

## Universal Periodic Review

(51<sup>st</sup> Session)

### Contribution of UNESCO to Compilation of UN information

Rwanda

#### I. RATIFICATION OF UNESCO CONVENTIONS

<i>Title</i>	<i>Date of ratification, accession, acceptance, approval or succession</i>	<i>Declarations /reservations</i>	<i>Recognition of specific competences of treaty bodies</i>	<i>Reference to the rights within UNESCO's fields of competence</i>
Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)	Acceptance on 28 December 2000			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)	Ratification on 21 January 2013			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)	Ratification on 16 July 2012			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960	28 December 2000	Reservation to this Convention shall not be permitted		Right to education

#### II. REVIEW OF LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND IMPLEMENTATION

##### A. RIGHT TO EDUCATION

##### Discrimination in education (UNESCO consultations)

1. Rwanda submitted a report to the 10th and 11th consultations on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education.

### Constitution and main education law(s)

2. The [Constitution of Rwanda, as revised in 2023](#), guarantees the right to education but only for citizens (article 20. 1) and a principle of non-discrimination (article 16). The Constitution also provides for free and compulsory primary education (article 20. 3).
3. The [Law determining the organization of education of 2021](#) only guarantees the right to only primary education (article 57) and does not contain a principle of non-discrimination. The act provides for six years of free and compulsory education, starting at the age of six (articles 55, 56 and 57). The legislation does not provide for free and compulsory pre-primary education.

### Corporal punishment

4. There is no explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in schools, although the Law relating to the Protection of the Child defines “severe punishment including corporal sanctions” on children as an offence.

### Minimum age of employment

5. The [Law regulating labour in Rwanda of 2018, as amended in 2023](#), sets the minimum age of employment at 16 years old (article 5). According to ILO Convention 138 (Minimum age convention) “The minimum age [for admission to employment or work] shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case, shall not be less than 15 years”. However, the minimum age can be lowered to 14 years old under certain circumstances (article 4). The minimum age of employment is not aligned with the end of compulsory education, which is set at 12 years old and thus does not correspond to international standards in terms of compulsory education.

### Enrolment rates

6. Most recent UIS available data for the enrolment rates is as follows:

	Pre-primary education (net) (2023)	Primary education (gross) (2023)	Secondary education (gross) (2023)	Tertiary education (gross) (2023)
Girls	39.94%	149.61%	48.78%	7.74%
Boys	38.94%	154.17%	41.43%	10.06%
Total	39.43%	151.89%	45.13%	8.89%

7. During the last cycle, Rwanda was recommended to increase school enrolment rates, especially in secondary education (134.97 and 134.98). According to UIS data, since 2021, the gross enrolment rate in secondary education for both sexes has increased from 44.18% to 45.13% in 2023.

### Investment in education

8. According to UIS data, in Rwanda, in 2024, the government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP was 4.65%, and 14.88% of the total government expenditure. The most recent UIS data indicates that, in 2025, the government expenditure on education as a percentage of total government

expenditure was 13.93%.

### Refugees

9. During the last cycle, Rwanda was recommended to promote and protect the rights of refugees, in particular their right to education. In that regard, Rwanda has not yet ratified the [Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education](#), which aims notably to “promote, through the recognition of qualifications, inclusive and equitable access to quality higher education and support lifelong learning opportunities for all, including refugees and displaced persons” (article II). Moreover, Rwanda has not yet ratified the [Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States](#), which sets as an obligation for State-parties to “establish appropriate procedures to assess whether refugees and internally displaced persons respectively fulfil relevant requirements to access higher education through recognition of prior learning and qualifications for employability and integration” (article III.2).
10. According to the [Rwanda’s education key statistics for year 2023/24](#), Rwanda counted 44 051 refugees learners.

### Teachers

11. During the last cycle, Rwanda was recommended to expand the number of qualified English-speaking teachers (134.98). In that regard, Rwanda adopted the [Teacher Development and Management Policy in 2024](#) which goal is “to make teaching a respected and attractive profession in Rwanda as one way of ensuring that education plays its role of catalyzing the social economic transformation of the country.” Policy priority number 8 is to “Establish a comprehensive system of support for teachers’ English proficiency in general and the use of English as the medium of instruction as well as in STEM and in the use of ICT.”

### School environment

12. During the last cycle, Rwanda was recommended to accelerate the scaling up of access to safe drinking water in schools, particularly at the nursery, primary and secondary school levels (134.94) and to fully implement the school feeding programme. According to the [Rwanda’s education key statistics for year 2023/24](#), 79.9% of pre-primary schools, 80.5% of primary schools, 92.3% of TVET institutions and 87.8% of general and professional secondary schools were equipped with water. Rwanda also adopted the [National School Feeding Strategy 2023-2032](#) and a [National School Feeding Programme Financing Strategy](#) in 2024 to implement it.

### Gender equality

13. During the last UPR cycle, Rwanda was recommended to continue its efforts towards gender equality in and through education, notably relating to the enrolment of girls in secondary and tertiary education (134.17, 134.22, 134.63 and 134.100). In that regard, Rwanda concluded its [2023-2027 Partnership Compact](#) in alignment with its 2022 National Statement of Commitment issued for the

Transforming Education Summit. This partnership compact aims at pursuing a transformative reform agenda for improved inclusive quality teaching and learning in Rwanda. This includes integrating gender equality as a crosscutting component in the education sector.

#### Comprehensive sexuality education

14. During the last UPR cycle, Rwanda was recommended to facilitate access to comprehensive sexuality education (134.90). In that regard, UNESCO Nairobi reported multiple measures. In 2022, with the support of UNFPA, UNESCO, the Imbutu Foundation, and the Rwanda Education Board (REB), 70 more master teachers were trained on the delivery of CSE. In 2024, 60 primary schools and 46 secondary schools were provided life skills-based HIV and sexuality education, ultimately reaching 99,193 learners. In addition, UNESCO, the REB, and the Rwanda Women Adolescent and Child Health Initiative (RWACHI) conducted a training for 1,156 teachers from 42 primary schools and five district officials in Kamonyi district on CSE and school violence prevention. UNESCO also supported the Ministry of Education in the sustainability of the existing coaching and mentoring program for improved CSE delivery by orienting 60 district school-based mentors and district education officials. A core group of these trainers will then cascade the training in all 30 districts of Rwanda. To support young people's safety and well-being in digital spaces, UNESCO promoted the use of non-formal teaching methods utilizing digital platforms and empowering young people to lead and co-create CSE interventions, building the digital literacy and safety capacity of at least 12,900 young people in 2024. In 2025, a reference book for secondary schools, distributed by the REB in 2020, was revised in partnership with UNESCO, UNFPA and other partners following the international technical guidance on sexuality education. The book covers 13 topics including 'Preventing pregnancy', 'Sexually transmitted infections, HIV and AIDS' and 'Human rights.'

#### Technical and vocational education and training

15. During the last UPR cycle, Rwanda was recommended to continue to improve vocational training (134.73). In that regard, UNESCO Nairobi reported multiple measures taken. For instance, in 2024, [UNESCO supported Rwanda's national TVET digitization strategy through the Pan-African Initiative](#), facilitating a workshop to draft a national action plan. A [TVET Quality Audit has also been conducted in 2024 by the National Examination and School Inspection Authority \(NESA\)](#) across 563 institutions to assess and improve competency-based training and assessment (CBT/CBA). Some challenges remain, namely financial and human resources constraints.

### **B. RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION AND RIGHT TO INFORMATION**

#### Constitutional and Legislative framework

16. Freedom of expression is enshrined in Article 38 of the 2003 Constitution of Rwanda.<sup>1</sup>
17. In 2018, Rwanda revised its Penal Code, decriminalizing general defamation, which had previously been punishable by imprisonment and fines.<sup>2</sup> However, Article 236 of the 2018 Penal Code still criminalizes insults or defamation against the President of the Republic, which is liable to be punished by a prison term of a minimum of five to a maximum of seven years.<sup>3</sup> Article 233 also criminalizes humiliation of national authorities and persons in charge of public service, which is liable to a prison term ranging from one to two years.
18. In March 2013, Rwanda adopted a new Law Regulating Media which expanded the rights of journalists.<sup>4</sup>
19. Simultaneously, the same law enshrined the right to access information.<sup>5</sup>

#### Implementation of legislation

20. The Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA) was initially created by Law 39/2001 with the mission to regulate, among other sectors, telecommunications services.<sup>6</sup> This Law was further reviewed and replaced by Law N° 09/2013 with the mission to regulate, among other sectors, telecommunications, information technology, broadcasting and converging electronic technologies including the internet and any other audiovisual information and communication technology.<sup>7</sup> The Board of the Authority consists of seven members, including the Director General, all appointed by a Presidential Order.<sup>8</sup>
21. The Rwanda Media Commission (RMC), established in 2013, is an independent body with the mission to promote professional, accountable, and independent

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<sup>1</sup> [https://natlex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/r/natlex/fe/details?p3\\_isn=64236](https://natlex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/r/natlex/fe/details?p3_isn=64236)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.police.gov.rw/uploads/tx\\_download/Official\\_Gazette\\_no\\_Special\\_of\\_14.06.2012-4.pdf](https://www.police.gov.rw/uploads/tx_download/Official_Gazette_no_Special_of_14.06.2012-4.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://police.gov.rw/fileadmin/templates/images/NEWS\\_2020/New\\_Penal\\_code.pdf](https://police.gov.rw/fileadmin/templates/images/NEWS_2020/New_Penal_code.pdf).

<sup>4</sup>

[https://rura.rw/fileadmin/Documents/ICT/Laws/Media\\_Law\\_Official\\_Gazette\\_no\\_10\\_of\\_11\\_03\\_2013.pdf](https://rura.rw/fileadmin/Documents/ICT/Laws/Media_Law_Official_Gazette_no_10_of_11_03_2013.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>

[https://rura.rw/fileadmin/Documents/ICT/Laws/Media\\_Law\\_Official\\_Gazette\\_no\\_10\\_of\\_11\\_03\\_2013.pdf](https://rura.rw/fileadmin/Documents/ICT/Laws/Media_Law_Official_Gazette_no_10_of_11_03_2013.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://rura.rw/index.php?id=51>

<sup>7</sup> [https://rura.rw/fileadmin/docs/report/Official\\_Gazette\\_no\\_14\\_bis\\_of\\_08\\_04\\_2013.pdf](https://rura.rw/fileadmin/docs/report/Official_Gazette_no_14_bis_of_08_04_2013.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [https://rura.rw/fileadmin/docs/report/Official\\_Gazette\\_no\\_14\\_bis\\_of\\_08\\_04\\_2013.pdf](https://rura.rw/fileadmin/docs/report/Official_Gazette_no_14_bis_of_08_04_2013.pdf)

media that contributes to the country's development and democracy.<sup>9</sup>

22. All media outlets must register with the Rwanda Media Commission, and any person who intends to provide multimedia and broadcasting services must obtain licenses from the Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA).<sup>10</sup>

#### Safety of Journalists

23. Since 2006, when systematic monitoring began, UNESCO recorded two killings of journalists in Rwanda, on its Observatory of Killed Journalists.<sup>11</sup> One case remains ongoing or unresolved and one case has been resolved, according to information provided by the Government.<sup>12</sup>

### **C. THE RIGHT TO SHARE IN SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT AND ITS BENEFITS**

24. The Constitution of Rwanda guarantees freedom of learning and teaching. There is no reference to the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
25. Rwanda has acceded to the ICESCR, but it has not yet ratified its Optional Protocol.
26. Rwanda did not include in its Third Cycle National Report (2020) any explicit reference to the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits, or inherent rights such as scientific freedom. No explicitly science-related Recommendations were made, nor were any Recommendations made in respect of the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits or its inherent rights such as scientific freedom. Rwanda did not submit its national report on the implementation of the Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers for the consultation period from 2017 to 2021, nor has it yet done so for the second consultation from 2021 to 2025.

## **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. RIGHT TO EDUCATION**

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<sup>9</sup> <https://rmc.rw/index>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.rura.rw/fileadmin/Documents/ICT/Laws/Regulation\\_governing\\_multimedia\\_services\\_in\\_Rwanda.pdf](https://www.rura.rw/fileadmin/Documents/ICT/Laws/Regulation_governing_multimedia_services_in_Rwanda.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Accessed on 15 May 2025.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.unesco.org/en/safety-journalists/observatory/country-overview?country=11515d0d-ccde-5b3f-b2a4-622912d528dd&hub=72609>

27. Rwanda should be encouraged to:

- i. Enshrine the right to education within the legislation and legally proscribe discrimination in education.
- ii. Guarantee in the legislation at least nine years of compulsory primary and secondary education and at least twelve years of free primary and secondary education.
- iii. Introduce legislation to make pre-primary education free and compulsory for at least one year.
- iv. Legally proscribe corporal punishment in education settings
- v. Strengthen efforts to increase the percentage of boys and girls in secondary education.
- vi. Ratify the Regional and Global Conventions on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education.
- vii. Continue efforts to ensure the right to inclusive education for refugees and for girls.
- viii. Continue efforts to ensure quality teacher training.
- ix. Continue efforts to ensure quality school environment notably ensuring access to safe water in schools.
  - x. Continue its efforts to ensure access to comprehensive sexuality education.
  - xi. Continue its efforts to improve quality technical and vocational education and training.
  - xii. Continue to ensure regular reporting to UIS on education data.
- xiii. Continue to regularly submit comprehensive national reports for the periodic consultations on UNESCO's education-related standard-setting instruments, and notably on the Convention against Discrimination in Education.
- xiv. Share with UNESCO any relevant information to update its country profile on UNESCO's [Observatory on the Right to Education](#) and [HerAtlas](#).

## **B. RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION AND RIGHT TO INFORMATION**

28. The Government is encouraged to continue investigating unresolved cases of killed journalists and to voluntarily report on the status of judicial follow-up to UNESCO and to the SDG 16.10.1 monitoring processes.

29. The Government is recommended to decriminalize insults or defamation against the President (Article 236, Penal Code) and the humiliation of national authorities (Article 233, Penal Code), and instead address them within a civil code that aligns with international standards.

30. The Government is encouraged to assess the system of supervision of the media sector in order to ensure that this process is transparent and independent.

## **C. RIGHT TO FREELY PARTICIPATE IN THE CULTURAL LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY (CULTURAL RIGHTS)**

31. As a State Party to the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), Rwanda is encouraged to fully implement the relevant provisions that promote access to and participation in cultural heritage and creative expressions and, as such, are conducive to implementing the right to take part in cultural life as defined in article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In doing so, Rwanda is encouraged to give due consideration to the participation of communities, practitioners, cultural actors and NGOs from civil society as well as vulnerable groups (minorities, migrants, refugees, young people, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities), and to ensure that equal opportunities are given to women and girls to address gender disparities.

#### **D. THE RIGHT TO SHARE IN SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT AND ITS BENEFITS**

32. Rwanda is invited to continue its efforts to ensure the full and comprehensive implementation and monitoring of the Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers in accordance with the relevant Decisions of UNESCO's Executive Board (216 EX/Decision 45 of May 2023). In that context, Rwanda is invited to engage with UNESCO's Program on the promotion of scientific freedom and the safety of scientists and support the related Call to Action in line with the Recommendation and decisions of UNESCO's General Conference (42 C/Resolution 26 of November 2023) and Executive Board (219 EX/Decision 30 of March 2024). The Call to Action underlines the need to protect science and scientific researchers, and to allow for a free and safe science ecosystem where there is trust in science and where scientific evidence informs decision making. UNESCO stands ready to support Rwanda in developing and nurturing its science ecosystem, and protecting its scientific researchers, including through the incorporation of appropriate legal and administrative measures in line with international law. Rwanda is invited to collaborate directly with UNESCO, through its Secretariat and specialised Sectors, for that purpose.

33. Against this background, Rwanda is invited to consider the following:

- i. Submit a national report to the 2nd consultation on the implementation of the Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers in line with the Circular Letter by UNESCO's Director-General (CL/4448 of 28 November 2024) and the guidelines contained therein.
- ii. Explore ways to strengthen the status of the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits in its legal system, including in its Constitution and any other appropriate legal and policy frameworks.
- iii. When implementing measures to guarantee the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right to information, and the right to education, include within those measures the freedoms indispensable for scientific research, and access to scientific education at all levels.
- iv. Expand input on issues covered by UNESCO's Recommendation in its national report to the UPR – particularly providing information about the

implementation of the right to science and scientific freedom, including the latter in its report addressing more broadly freedom of opinion and expression. This will allow further discussions thereon at the Human Rights Council and the formulation of specific recommendations.

- v. Ratify the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR.