n° 027/2023 of 18/05/2023 amending the Law n° 66/2018 of 30/08/2018 to increase parental leave for mothers from 12 consecutive weeks to a commendable 14

¹ GoR: Stands for the Government of Rwanda.

² AFIRR stands for Access to Finance for Recovery and Resilience.

³ BRD stands for Rwanda Development Bank.

consecutive weeks, while simultaneously extending paternity leave from four days to seven calendar days.

13. On the other side, the revised Rwanda Penal Code 2018 determines in its article 137 that one who sexually assaults their spouse would be punished with up to five years in prison. This punishment from a rape which is not marital, is determined from 10 years of imprisonment to life sentence.

Access to justice

Reply to paragraph 4 of the list of issues and questions

14. The Ministry of Justice (Office of the Attorney General) among other achievements, decentralized and provided Legal aid services through treatment of nationals' grievances addressed to the Ministry headquarters' staff, at Access to Justice Houses (MAJ) offices at district level and at Abunzi committees' members in every Cell and Sector. In this regard, at the end of 2022/23 FY, MAJ received and handled 19,206 cases including 11,286 (59%) from females, 7,920 (41%) from males and 2261 cases from minors. On the other side, Abunzi committees received and resolved a total of 28,776 cases among which 16,899 (59%) were from males and 11,877 (41%) were from females. Out of them, 27,291 (95%) were amicably mediated country wide.

National machinery for the advancement of women

Reply to paragraph 5 of the list of issues and questions

15. In relation to Human, technical and financial resources allocated to gender machinery; the establishment of Organic law on public finance management Number 002/2022.O.L of 12/12/2022 on gender equality and social inclusiveness in public finance management, requires the promotion of gender equality and participation of all people in the society in public finance management (Article,4, 6). To implement this and in accordance with Article 34, 12 of the above-mentioned law, as specified in the ministerial Order Number 001/16/10/TC of 26/01/2016 (Article 10,7), one of the guiding principles for budget allocation for all public/state budget agencies must have Gender responsiveness budgeting processes that ensure gender balance in budget allocation. In line with this principle, each budget agency presents its Gender Budget Statement (GBS) based on gender analysis, identification of key sub-programs, with the big proportion of the budget, enhancing service delivery. In addition to that, each budget entity presents the staff structure from a gender perspective.

16. Budget execution and activity reports which require all Ministries and Central Government entities which are not under supervision of any Ministry to prepare and submit to the Minister their quarterly and annual budget execution report including Gender Budget statement and Activity Report (Article,77).

17. During Budget hearing sessions chaired by the chairperson of the parliament committee and Ministry of Finance and Economic planning, Gender Monitoring Office together with representative from civil society organizations ensures that gender is mainstreamed in Planning, Budget and staffing structure.

Non-governmental organizations

Reply to paragraph 6 of the list of issues and questions

18. Article 35 of the Constitution stipulates that, “freedom of association is guaranteed and shall not require prior authorization.” To promote and protect the freedom of association of all individuals and groups such as civil society, human rights defenders and political parties; 2,239 National Non-Governmental Organisations (NNGOs) have been registered as of 30th June 2023, and 207 International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) were registered as of 30th June 2023 upon the presentation of (1) Application letter addressed to the Chief Executive Officer of RGB; (2) Notarised statutes; (3) Recommendation letter issued by the district Mayor where the organisation intends to implement its activities; (4) Notarised minutes of general assembly meeting which among other things established the organisation and approved its statutes, action plan and appointed members of its organs; (5) List of general assembly participants with their names, IDs, phone numbers and signatures; (6) CVs of the legal representative and his/her deputy; (7) Criminal record certificates of the legal representative and his/her deputy; (8) Notarized declaration of legal representative and his/her deputy confirming their readiness to assume responsibilities; (9) Annual Action plan that detailing activities, number of beneficiaries, budget and source of funds; and (10) Payment slip of 100.000 Frw non-refundable fee.

19. In regard to women human right defenders, the GoR recognizes the contribution of human rights defenders in the context of Human Rights Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). In this regard, National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP), recognizes human rights defenders among stakeholders in the national human rights agenda. The engagement and collaboration between GoR and Civil Society working in the field of Human Rights have improved remarkably, and CSOs enjoy free space to conduct their activities.

Temporary special measures

Reply to paragraph 7 of the list of issues and questions

20. The measures have been taken to ensure gender parity in the appointment, the total number in senior positions is 1,236 (Females are 375 compared to 869 males). Actions taken to advance gender equality in the world of work (including informal and non-standard employment as well as entrepreneurship). The state party has mainstreamed gender in decent work and productive jobs from employment policy to programs. In the implementation of the 2019 Revised National Employment Policy, some measures were taken to facilitate employment for women and they include:

(a) To enhance women’s employability and promote equal access to productive resources (such as land, finances...) and women’s entrepreneurship development; women and men have currently equal rights on the ownership and use of the land property (50/50) which has increased the access on loans in case they are requested for collaterals. Specific financial products for women in SMEs were developed and facilitated by 75% of requested guarantee and grants through BDF. Additionally, women street venders were grouped into cooperatives or formal savings groups to support them getting market places and access to finance to sustain their businesses;

(b) In the implementation of the Workplace Learning Policy, the guidelines provide the special consideration of inclusiveness participation of women, men and People with Disabilities. In terms of safety and wellbeing of beneficiaries at

workplaces, the gender-based violence (GBV) was prohibited and avoided at all levels;

(c) In the implementation of the Revised National Employment Policy (2019), the Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender and Inclusion in Rwanda's National Skills Development and Employment Promotion (NSDEPS) was also developed to ensure equal benefits for both men and women on employment related interventions such as skills development, entrepreneurship development, among others;

(d) In the recruitment of the public servants, gender aspect also is considered. In the article 17 of the Presidential Order relating to recruitment of public servants and induction programme N° 128/01 du 03/12/2020, it states that If two (2) or more candidates obtain equal marks for one job position, priority for job offer is given to a candidate from the less represented gender in the concerned public institution;

(e) To encourage gender-friendly strategies, appropriate technology to reduce the burden of Unpaid Care and Domestic Work (UCDW) on women have been adopted such as increasing on the budget for people to access green cooking energy and have specific strategy provisions in the national transformative strategy engaging men and boys for gender equality, dedicated to transforming social norms for equitable redistribution of UCDW;

(f) Rwanda as a Member of the International Labour Organization (ILO) since 1962 up to date has ratified various conventions in the field of employment and labour. Specifically, the ratification of the convention n° 190 on Violence through the Presidential Order N° 031/01 of 26/05/2023 on Violence and Harassment aims to improve working conditions, address global issues of violence and harassment in the world of work, foster an environment based on dignity, respect and that is free from violence and harassment;

(g) Use of technology in domestic activities such as use of cooking gaz, washing machines, among others are paramount to increase the productivity and income of women because they reduce the time spent on domestic works to the economic activities that are productive for them and the country as whole;

(h) ECD Centers were also introduced to facilitate mothers with baby/child while working at the workplace, and a breastfeeding rooms are also being established across public and private workplaces.

Discriminatory stereotypes and harmful practices

Reply to paragraph 8 of the list of issues and questions

21. Stipulated in the 7th priority areas of the revised national gender policy 2021 on gender capacity building, the Government through the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) and partners regularly conduct intensive gender transformative trainings of religious leaders and chief editors on (1) promotion of gender equality principles, (2) the fight against gender based violence (GBV) (3) positive masculinities (4) the empowerment of women all meant to challenge negative sociocultural and patriarchal stereotypes from urban and rural dwellers. In this regard 36 journalist from various media houses and 316 religious leaders and their spouses were reached by the intervention.

22. Furthermore, referring to priority area 5 of the same policy, the state party developed a national gender transformative strategy engaging men and boys for gender equality 2023/24 – 2027/28 and it is going to serve as a national reference of all men and boys engagement and social norms shift throughout gender transformation trajectory in Rwanda.

Gender-based violence against women

Reply to paragraph 9 of the list of issues and questions

23. The Gender-Based Management information system was developed and is now operational to support Isange One Stop Centre (IOSC) data entry since December 2023. It has windows which support data entry, coordination and monitoring. The windows are; coordinator, Investigator, GBV officer, Doctor, Psychologist and MAJ.

24. This integrated electronic case management system (IECMS) system that collects data at different levels from the investigation, prosecution and courts is under upgrade and shall generate different indicators including the relationship of perpetrators and victims. After the upgrade, the next phase shall be to train all users on data entry to ensure effective data entry.

25. In line with its mandate of being a hub of knowledge and information on gender equality, Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) established a Gender Management Information System which is a web system developed in 2018 and officially launched in 2019. The system serves as a tool for data management with the main objective of informing gender responsive programming and evidence-based advocacy for inclusive and sustainable development. After Initiation phase, in the same year, Pilot phase has followed which led to system upgrade. Initially the system started with modules of system administration, data collection and reporting modules, later on GMIS was upgraded with additional new modules of public portal and data interpretation. The system became fully functional Since 2020. Currently, it has gender data for 62 indicators across different Districts and sectors for the five periods, 2018/2019, 2019/2020, 2020/2021, 2021/2022; 2022/2023; data on 70 indicators from surveys, censuses and data on 44 indicators from Ministries and Public institutions.

26. GMIS primarily helps to avail gender data in case they are needed in different internal and external gender data frameworks; and helps to respond to different gender data requests from public and private institutions and inform programming of different key actors through regularly consulting them.

27. **Capacity building of system users:** After System upgrade, District statisticians, GMIS technical team and GMO staff were trained on system operationalization and functionality.

28. **Data collection process:** Gender Data collection is the critical process of the GMIS operationalization whereby Gender data are collected on annual basis both at Central and decentralized level institutions. At District level, data are collected on 62 Gender and GBV Indicators plus data which we collect and request from Districts depending on Institution's request. The system also stores data from the following sources: Administrative data from Ministries and institutions and also Disaggregated gender data from surveys and censuses Reports.

29. Isange One Stop Centre (IOSCs) provide free services through social workers and legal aid officers who provide victims with required information and their rights to file complaints without fear.

30. These centres are now located in 48 hospitals where victims are free to walk like any other patient's access services without being identified. Additionally, the law provides right to victims including right to privacy during the whole process of access to justice, to be informed about the legal provision which concerns him/her and the right to be protected if he/she expresses a concern for her/his safety – article 54 of Law no 027/2019 of 19/09/2019 relating to the criminal procedure.

Gender-based violence against women in conflict situations

Reply to paragraph 10 of the list of issues and questions

31. As per the (para. 104) of the report, the GoR considers that there are no new elements concerning this report and maintains its position to categorically reject it.

32. As per the capacity building reported in paras 9 of Rwanda's report, the state party through Rwanda correctional services (RCS) holds RCS WOMEN CONVENTION every year where members discuss all Gender related Issues and how to address them. Over 200 participants in these conventions are both men and women in RCS. This year it was held on 28/02/2024 with the theme: *Empowering Female Correctional Officers; A Contribution to Strengthen the Correctional System*. Also, all the trainings carried out in RCS have to include Gender related topics such as Equality, Equity, GBV, addressing gender specific needs, etc. RCS also carries out awareness campaigns on gender and GBV prevention to prepare a gender transformative reintegration of their beneficiaries once back to the community and while serving their sentences.

33. The Ministry of Defence empowers all members of RDF equally in all military career courses and formal education. The Ministry of Defence has drafted and approved the Gender Management Policy which clearly stipulates how all members are prohibited to do any act of GBV. The Ministry of gender and family promotion is also regularly engaged in police, army and RCS academies to deliver a module on gender, GBV prevention and response, for each cohort in those academies.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

Reply to paragraph 11 and 12 of the list of issues and questions

34. As reported in paras 106, the law has set mechanisms and frameworks to counter human trafficking and establishment of a National Steering Committee on counter trafficking to coordinate all interventions. The Prime minister's order 019/03 of 29/08/2021 determining the organ responsible for providing necessary means for repatriation of victims of crime of trafficking in persons. It clarified each institution's roles and responsibility where MINAFFET repatriates the victims of human trafficking while MINECOFIN avails the needed budget for the repatriation.

35. The ministerial order no 013/MOJ/AG/21 OF 29/08/2021 providing for other particular means to support victims of human trafficking. It regulates interventions in response to victims of human trafficking at different levels in getting treatment and other management as well as reintegration back to their communities. The law enumerates the crime of gender-based human trafficking. It also provides for the protection and relief of victims, procedures, and guidelines to be followed by courts in relation to punishment, protection, and compensation of victims of violence, and provides a clearer definition and expansion of the notion of rape to include spousal violence.

36. This ministerial order also incorporated victims of human trafficking in beneficiaries of the IOSC multidisciplinary services and therefore can access free holistic services including medical, psychological, investigations, accommodation as well as reintegration as per the national reintegration guidelines of GBV victims.

37. In this regard, a total of 172 cases of human trafficking involving 235 victims (65 sexual trafficking while 170 labor trafficking) were registered at investigation level, 79 were below 18 years, 127 were between 18-30 years while 29 victims were

above 30 years. 79 victims were intercepted on the way to foreign countries while 232 victims were Rwandese and 04 Burundians.⁴

38. At the prosecution levels, 171 were registered among which 49 cases were pronounced and 40 suspects were convicted while 9 suspects were acquitted.⁵

Participation in political and public life

Reply to paragraph 13 of the list of issues and questions

39. In Rwanda, the established network of parliamentarians (Forum des Femmes Rwandaises Parlementaires) influence the gender mainstreaming agenda in the parliament (legislation and oversight over the government).

40. The constitution of the republic of Rwanda in its article 75 par. B provides that in the chamber of Deputies there must be 24 specific seats reserved for women. In the Senate, at least 30% of elected and appointed senators must be women (Article 80, 7). There has been strengthened partnership between public institutions denoted by “National gender machinery” namely MIGEPROF, National Women’s Council, Forum des Femmes Rwandaises Parlementaires and Gender Monitoring Office for a better coordination and strengthening vertical and horizontal coordination with other GEWE stakeholders at central and decentralized levels.

41. The quota of at least 30% of women in decision making organs is mainstreamed in laws governing elections at all levels. Rwanda has 23 female diplomats in our diplomatic missions abroad out of 144 diplomats and 39 female employees at the headquarters out of 91 employees. Rwanda has a total of 62 female Rwandan women workers employed in the foreign services out of 235 workers.

42. Regarding the impacts of implementing quota of 30% in the state party, women in decision making organs are evidenced with 63.1% of women lower chamber of the parliament, 42.4% women cabinet members, 37,5% of women senators, 78% of District Vice Mayors in charge of Social Affairs among other registered impacts.

Education

Reply to paragraph 14 of the list of issues and questions

43. To address barriers preventing women’s and girls’ access to education and increase the number of enrolments in secondary schools, the Ministry of Education took different measures including:

(a) The construction of girls’ rooms in basic education and equipping them with Hygienic materials; (From 2020/21 girls’ rooms increased from 55.4% to 57.1% in primary schools, from 80.5% to 81. % in professional secondary schools and from 76.2% to 81.0% in TVET schools);

(b) Increase the number of classrooms to reduce overcrowding and long distance, which impacted not only on the pupil-teacher ratio in primary education over the past five years, from 61:1 in 2017 to 44:1 in 2021/22 but also on providing a more favorable learning environment for students. The number of classrooms in use increased from 59,032 in 2019 to 77,629 in 2021/2022;

(c) Implementation of school feeding programme in all pre-primary, primary and secondary schools;

⁴ Records of Rwanda investigation bureau.

⁵ See NPPA Report of 2021–2023.

(d) Abolition of school fees and provision of capitation grant to all primary and secondary public and government-aided schools;

(e) Introduce in the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) topics related to gender equality and comprehensive sexuality education;

(f) Capacitate teachers on gender equality/equity and Gender Responsive Pedagogy;

(g) Provide training on comprehensive sexuality education and establishment of health clubs in schools talking to various topics/ code of conducts to teachers, students and head teachers;

(h) Working with various stakeholders in education to promote girls' education (UNICEF: GIRL Programme, CLE: elaboration of STEM strategy to attract girls, UN-Women: Boot camp and Imbuto foundation: Awarding best female performers), and various local NGOs works on ASRH);

(i) Encourage pregnant students to continue studying until they are able to attend and return back to school after delivery as stated in girl's education policy.

44. Generally, Girl's enrolment is not low in secondary education comparing to that of boys (Lower Sec: F: 54.5% M: 45.5%; Upper Sec: F: 58.2% M: 41.8%) except in STEM (47.7%) fields and TVET (41.7%) from level 1 to 5 and the above intervention are addressing the problem. Ministry of Education is applying also Gender mainstreaming in planning its activities as per the national gender and accountability Minimum guidelines (GMAMGs). Projects with stakeholders such as like Zero out of school children are being implemented to fix the issue of school drop-out.

45. **Impact of girls' education policy:** (1) More pregnant girls and adolescent mothers have been able to access formal education and continue their studies without interruption (Primary and secondary) as there is no punishment offered to pregnant girl students; they are rather encouraged to remain at school until they are able to attend and return back after delivery. Schools are sensitized to facilitate teen mothers to facilitate them at school by offering time for breastfeeding; (2) Stigma and discrimination against pregnant girls and young mothers have been reduced through awareness campaigns and inclusive policies, fostering a more supportive environment, (3) Girls who are reintegrated into schools have the opportunity to improve their academic outcomes, acquire skills for future employment, and break the cycle of poverty.(4) Awareness campaigns were conducted to help school community recognize the different forms of GBV, including physical, sexual, emotional, and economic violence; challenge societal norms and beliefs that perpetuate GBV, reporting channels and evidence preservation. They also focused on awareness-raising initiatives empowering victims of GBV to speak out, seek help, and access available support services. Community members were encouraged to actively participate in prevention efforts and early intervention strategies.

Employment

Reply to paragraph 15 of the list of issues and questions

46. In line with measures taken to promote the equal sharing of family and domestic responsibilities between women and men in practice, according to the article 54 and 58 of the Ministerial Order n° 02/MIFOTRA/23 of 01/08/2023 on occupational health and safety, employees' organizations and employers' organizations, child employment, employment of a foreigner and leave; A female employee who gives birth has a right to maternity leave of 14 consecutive weeks including two weeks she may take before delivery.

47. A male employee is entitled to a paternity leave of seven calendar days in case of the delivery of his wife.

48. Measures taken by the state part to address the disproportionately high unemployment rate among women and their overrepresentation in the informal economy include: (1) Triple girls' enrolment in technical vocational education and training (TVET); (2) Promote women access to financial products for formal investment; (3) Promote girls' education with focus on science technology engineering and mathematics (STEM); (4) Encourage employable skill development as per national skill development and employment promotion strategy (NSDEPS).

49. As per the national gender mainstreaming and accountability minimum guideline (GMAMGs 2024), the state party encourage the private sector to: (1) Put in place special facilitation measures to support small-scale informal cross-border traders, the majority of whom are women; (2) Put in place special measures (tax and no-tax incentives) to offer a competitive edge to women and youth small scale exporters; (3) Revise the business facilitation regulatory framework to mainstream a gender perspective in trade laws, trade and investment promotion agreements (4) Prevent gender-based discrimination and harassment in the work-place, and support work-life balance for both women and men (5) Embed a gender lens in business development services.

50. For the reporting period (March 2017 to March 2021), a total number of 18 cases that involved 26 female victims of sexual harassment were investigated and submitted to NPPA.

51. The criminal justice system can receive anonymous filings, toll-free lines exist within GMO, RIB, MIGEPROF, RNP, NPPA, NCDA and other different institutions where it is emphasized on how people can call anonymously.

52. Additionally, the confidentiality of victims can also be ensured through the process of codification to hide their identification based on the provision of the Law N° 44bis/2017 of 06/09/2017 Law relating to the protection of whistle-blowers.

53. The Article 10 of this law stipulates: "Secrecy of disclosures received. For purposes of protecting a whistle-blower, all disclosures are received in secret and recorded by use of a code. The code must be similar to the code of the person who disclosed information based on the list of whistle-blowers. The list of whistle blowers must also be drawn up in secret and may be accessed only by the officer who receives the disclosures and the head of the institution or other authorized officer".

Women domestic workers

Reply to paragraph 16 of the list of issues and questions

54. In 2023, 28 Females and 58 males were found and removed from child labour and all children were returned to their families and Schools and 39 perpetrators were reported to RIB for investigation.

55. Measures in place to support families living in poverty include (1) Ubudehe program to access small loans; (2) GIRINKA program (3) Ejoheza as long-term saving and social security scheme among other initiatives.

Health

Reply to paragraph 17 of the list of issues and questions

56. New measures taken to further reduce the high maternal mortality include: (1) Regular weekly maternal death audit meetings to discuss on factors leading to death and take actionable recommendations to prevent further maternal deaths; (2) Establish the use of ultrasounds at Health Center level for early detection of risky pregnancies (3) To address skills, gap in obstetric care through capacity building in Emergency obstetric care; (4) Avail essential Maternity equipment in Health Facilities; (5) Measures to address early Pregnancies and unsafe abortion;(6) Building the capacity of youth corners in health centres to improve the quality of youth friendly ASRH services at health Centre Level; (7) To include ASRH package mainly ASRH information in Community Health Workers package; (8) Training of ASRH Peer educators to support Out of School youth and adolescent to have information on ASRH (9) To avail emergency contraception pills in all Health Centres; (10) Study on teenage pregnancies to identify factors and design actions to decrease teenage pregnancies (11) Orientation of community leaders, religious leaders and health providers on ministerial order for the law related to safe abortion.

57. Measures taken to remove restrictions that unnecessarily limit access for women to safe abortion and post-abortion services, include: (1) Legally permitting mid-level health-care providers to offer abortion care; (2) Building the Capacity of at least 2 nurses/Midwives per each HC in 20 out of 30 districts on provision of Post abortion care at HC level including Manual Vacuum aspiration practices; (3) Availing Manual Vacuum aspiration (MVA) Kits in all Health Centres for provision of Post Abortion Care; (4) Availing new medicine (Mifepristone- Misoprostol combination) for safe abortion care; (5) Research on provision of Safe Abortion Care by Midlevel (Nurses/Midwives) providers at Health Centre level using Telemedicine model in one district and this is expected to be expanded to other 4 districts to inform the policy change including ministerial order and future possible scale up.

58. The measures taken to ensure that women and girls have access to affordable sexual and reproductive health services, include: (1) Modern contraceptives are available in all public Health facilities and at community level (Community Health Workers); (2) All SRH services are covered by Health Insurance; (3) 2 New contraceptives have been added to the usual methods (Hormonal intrauterine device and Subcutaneous DMPA);; (4) Collaboration with Private Clinics to access the contraceptives for free to minimize the cost of Family Planning services in private health Facilities; (5) Building capacity of Providers on use of contraceptives in all health facilities; (6) Integration of Family planning in Antenatal care and Postpartum care; (7) Consistent availability of Contraceptives in all public Health Facilities; (8) Provision of short method of contraception at community level by Community Health Workers; (9) Outreach services for Long-acting reversible contraceptives and Family Planning Permanent method at community level hard to reach services; (10) Detailed information on the impact of efforts to ensure that modern contraceptives are available, accessible and affordable, and that the law enables adolescents access to contraception without third-party authorization; (11) The fertility rate decreased from 4.2 from year 2019/2020 (RDHS 2019/2020) to 3.6 in 2022(Population Census of 2022); (12) There is a high-level regular forum of Ministries and their agencies (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Youth, MIGEPROF, MINEDUC among others), to assess the possibility of making a bill to allow adolescent from 16 to 18 years to have access to contraceptives without third party authorization.

59. In the context of Article 10(2) of Law No. 21/2016 relating to human reproductive health, “competent organs” refer to the governmental or administrative bodies authorized to enforce the provisions of the law. These organs may include health ministry, regulatory authorities, or other relevant agencies responsible for overseeing healthcare policies and practices. Under certain circumstances, these competent organs may compel HIV/AIDS testing as mandated by the law.

60. Such circumstances typically involve situations where there is a public health concern or a legal requirement to safeguard public health, such as: HIV transmission from an individual to others, through sexual contact, needle-sharing among intravenous drug users, or perinatal transmission from mother to child.

61. In cases where HIV testing is deemed necessary for the protection of public health, such as during the processing of immigration applications or in certain healthcare settings where there is a risk of exposure to HIV.

62. When there are legal mandates or regulations requiring HIV testing, such as in certain occupations where there is a potential risk of HIV transmission to others, or in the context of criminal investigations involving allegations of HIV transmission.

Economic empowerment

Reply to paragraph 18 of the list of issues and questions

63. Among numerous home grown solutions initiated by state party’s government to promote the social, economy and political development for rural women include: (1) Igiceri program (Coin program) hereby villagers living in the same vicinity pool money together for saving and borrowing purposes every month and open an account in Sacco Village. It helps them saving and borrowing; (2) One Hundred women which is women initiative where women collect One Hundred thousand and give it to a woman as small business start-up capital; (3) VSLAs (Village Saving Loans Associations) which is an initiative where people voluntarily put money together for saving and borrowing by means of Umurenge Sacco with internal and binding rules and regulations.

64. In the same vein, there have also been taken a number of strategic interventions meant to guarantee women access to finance and they include: (1) National Women and Youth access to finance strategy; (2) National Affirmative Finance Action for women in Africa strategy (AFAWA); (3) Start-up capital provided to Women in cross-border trade; (4) Pension benefits paid by Rwanda Social Security Board (RSSB) and importantly the Law n° 027/2023 of 18/05/2023 amending the law n° 66/2018 of 30/08/2018 regulating labour in Rwanda (Article 56,1).

65. The state party established business development fund (BDF) as a way to have access to financial credits for women and youth without collaterals. The state party also initiated national employment program (NEP) to promote job creation by providing business start-up toolkit for TVET graduates.

66. The implementation of Law No.29/2017 of 29/06/2017 establishing The Long Term Savings Scheme and determining its organization, OG No. Special of 18/08/2017 was inspired by the International Social Security Association (ISSA) Guideline on Administrative Solutions for Extending Coverage, and was facilitated by the adoption of: (1) Ministerial Order No.001/18/10/TC of 05/12/2018 determining modalities of granting Long-Term Savings Scheme Benefits, OG No.50 of 10/12/2018; (2) Ministerial Order No.001/19/10/TC of 14/01/2019 determining other incentives for the Long-Term Savings Scheme and terms for their administration, OG No.03 of 21/01/2019 (3) Prime Minister’s Order No.58/03 of 04/04/2018 determining the administrator of the Long-Term Savings Scheme, OG No.15 of 09/04/2018.

67. **Government strategy:** To encourage the community to enrol and save in *EjoHeza*, the Government reserved incentives to top up to members' contributions.

68. **Mass mobilization:** Mobilization approach and implementation strategies where public education and awareness efforts involve local authorities and media in mobilization. Enrollment of Ejo Heza membership and payment of contribution is driven by mass education and awareness delivered through partnership with central and local government institutions and organizations including cooperatives, associations, youth, women, private and civil sectors.

69. Accessibility and Affordability nature of Long-Term Savings Scheme: The design of Long-Term Savings Scheme is adapted to the informal economy workers. The scheme is digital-based as it establishes an identification system by putting in place IT system linked with National Identification Agency which holds a database for the whole population. The system simplifies registration and payment process to Long-Term Savings Scheme by the use of cell phone.

Rural women

Reply to paragraph 19 of the list of issues and questions

70. **Rural women access to justice,** Rwanda's justice sector services have been decentralized up to District level whereby Access to Justice Bureau (MAJ) have been operationalized and countywide provide justice services including legal advisers to Rwandans with legal conflicts, indigents representation before courts of law, court submission preparation, enforceable judgement execution, legal education, and case filing through Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS). In the same vein, Justice sector coordination committees (JRLOS committees) at District level to make legal services available, accessible and affordable.

71. **Rural women access to education:** there have constructed more classrooms with hygiene facilities and increase the number of teachers to reduce overcrowding and long distance from and to school. To this end, various initiatives have been implemented and they include: (1) Introduction and implementation of school feeding program in all schools (pre-primary, primary and secondary levels) (2) Abolition of school fees and provision of school fees to all public and government aided schools (3) Construction and equipping girls' rooms at schools (4) Training teachers on gender responsive pedagogy/gender equality and reproductive health (5) Putting gender equality and comprehensive sexuality education in CBC as cross-cutting issues (6) Girl students are involved in the management of the education institutions through their representations in school committees. (7) Education law requires to have at least 30% of female representation in parent committees at schools.

72. **Rural women access to justice:** The Government has deployed legal personnel who were given mission to provide assistance and services in legal matters (MAJ "Maison d'Accès à la Justice"/ "Access to Justice Bureau") to the citizens at District level; NST-1 provides that (1) MAJ services decentralized from District to Sector level by 2024. (2) Mediation Committees ("ABUNZI") were established at Cell and Sector level in 2,148 Cell and 416 Sectors (3) Court rulings execution services are delivered by both Professional Bailiffs and Non-Professional Bailiffs. The latter are Civil servants who are closer to the Citizens (at Cell and Sector levels) in 2,148 Cell and 416 Sectors hence providing Court rulings execution free services to local population for certain Court rulings. (4) The newly adopted Alternative Dispute Resolution policy (ADR) is expected to reduce the number of cases received in Courts.

73. Rural women land ownership: Nowadays, both Female and Male have equal rights for Succession in the Rwandan society. Land titles are owned by both spouses; 50% is owned by the wife and 50% by the husband especially for those who choose Community of property matrimonial regime.

74. Health care: In light of community access to health care services, the following mechanisms and Home-Grown Initiatives were put in place: (1) Community Based Health Insurance (Health care service are covered by the Government at 85% Countrywide and free of charge for the most vulnerable identified Households); (2) Four (4) Community Based Health Workers (2 Women & 2 Men) are available at Village level in 14,837 Villages at the lowest Decentralized Administrative Entity in Rwanda; (3) The current Rwandan Health Policy provides that all mothers are expected to deliver at recognized Health facilities available up to Cell level in 2,148 Cell and 416 Sectors; prior to that, they shall visit the Physician at least 08 times before giving birth to protect mother's and the baby life; (4) NSDS⁶ programme is available for all mothers including Teen mothers; a monthly financial as well as nutrients commodities support is provided to program beneficiaries.

75. Rural women participation in decision-making: The state party to the convention has been implementing various women empowerment interventions including participation in decision making at all levels of government. In this respect, there are 25.92% of Women Mayors, 85.18% of Women Vice Mayors in charge of Social Affairs, 14.81% of Women Vice Mayors in charge of economic development; 44.3% of Women District Councilors and 50% of Women in City of Kigali Council: 05/10.⁷

BATWA women

Reply to paragraph 20 of the list of issues and questions

76. Government of Rwanda's short-, medium- and long-term social protection policy agenda reconfirms its commitment to the progressive development of an inclusive and comprehensive social protection system grounded in positive values of inclusive development, self-reliance, citizen participation, service delivery excellence and national solidarity.

77. All Rwandans have got equal access to basic services and Government programmes. Complaints of gender-based violence against women are filed and handled at Isange One Stop Center (IOSC) where anyone can access victim support programmes free of charge.

Women with disability

Reply to paragraph 21 of the list of issues and questions

78. Detailed information on the measures taken to health services and information about sexual and reproductive health services and rights are accessible to women and girls with disabilities (paras. 266–270) and that they are not sterilized without their consent.

79. All women including women with disability access SRHR Health services and information inclusively. The Consent of each client must be obtained to provide any Contraception method including sterilization method.

⁶ NSDS means *Nutrition Sensitive Direct Support programme*.

⁷ MINALOC, 2023 Local government elections report.

80. There are various initiatives initiated to make sure that health services are accessible by PwDs whereby the Ministry of Health has physically renovated dozens of health centers, targeting accessibility improvements for persons who are blind and/or persons who use canes and wheelchairs, and it is imperative that all public and private service infrastructures have to be disability-friendly and accessible especially for PwD. Note that primary health services in Rwanda have been decentralized up to community level through health community advisors.

Refugee and migrant women and girls

Reply to paragraph 22 of the list of issues and questions

81. Rwanda currently hosts 135,109 refugees and asylum seekers of which 91% live in six camps (Mahama-Kirehe District), Mugombwa-Gisagara District), Nyabiheke-Gatsibo District), Kigeme-Karongi District), Kiziba-Karongi District) and Nkamira-Rubavu District) and 9% live in urban areas.

82. 61.77% are Congolese, 37.57% are Burundians whereas others make 0.66% (from other countries other than DRC and Burundi). Male counts 49% while women count 51%.

83. In relation to GBV cases registered and investigated involving refugees, there are 19 cases (17 cases of defilement and 2 cases of rape). The cases involved 22 females from Mahama, Mugomba, Kiziba and Kigeme refugee camps. In terms of nationality, 15 were Congolese while 7 Burundians.

Marriage and family relations

Reply to paragraph 23 of the list of issues and questions

84. According to the Article 133 of the Law N°68/2018 of 30/08/2018 determining offences and penalties in general, a case of forced marriage for a child, became aggravated circumstance of child defilement. The law stipulated that if child defilement is followed by cohabitation as husband and wife, the penalty is life imprisonment that cannot be mitigated by any circumstances". In this regard, defilement cases registered for 2021 reporting period were 17,099 cases.

85. And the conviction rate, 7870 cases were pronounced by Courts and among them 5447 were won and 2423 were lost.

86. In 2022, the "Safe and Resilient Family" national awareness initiative kicked off, aiming to foster family unity and combat harmful practices like polygamy, thereby safeguarding households and promoting progress. This campaign serves as a platform to raise awareness about family-related issues, employing a collaborative approach that calls on parents to prioritize harmony for the well-being and advancement of their families.

87. According to Penal code 2018, giving a child for premature for forced marriage is considered a crime and is punishable by heavy sanctions provided for by the penal code of the state party.