



**Human Rights Council
Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Rwanda
51st Session (January 2026)**

Joint Stakeholders' Submission on:

Human Rights in Rwanda

Submitted by:

Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI)
(NGO in Consultative Status with ECOSOC)

and

Marist Brothers – Province of Central-West Africa

and

Solidaridad, Educación, Desarrollo (SED)

Geneva, July 2025

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This stakeholders' report is a joint submission of the above-mentioned organizations. The report highlights key concerns related to **children's rights** in Rwanda, particularly **Education access, retention and quality, Youth development and opportunities, Children's Rights and general welfare**, and finally, **Infrastructure and Broader Development**. Each section conveys recommendations to the Rwanda Government.

2. The data and information obtained for this submission came from various sources and includes information from youth, teachers, educators, and other civil society actors living and working in Rwanda. All information concerned the period from June 2020 to May 2025.

3. **Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI)** is an international organization promoted by the Marist Brothers, present in 80 countries. FMSI has more than 15 years of experience working in the field of international solidarity, advocating for children's rights especially in the field of education. It works at the international level, participating in the UN human rights mechanisms in collaboration with other organizations with similar interests. It has been accredited by ECOSOC since 2011.

4. **The Marist Brothers – Province of East-Central Africa:** The Marist Brothers is a religious congregation of consecrated men in the Catholic Church. They are involved in the education of children and young people in schools and other educational settings. The Province of East-Central Africa is an Administrative Unit within the Marist Institute, composed of several locations and personnel living and working in Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Kenya and Tanzania¹. The Marist Brothers currently operate multiple schools in Rwanda and provide essential social services for vulnerable children and youth.

5. **Solidaridad, Educación, Desarrollo (SED)** is a non-profit, state-wide, non-governmental development organization (NGO). It works mainly to promote the right to education in Africa and Latin America, as well as in some countries in Asia and Europe. SED's three objectives are: development cooperation, education for development and the promotion and training of volunteers. Its headquarters are in Madrid. It has four regional delegations in Barcelona, Valladolid, Pamplona and Seville. In Spain it works in the field of Development Education and Social Advocacy.

II. GENERAL REMARKS AND COOPERATION WITH THE UPR MECHANISM

6. Rwanda was reviewed in January 2021 at the 37th Session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, receiving 284 recommendations. This coalition welcomes the constructive participation of Rwanda in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). As the outcome of its UPR at Human Rights Council 47 (July 2021), Rwanda adopted 160 of these recommendations and noted 124².

7. We also welcome the adoption of many recommendations that are connected to the Sustainable Development Goals³: **16** - Peace, justice and strong institutions (52%); **5** - Gender Equality (13%);

¹ Cf. Marist presence in the world: <https://champagnat.org/en/marist-institute/our-presence/>

² Cf. "Matrix Recommendations Rwanda" available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/rw-index>

³ Cf. "Infographic" available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session37/RW/RWANDA.pdf>

10 - Reduced inequalities (8%); **4** - Quality Education (7%); **8** - Decent work and economic growth (7%).

8. The Rwandan government's adoption of these multiple recommendations clearly shows its commitment to safeguarding human rights. As a coalition, we acknowledge this dedication and respectfully urge the government to continue allocating the necessary resources and implementing the required measures to ensure these recommendations are effectively put into practice. This is essential for the progress of human rights, with a special focus on the most vulnerable in society. Therefore, we strongly encourage the government of Rwanda to pay particular attention to the effective follow-up of these recommendations, in consultation with Civil Society.

9. We would like to express our gratitude to the government of Rwanda for granting us the opportunity to submit this report, and for its adherence to the measures proposed by the United Nations for the participation of civil society. This joint submission represents the follow-up to the recommendations accepted by the State on the previous UPR cycle. We recognize the need to build on the previous recommendations and tackle any new issues that might come up in the next session.

III. METHODOLOGY FOR DATA COLLECTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC

Methodology:

10. The methodology entailed the active engagement of adolescents and young people, encompassing multiple groups of students between the ages of 14 and 18 from various educational institutions. Student responses, collected from 90 participants (70% male, 30% female), centered on issues affecting their educational and personal well-being. This report covers the primary concerns that emerged from this fieldwork, while acknowledging that other issues were also identified but not specifically mentioned.

11. This report features **direct quotes from children and young people** sharing their perspectives on the human rights situation in Rwanda. These voices, presented *"in quotation marks" and in italics*, were gathered through conversations and attentive listening with adolescents and young people during our data collection. These **children and young people's voices** serve to both inspire and validate the theoretical work done by the organizations behind this report.

Overview:

12. **Education** is a central concern for Rwandan children and youth. Participants in the data collection process repeatedly stress the need to improve both the **quality and accessibility** of education. This emphasis is multifaceted, spanning from enhancements in the learning environment to systemic reforms that encourage practical and innovative learning. They call for an education system that is not only more accessible but also more attuned to the practical realities of learners' future career needs.

13. The **development and promotion of youth talents** is a constant focus on the participants' responses. There is a widespread concern that students' diverse abilities — be they in sports, the arts, or academics — are not being nurtured effectively. Respondents emphasize the importance of fostering a wide range of talents and call for a balanced approach that encourages creativity alongside academic and sporting excellence. This approach would also address the issue of prolonged unemployment despite educational qualifications.

14. Children and young people underline the importance of **respecting individual rights**, call for more information on children's rights and emphasize equal rights in matters of religion, including the freedom to practice one's faith, and the commitment of the nation and the international community to promote peace and justice in Africa.

15. Although less extensive than the previous ones, another set of children and youth's opinions and suggestions for the country's development includes **improving physical infrastructure, modernizing industries, and promoting sports and recreation** as societal goals that can enhance Rwanda's social well-being.

16. The government of Rwanda has enacted legislation and instituted public policies aimed at ensuring the protection of human rights. It is acknowledged that some of the challenges confronting the government are complex and require dedicated effort to address, both in the present and in the future. We deeply appreciated its commitment to maintaining these efforts.

IV. EDUCATION ACCESS, RETENTION AND QUALITY

17. Our coalition acknowledges that Rwanda's education sector, from 2020 to the present, has been characterized by the governmental commitment to human capital development and a strategic alignment with national development goals and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) in response to several recommendations from the last UPR⁴.

18. The Rwanda Ministry of Education has implemented policy frameworks, such as the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2018/2019 -2023/24)⁵ and the Foundational Learning Strategy (FLS)⁶, providing a clear roadmap for the sector's evolution towards a knowledge-based economy. There is a clear effort to position education as a vital instrument for human capital development, poverty reduction, and fostering national unity and reconciliation in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide⁷ that marks a critical shift in focus from merely increasing access to education to ensuring actual learning outcomes.

19. The creation of the Higher Education Council (HEC) in 2020, along with other crucial affiliated agencies such as the Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) for basic education, and the National Examination and School Inspection Authority (NESA) for national examinations and school inspections, signify a strong centralized governance structure for education quality assurance

⁴ 134.75 (Venezuela); 134.96 (Cuba); 134.97 (Cyprus); 134.98 & 134.99 (Israel); 134.100 (Kenya); 134.101 (Lithuania); 134.102 (Mauritius); 134.104 (Myanmar); 134.105 (Oman); 134.106 & 134.149 (Qatar); 134.107 (Turkey); 134.155 (Singapore); 134.144 (Iran); 134.148 (Bulgaria); 134.108 (Algeria); 134.152 (Finland); 134.158 (Lesotho).

⁵ "Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2018/2019 -2023/24)"- Ministry of Education, accessed June 25, 2025: https://www.mineduc.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/Mineduc/Publications/ESSP/1_Education_Sector_Strategic_Plan_2018_2024.pdf

⁶ Foundational Learning Strategy (FLS), accessed June 25, 2025: <https://www.mineduc.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=103654&token=aa0cf55e9e249885023813ebc371b1615bd48488>

⁷ Cf. "Impact of Educational Policies and Reforms on Human Capital Development in Rwanda" - ResearchGate, accessed June 25, 2025: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/389521983_Impact_of_Educational_Policies_and_Reforms_on_Human_Capital_Development_in_Rwanda

across all levels⁸ allowing Rwanda's education sector achieves progress across several critical dimensions, such as:

- A slight increase in budgetary allocations to the education sector reaching FRW 793 billion in 2024/2025⁹ and the increasing decentralization of funding to empower local management and responsiveness in education delivery. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) reported that government expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure (excluding debt service) increased from 10% in 2020 to 15% in 2023.¹⁰
- A significant intervention within the education budget is the national school feeding program, which accounts for almost 12% of the total education budget. This program, rolled out nationally across all basic-education levels, is identified as a key factor contributing to reduce school dropouts.¹¹
- A total of 50,895 new teachers has been recruited and have received extensive training across diverse, critical areas (English proficiency, digital skills, STEM, math and science, inclusive education, among others). This number indicates the effort to build the human capacity of the education sector with a systemic approach to professionalization, aiming for consistent quality and competency from the outset.¹²
- The improvement in students' access, retention, and learning outcomes:
 - Proficiency levels in core subjects at the primary level have seen notable gains (especially English proficiency, numeracy and Kinyarwanda reading fluency and comprehension)¹³.
 - Refugee children demonstrated strong access to inclusive education, with a gross enrollment rate of 96% by the end of 2024, including 80% in Early Childhood Education, 125% in primary, 73% in secondary, and 5.8% in higher education/TVET.¹⁴

20. However, the sector continues to grapple with persistent challenges that point to ongoing quality and equity gaps:

- Financial allocations to education, while increasing in absolute terms, remain below UNESCO's recommended benchmarks as a percentage of the total national budget (13.9%)

⁸ Cf. *Education* - UNICEF, accessed June 25, 2025:

https://www.unicef.org/rwanda/media/6466/file/UNICEF_Rwanda_Budget_Briefs_2024_2025_Education.pdf.pdf

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ Cf. *"GPE 2025 results framework for Rwanda"* – Documents. GPE, accessed June 25, 2025:

<https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/gpe-2025-results-framework-rwanda>

¹¹ Ibid. - *Education* – UNICEF.

¹² Cf. *"Implementation Status & Results Report Rwanda Quality Basic Education for Human Capital Development Project (P168551)"* - World Bank Document, accessed June 25, 2025:

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099050125070557119/pdf/P168551-39b59a4c-d425-424d-b526-4983abf09a4c.pdf>

¹³ Cf. *"Foundational Learning Strategy"* – Ministry of Education, accessed June 25, 2025:

<https://www.mineduc.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=103654&token=aa0cf55e9e249885023813ebc371b1615bd48488>

¹⁴ Cf. *"Annual Results Report - 2024 Rwanda"* - UNHCR, accessed June 25, 2025:

<https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/Rwanda%20ARR%202024.pdf>

of the total budget in 2024/25 against the target of 15-20%).¹⁵ While absolute spending has increased, the declining proportion of the national budget allocated to education suggests that other sectors might be gaining higher priority.

- Low participation in early childhood education (less than half of children in this age group participated in 2023)¹⁶.
- Repetition rates increased from 13% to 30%¹⁷, and average repetition rates in early primary (P1-P5) rose from 12.00% in March 2022 to 19.80% as of January 2025¹⁸. Besides, only 37.5% of students who enter Primary 1 are likely to finish Primary 6 within six years, and a mere 12.2% complete Senior 6 within 12 years, indicating significant issues with retention and completion across the basic and secondary education cycles¹⁹.
- The overall Advanced Level national exam pass rate for the 2023-2024 academic year dropped to 78.6%, with general education candidates experiencing a sharp decline from 95% in the prior year to 67.5%.²⁰
- The effectiveness of teacher training is sometimes hampered by a lack of formal proficiency assessment and a significant proportion, almost 40% of teachers, remain untrained,²¹ posing a fundamental challenge to instructional quality.
- Data from the EICV7 - Thematic Report Education 2023/24 reveals that 10% of individuals aged 15 years and above have never attended school, and 41% attended school but did not complete primary education.²² This highlights a substantial segment of the population lacking foundational literacy and numeracy.
- External shocks like climate change²³ and internal operational hurdles, such as data inconsistencies and delayed textbook delivery,²⁴ pose additional complexities.

21. The young people who participated in the data collection for this report are aware of these challenges. The following needs were expressed by them:

- “(Rwanda’s government should support students by) *Providing enough education opportunities such as scholarships.*”
- “*Helping in holding more international events & competitions such as International Math Olympiads (MO), and other extra-curricular competitions.*”
- “*Improvement in technology particularly in the field of education: (The government) should provide practical experiments led by experts in different aspects like medical, health*

¹⁵ Ibid. - Education – UNICEF.

¹⁶ Ibid. - Education – UNICEF.

¹⁷ Cf. “Parliament Calls For Education Policy Reforms Amid Rising Grade Repetition In Primary Schools” - KT PRESS, accessed June 25, 2025: <https://www.ktpress.rw/2025/02/parliament-calls-for-education-policy-reforms-amid-rising-grade-repetition-in-primary-schools/>

¹⁸ Ibid. “Implementation Status & Results Report Rwanda Quality Basic ...”

¹⁹ Ibid. - Education – UNICEF.

²⁰ Cf. “NESA releases 2024–2025 national exams timetable as pass rates ...”, accessed June 25, 2025: <https://rwandainspirer.com/nesa-releases-2024-2025-national-exams-timetable-as-pass-rates-drop/>

²¹ Ibid. “Parliament Calls For Education Policy Reforms...”

²² Cf. “National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda”, accessed June 25, 2025, <https://www.statistics.gov.rw/>

²³ Cf. “Climate change and education. From evidence to action” – Education Development Trust, accessed June 25, 2025: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED671244.pdf>

²⁴ Ibid. “Implementation Status & Results Report Rwanda Quality Basic ...”

and agricultural fields by promoting technology so as to help learners realize their dreams and innovation.”

- *“To aid those who succeed well in school and don't get money to help them to continue their education inside and outside the country, specially, aid those who have disability.”*
- *“Some pupils (students) are studying but they don't have place where to have holidays and someone to pay for School fees. Concrete action: Establishment of orphanage families to keep them.”*
- *“To help those who are vulnerable childrens to get school fees so that they can get opportunities to learn like others.”*
- *“(To provide) School fees for orphans and Street children through the creation of projections (charity). Give the families of that children somethings that can help them in different aspects.”*
- *“(The government) should improve Rwandan's and Africa's (in general) education system, by promoting practical learning in African schools, and promoting African international schools.”*
- *“(To allow Rwandan youth) acquire high education (by) Reducing university fees so that most Students finishing high school at can get engaged or involved in Universities.”*
- *“We definitely recommend experimental scholastic materials with various opportunities to help us apply our theoretical studies hence strengthening our practical skills.”*
- *“We would request the availability of more and more scholarships to different universities found in other countries so that the experience and education might be developed.”*
- *“Many of us go or want UNIVERSITY abroad. Because we know that they have materials and better educators that will help us to know well things we need.”*
- *“(To provide) Materials to be used in education for better understanding and support from educators with better training.”*
- *“Provision of like high quality laptops per child (like MacBook) and internet access due to low internet use available to children in schools.”*

22. In accordance with Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and aiming to improve the educational situation in Rwanda to ensure inclusive and quality education for all -aligned with Sustainable Development Goals 4- our coalition puts forward the following recommendation”

- a. Increase progressively and maintain consistently the education budget allocation to meet or exceed the UNESCO target of 20% of the national budget by 2030, aiming to enhance educational infrastructure and resource provision nationwide.**
- b. Continue implementing and expanding the Foundational Learning Strategy (FLS), with emphasis on evidence-based pedagogical practices, digital learning and the timely provision of adequate and culturally relevant learning materials, particularly textbooks, computing devices and Internet access.**
- c. Develop and implement robust, transparent systems for training, assessing, and certifying teachers' proficiency, especially in core subjects and languages of instruction, such as Kinyarwanda and English, as well as digital skills. These systems must be capable of ensuring that training translates into measurable improvements in classroom instruction.**

- d. **Complete a comprehensive, disaggregated national analysis of socio-economic factors, pedagogical shortcomings, and curriculum challenges contributing to high repetition and low completion rates in upper primary and secondary education. Based on these findings, develop and implement targeted interventions, aiming to reduce the national repetition rate by and increase the secondary education completion rate.**

V. YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES

23. Rwanda's national development agenda is firmly anchored in a vision of human capital development, aspiring to achieve middle-income status by 2035 and high-income status by 2050.²⁵ This ambitious trajectory is articulated through comprehensive strategic frameworks, notably the Second National Strategy for Transformation (NST2) for the period 2024-2029²⁶ and the National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS 2024-2025)²⁷, in line with some of the recommendations adopted in the previous UPR session²⁸ and Sustainable Development Goals 8, 9 and 10.

24. Within this framework, children and youth under 20 years of age, who constitute a substantial demographic representing approximately 50% of the population as of 2022,²⁹ are explicitly recognized as pivotal stakeholders, whose active participation is deemed essential for the successful implementation of national development goals.³⁰ This high-level policy commitment to youth development, coupled with a cross-sectoral integration, establishes a foundation for identifying and leveraging opportunities while providing a clear direction for addressing existing weaknesses. Such strategic alignment significantly enhances the potential for interventions to be sustained and to yield meaningful, long-term impacts on the lives of young Rwandans.

25. Accompanying Rwanda's economy remarkable resilience and robust growth in recent years³¹, the United Nations has actively contributed to shaping the NST2 Strategy, with a particular focus on private sector development and youth employment, recognizing these as critical drivers for future progress.

²⁵ Cf. "Rwanda Overview: Development news, research, data" – World Bank Group, accessed July 4, 2025: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/rwanda/overview>

²⁶ Cf. "National Strategy for Transformation (NST2)" - Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, accessed July 4, 2025: <https://www.minecofin.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=112650&token=cb55b3319372c3f73528c46433b587ef72e8d4eb>

²⁷ Cf. "National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS 2024-2025)" – Ministry of Public Service and Labour, accessed July 5, 2025: <https://t.co/Bi9E8HhPk7>

²⁸ 134.73 (Indonesia); 134.24 (Cameroon); 134.74 (China)

²⁹ Cf. "Population size and Population characteristics" – National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda – NISR, accessed July 7, 2025: <https://www.statistics.gov.rw/statistical-publications/population-size-and-population-characteristics>

³⁰ Cf. "Draft Rwanda country strategic plan (2025–2029)", number 34, page 7 – WFP, accessed July 4, 2025: https://executiveboard.wfp.org/document_download/WFP-0000163189

³¹ The real Gross Domestic Product - GDP grew by an average of 8.2% in 2022-2023 and notably increased by 9.7% in the first half of 2024. Projections indicate that this growth momentum is expected to continue, averaging 7.1% between 2025 and 2027. Cf. "2024 UN Annual Results Report – Rwanda" – United Nations, Rwanda, accessed July 4, 2025: https://rwanda.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/Annua%20Results%20Report%202024%20-%20Rwanda_0.pdf

26. Our coalition recognizes the wisdom of the Rwandan government in prioritizing technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as a cornerstone of human capital development. The government's commitment to TVET is evident in its ambitious plan, supported by the international community, to establish³² "Centers of Excellence" — model technical and vocational centers — across every district. These centers will be designed to meet high European and Asian standards³³. If the strategy is fully adopted and implemented, it will create opportunities to develop the talent and skills of young people. However, it is crucial to overcome the educational obstacles mentioned in the previous section of this report.

27. Despite the significant strides made, Rwanda faces several persistent weaknesses and challenges that impede the full development of youth talent and their successful integration into the employment landscape:

- A significant proportion of Rwandan youth remain outside the formal education system or fail to complete their schooling. In 2019, 121.348 children and 32.455 adolescents were out of school.³⁴ This situation points to systemic barriers that prevent young individuals from acquiring even basic foundational skills, severely limiting their talent development and future employment prospects.³⁵ The consequence is a large pool of low-skilled youth, increasing their vulnerability to unemployment and precarious work in the informal sector.
- The low level of digital literacy among teachers and students³⁶ indicates that, although the infrastructure for digital learning is expanding, the capacity to effectively use these technologies for educational and developmental purposes is lagging. This creates a critical "digital divide" that extends beyond access to digital tools and encompasses the ability to use them.
- Persistent skills mismatch between Rwandan youth graduates' qualifications and the requirements of the country's labor market. The high rate of unemployment in 2017 among individuals who had completed upper secondary education (23%), and university graduates (18%) suggests a clear disconnect between higher levels of education and the actual needs of the job market³⁷.

³² Cf. "Youth Center Development Strategy (2020/21– 2024/2025)" – Ministry of Youth and Culture, accessed July 4, 2025:

<https://www.moya.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=74195&token=9fb22fb3c7b821e0fb036cebccb262bf5fec29a0>

³³ Cf. "Rwanda To Establish Model Technical, Vocational Centres In Every District" – KTPress, accessed July 4, 2025: <https://www.ktpress.rw/2025/02/rwanda-to-establish-model-technical-vocational-centres-in-every-district/>

³⁴ Cf. "Rwanda: Making strides in equity and inclusion" – Global Partnership, accessed July 5, 2025:

<https://www.globalpartnership.org/results/country-journeys/rwanda-making-strides-equity-and-inclusion>

³⁵ In 2019, 86% of children in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Rwanda, were experiencing learning poverty, meaning they were unable to read and understand a simple text by age 10; only 37.52% of P3 learners met English foundational literacy benchmarks in 2023, and 55.60% met Mathematics benchmarks, and in Primary 5 and Primary 6 students struggle with English language proficiency. Cf. "Rwanda Quality Basic Education for Human Capital Development Project (P168551)" – The World Bank, accessed July 4, 2025:

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099050125070557119/pdf/P168551-39b59a4c-d425-424d-b526-4983abf09a4c.pdf>

³⁶ Cf. "Draft country programme document (CPD) for Rwanda" – UNICEF, accessed July 4, 2025:

<https://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/27861/file/2025-PL2-Rwanda-draft-CPD-EN-2024-11-11.pdf>

³⁷ Ibidem.

- Low productivity (attributed to existing infrastructure gaps, limited progress in innovation, and suboptimal allocative efficiency) directly impacts the economy's capacity to create high-value, formal jobs leading many young people to enter low-skill occupations within the informal economy.³⁸ This combination of low productivity, high informality, and insufficient formal job creation indicates a systemic inability to provide dignified and fulfilling work for the growing youth population.
- Although entrepreneurship is actively promoted as a pathway to youth employment, many young entrepreneurs lack the exposure, resources, and networks necessary to effectively scale their businesses. Limited access to credit is also a major barrier to self-employment.³⁹
- The situation is even more challenging for girls and young women who are affected by persistent disparities in education and employment.⁴⁰ The same is true for youth with disabilities,⁴¹ young refugees,⁴² and those deeply affected by the adverse effects of climate change.⁴³ These groups face systemic barriers to inclusive education and development. This underscores the significant challenge of ensuring equitable talent development for these vulnerable groups.
- Poor mental health significantly impacts human capital development and employment. While not all sources explicitly detail the direct causal link between mental health conditions and youth development and employment, mental health conditions can affect an individual's cognitive function, concentration, and productivity. Mental health issues can also hinder educational attainment and participation in vocational training, thereby limiting the acquisition of necessary workforce skills.⁴⁴

28. Adolescents and young people participating in the preparation of this report addressed this significant issue on multiple occasions. Below, we share some of their direct expressions:

- *“Talents development: showing time and support to develop talent; having some sport clubs not for every school but for sector. It will be enough to us.”*
- *“To create the opportunities for the persons who already finished their studies so that they may develop themselves by performing different activities.”*

³⁸ Cf. “Labour Market Profile Rwanda – 2021/2022” - Danish Trade Union Development Agency, accessed July 5, 2025: <https://www.ulandssekretariatet.dk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/LMP-Rwanda-2021-Final.pdf>

³⁹ Cf. McIntosh, C. and Zeitlin, A. (2023) “Skills and Liquidity Barriers to Youth Employment: Medium-term Evidence from a Cash Benchmarking Experiment in Rwanda”, accessed July 6, 2025, available at: https://gps.ucsd.edu/files/faculty/mcintosh/mcintosh_skills-and-liquidity-barriers-to-youth.pdf

⁴⁰ Female out-of-school rates are higher than male rates at the upper secondary level (46% vs. 44%). In higher education, female participation in STEM fields remains limited, with only 1,397 enrolled. In the labor market, the unemployment rate in February 2025 (Q1) was higher among females (12.5%) compared to males (9.9%), and the labor underutilization rate was also higher for females (59.8%) than males (47.2%). Cf. “Labour Force Survey - 2025 (Q1)” – National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, accessed July 6, 2025: <https://www.statistics.gov.rw/statistical-publications/labor-force-and-economic-activity-/labour-force-survey-2025-q1>

⁴¹ Ibid. “Rwanda: Making strides in equity...”

⁴² Cf. “Annual Results Report – 2024. Rwanda” – UNHCR, accessed July 6, 2025: <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/Rwanda%20ARR%202024.pdf>

⁴³ Cf. “Climate change and education. From evidence to action” – Education Development Trust, accessed July 6, 2025: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED671244.pdf>

⁴⁴ Cf. “Rwanda. Annual Report 2024” – UNICEF, accessed July 6, 2025:

- *“Promotion and improvement of students' talents: Concrete action: Providing enough time to students to improve their talents in all games, without focusing on one only and also providing the opportunity to improve their talents. Students' talents are disappearing.”*
- *“Creation of Employment for all those who finish their studies: Really, nowadays there is an issue of unemployment in the country and all over the world. Where someone finishes his /her studies and rest at home about ten years and without job. So, what can improve their life is to create more employment where everyone can get opportunities to get a job.”*
- *“Developing talents in Africa and Rwanda such new Football clubs and Academies especially in schools.”*
- *“Availing Some education courses like the aeronautical engineering or other courses which are rare and avail them globally in all areas. This is because it will help us to access some education courses which will enable us to get good jobs as well as have a successful life.”*
- *“Introducing specialised schools nurturing particular talents of students academically such as Rwanda Coding Academy.”*
- *“Creation of organizations that support the talents of children and avoidance of corruption to leaders. Create different places and times of developing their talents in school effectively.”*
- *“(Government promote development by) Investing in our ideas (business ideas)”*
- *“We would request investors to invest their money in our projects or business. When we get this support, it will totally improve our living standard.”*
- *“Put more emphasis on children's talents through giving partners who are responsible for dealing on how to promote their talents... which may result into allowance of getting promotion of their owners where possible that it may even become their profession in their life. For instance, they are artist, footballers, musicians, poets, if possible they can set some competitions and materials like those artists required.”*

29. To develop youth talent, create a robust labor market, and generate better employment opportunities, and to achieve Sustainable Development Goals 8, 9 and 10, our coalition recommends the following to the Government of Rwanda:

- Actively participate in and fund skills development initiatives, including apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job training programs. These programs should be available not only in agricultural, industrial, and commercial fields, but also in artistic, sports, and cultural areas to promote the entertainment economy.**
- Incorporate mental health and psychosocial support into existing education and livelihood programs, acknowledging that mental well-being is a crucial element for talent development and sustained employability.**
- Strengthen and incentivize continuous collaboration between educational institutions (TVET and higher education) and the private sector in developing and reviewing curricula. This collaboration should ensure that skills taught are directly relevant to current and emerging labor market demands, reducing skills mismatches and enhancing graduate employability.**
- Provide comprehensive support for youth entrepreneurs that extends beyond initial training. This includes providing seed capital, facilitating access to affordable credit, offering sustained mentorship, and establishing robust market linkages to ensure the longevity and growth of businesses.**

- e. **Collaborate with development partners to streamline business regulations, provide incubation services, and invest in youth-led start-ups. This will allow young people to showcase their talents and nurture a dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem capable of generating new jobs.**

VI. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND GENERAL WELFARE

30. Rwanda has demonstrated a robust commitment to advancing the rights and well-being of its children, adolescents, and youth between 2020 and the present. This period has been characterized by the development and implementation of comprehensive legal and policy frameworks⁴⁵ along with consistent efforts to strengthen the child protection system, enhance mental health services, and improve access to justice for children, in response to the recommendations aroused by several countries during the previous UPR cycle⁴⁶ and in accordance with Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 16.

31. Rwanda, a nation profoundly shaped by the 1994 genocide, has demonstrated remarkable progress in economic and human development, driven by a strong governmental emphasis on national unity and reconciliation. Post-genocide policies have been explicitly designed to prevent the recurrence of violence and to foster social cohesion, with education playing a central role in correcting biased perceptions of history and instilling ideals of tolerance and unity⁴⁷.

32. However, the UNICEF's Child Protection analysis⁴⁸ along with other reports, reveals several critical areas where challenges persist, demanding sustained attention and strategic interventions:

- The effectiveness of the integrated policy approach for human capital development is often hampered by challenges in inter-agency coordination, inconsistent implementation at sub-national levels, and a disconnect between policy ambitions and on-the-ground realities, particularly concerning resource allocation and data sharing.

⁴⁵ This robust and evolving set of national legal and policy instruments includes the *National Strategy for Transformation (NST2)*, the *Youth Center Development Strategy*, the *National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS)*, the *Education Sector Plan (ESP 2020-2024)* and the broader *National Education Strategic Plan (NESP 2020-30)* cited in previous sections of this report, as well as the *Justice, Reconciliation, Law & Order Sector Strategic Plan 2024-2029 (JRLOS IV)* (Cf.

<https://www.minecofin.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=113424&token=1882758b65047b8866bf4031a58a6225ceb7a621>) and the *National Youth Council Strategic Plan (NYC Strat Plan 2021-2025)* (Cf.

<https://www.scribd.com/document/662784668/NYC-Strat-Plan-2021-2025>)

⁴⁶ 134.25 & 134.71 (Fiji), 134.70 (Uganda), 134.15 & 134.72 (Turkey); 134.82 (Philippines); 134.75 (Venezuela); 134.103 (Mozambique); 134.141 (Barbados); 134.7 & 134.142 (Holy See); 134.143 (India); 134.144 (Iran); 134.145 (Iraq); 134.148 (Bulgaria); 134.149 (Qatar); 134.120 & 134.159 (Mexico); 134.146 (Italy); 134.19 & 134.108 (Algeria); 134.114 (Pakistan); 134.49 (Costa Rica)

⁴⁷ Benjamin, K (June 2020) *"How Children's Well-Being Reflects Government Choices and National Circumstances in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda"* – Global Majority E-Jurnal, 11,1, pp. 4-19, accessed July 7, 2025:

https://www.american.edu/cas/economics/ejournal/upload/global_majority_e_journal_vol-11_no-1_benjamin.pdf

⁴⁸ Cf. *"Child Protection in Rwanda. A situation analysis"* – UNICEF, accessed July 7, 2025:

<https://www.unicef.org/rwanda/media/5391/file/Child%20Protection%20in%20Rwanda.pdf>

- While refugee youth are increasingly integrated into the national education system, the long-term sustainability of some educational facilities remains precarious due to their non-integration into public management structures.
- Pervasive social stigma, coupled with severe underfunding and a shortage of trained mental health professionals, continues to impede access to and utilization of essential mental health services, particularly for youth and in rural areas.
- High rates of adolescent pregnancies persist, driven by a complex interplay of socio-economic disadvantages, cultural norms, and limited access to integrated, youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education.
- Violence against children, child labor, and child trafficking remain prevalent, often rooted in poverty and harmful social norms. The child protection system, despite advancements in community-based models, is severely underfunded, lacks a unified data management system, and faces challenges in formalizing its professional workforce.
- In some contexts, children, adolescents, and youth experience a climate of fear to express legitimate questioning, nuanced discussions, or exploration of sensitive historical or political topics.⁴⁹ This significantly stifles the development of critical thinking skills, discourages open debate, and inhibits the formation of independent political opinions, all of which are crucial for healthy civic identity formation and meaningful democratic participation.
- While a legal framework for religious freedom exists, its practical application within educational settings can be inconsistent, potentially placing children in a difficult position where they must choose between their right to education and their deeply held religious convictions.⁵⁰ Such dilemmas can create internal conflict for children and adolescents, impacting their sense of identity, belonging, and trust in institutions.
- Child soldier recruitment undermines broader child protection efforts and highlights critical gaps in accountability and enforcement against child trafficking.

33. Young people shared their own opinions about children's rights and general welfare:

- *“(In Rwanda is necessary) To Give more information to the people about children's rights”*
- *“In Ruanda, Catholics have many schools which are quite good. But the problem is that religious leaders of those schools want all students to become catholic followers which is extremely bad... all students regardless to the religion are ordered to join catholic church whether Islam, protestant and others. And this is child abuse. For the sake of the future, all students enjoy their rights to religion. This can be done by allowing every child the right to pray in his/her religion. All children must get equal rights in religion.”*
- *“(The government) should promote peace in Africa.”*
- *“Create an organisation that promote African youth to develop their nations.”*

⁴⁹ Cf. Newey, A (2022) “On the Genocide Ideology Laws in Rwanda”, accessed July 7, 2025:

<https://www.genocidewatchblog.com/post/on-the-genocide-ideology-laws-in-rwanda> and “How does Rwanda’s genocide ideology law regulate speech online?” – Advox, 2020, accessed July 7, 2025:

<https://advox.globalvoices.org/2020/07/20/how-does-rwandas-genocide-ideology-law-regulate-speech-online/>

⁵⁰ Cf. “2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Rwanda” – US Department of State, accessed July 7, 2025:

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/rwanda/>

34. In line with Articles 4 and 42 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, our coalition presents the following recommendations to strengthen awareness of and protection for the rights of children, adolescents, and youth in Rwanda. These recommendations align with Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 16 and aim to promote a societal culture that respects, upholds, and actively safeguards the well-being of every child.

- a. Formalize and adequately fund the professional child protection workforce, ensuring their integration into government structures.**
- b. Develop and implement a unified, interoperable data management system for child protection cases to enable comprehensive analysis and evidence-based interventions.**
- c. Engage children and young people -ensuring that their perspectives are heard- in the design, development and implementation of comprehensive public awareness campaigns to educate the population on the critical importance of child rights and protection.**
- d. Empower local leaders, community organizations, and faith-based groups to become active advocates for child rights facilitating interactive discussions and workshops at the community level to encourage dialogue and shared responsibility.**

VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND BROADER DEVELOPMENT

35. Rwanda has continued its ambitious development trajectory from 2020 to the present, focusing on transforming its socio-economic landscape through significant investments in infrastructure, the promotion of sports and recreation, and sustained efforts to enhance social well-being in compliance with some recommendations proposed by the international community.⁵¹ This effort is aimed at achieving Sustainable Development Goals 9 and 11.

36. Some achievements in infrastructure and broader development are:

- The real GDP growth reaching 8.2% in 2023 and 9.7% in the first half of 2024, partly fueled by new construction projects and manufacturing activities. This growth is supported by international partners in sectors including infrastructure, urban management, energy, and agriculture.⁵²**
- Substantial progress in road transport including the upgrading of 424 km of national roads to paved status, rehabilitation of 303 km of national paved roads, and improvement of 237.46 km of urban roads in Kigali and other cities.⁵³**

⁵¹ 134.14 & 134.24 (Cameroon); 134.74 (China); 134.83 (Senegal); 134.79 (Botswana); 134.77 (Ukraine)

⁵² Cf. "Rwanda Overview: Development news, research, data" – World Bank Group, accessed July 4, 2025: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/rwanda/overview>

⁵³ Cf. "Summarised Transport Sector Strategic Plan 2024-2029" - Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN), accessed July 9, 2025: <https://www.minecofin.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=113406&token=ef7f9437ac19e5f3baa005c5baef447a5ac4498d>

- Access to improved drinking water sources nationally increased from 87% in 2016/17 to 90% in 2023/24 and electricity access reached 73% by 2020, with the government targeting 100% by 2024 through various programs.⁵⁴
- Rwanda's government is committed to develop sports infrastructure, enhance talent detection, and promote grassroots participation as stated in the Sports Development Policy and the Sports and Culture Sector Strategic Plan 2024-2029.⁵⁵
- The poverty rate in Rwanda significantly decreased from 39.8% in 2016/17 to 27.4% in 2023/24⁵⁶ and the country has achieved remarkable health indicators.⁵⁷

37. However, ongoing challenges related to equitable distribution of educational, health and sports infrastructure and smaller-scale community facilities necessitate continued focus and investment:

- The high population density and rapid urbanization continue to exert pressure on social services as well as on existing and planned infrastructure;⁵⁸ housing deficit persists, and disparities between rural and urban areas in terms of infrastructure quality and access remain a challenge.⁵⁹
- The country lacks smaller-scale community sports centers and school-based facilities, and many sports disciplines remain relatively underdeveloped.
- Disparities in social well-being indicators still exist between different geographical areas (e.g., rural vs. urban) and demographic groups.

38. Some concerns have been expressed by young people regarding infrastructure and sports as instruments for promoting economic growth and social well-being:

- “(Guarantee the right to play by) *Building playgrounds on in all Rwandan schools. To send investigator to suspect those who don't complete this actions*”
- “*Create different places and times of developing (youth's) talents in school effectively*”
- “(The government) *Should promote sports in Africa, by providing tools, etc.*”
- “*Developing talents in Africa and Rwanda such new Football clubs and Academies especially in schools.*”
- “*Development in industries: More modernized industries are needed in order to get different needs that we do not have.*”

⁵⁴ Cf. “EICV7 - Main Indicators Report 2023/24” - National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda - NISR, accessed July 7, 2025: <https://beta.statistics.gov.rw/file/17365/download?token=0w52Lu1P>

⁵⁵ Cf. Ibid. “Sport and Culture...” and “Sports Development Policy 2020-2030”, - Ministry of Sports, accessed July 10, 2025: <https://minisports.staging.risa.rw/index.php?elD=dumpFile&t=f&f=17217&token=7010108a292a20c47b2bdd6876739d9083f52fd2>

⁵⁶ Cf. Ibid. “EICV7 - Main Indicators...”

⁵⁷ For example: Health insurance coverage expanded to 85.3% in 2023/24; life expectancy at birth has increased to 67.8 years (as of 2022); reduction in stunting among children under 5 (from 38% in 2015 to 33% in 2020), and a decrease in under-5 mortality rates; high rates of skilled birth attendance (94.2%) and immunization coverage, according to data from the Ministry of Health, the “EICV7” – NISR, and the World Bank reports.

⁵⁸ Cf. Ibid. “EICV7 - Main Indicators...”

⁵⁹ Cf. “Rwanda Development Effectiveness Review” - African Development Bank (AfDB), accessed July 10, 2025: <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/rwanda-development-effectiveness-review-2024>

39. In line with Sustainable Development Goals 9 and 11, our coalition submits the following recommendations, inviting the government of Rwanda to take specific action to improve the general well-being of the nation, especially for children and youth:

- a. Launch a "Schools and Community Playgrounds Initiative" to construct and equip new multi-purpose playgrounds in rural schools and underserved urban communities across Rwanda, with a focus on districts identified with the highest disparities in access to sports facilities.**
- b. Fully implement the "Youth Center Development Strategy (2020/21–2024/25)" by creating centers strategically located across different provinces, so that they become youth talent and innovation hubs able to provide specialized training in underdeveloped arts and sports disciplines.**
- c. Implement Rural-Urban Infrastructure Parity programs to reduce the housing deficit in key urban centers and upgrade essential infrastructure (water, sanitation, road access) in rural districts identified with the greatest disparities.**
- d. Implement a "Community-Driven Infrastructure Needs Assessment and Feedback Mechanism" in high-priority urban and rural sectors that involve regular, structured dialogues (e.g., town halls, digital feedback platforms) with local residents, including youth, to gather input on infrastructure priorities, quality, and implementation.**

VIII. CONCLUSION

40. As a civil society coalition, we appreciate the Rwandan government's acceptance of many recommendations from the last cycle. We commend the progress in policy development and implementation, and we urge the government to persist in its efforts to clear hurdles and reach the proposed goals for the benefit of its citizens.

41. We also want to thank the government for considering the concerns raised by civil society, especially those from children and young people. They represent both the present and future of the nation, and their active involvement and responsible leadership are crucial for transforming the present to secure their future. The recommendations outlined by Rwandan youth, which have been subsequently captured and processed in this report, are indicative of their broader aspirations for sustainable development and self-determination. These recommendations offer valuable insights that could inform policy development and educational reforms.

42. We understand that addressing the complex issues of poverty, harmful societal norms and beliefs, and limited resources requires a multifaceted approach. Therefore, we recognize the need for all stakeholders — the government, civil society, communities, families, and individuals — to collaborate to create a nation that guarantees the rights of every person, and we are committed to doing our part.

43. We appreciate the opportunity the United Nations provided through the UPR mechanism, as it enabled us to amplify the direct voices of adolescents and young people. Their valuable contributions have been crucial in addressing the concerns and demands outlined in this report.