



# Gender Equality Strategy: UNDP Rwanda (2019-2022)



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## Executive Summary

### **Subject**

There is no single understanding of gender equality and women's empowerment. The meaning, implication and reality of these terms can change throughout different languages, cultures, and time periods.

This Strategy is a product of UNDP Rwanda's stance on gender equality and women's empowerment. Through collaboration with government, national actors, local and foreign entities, and others, our Country Office (CO) continues to work toward the goals relevant to Rwandan women and men.

### **Mission**

UNDP Rwanda's mission begins with the simple belief in the fundamental equality of all people. The CO pledges to continue creating and implementing policies and programmes which support the development of all Rwandans, with increased attention to leaving no one behind.

As such, the CO will ensure that gender is mainstreamed into all development projects so that the unique concerns of girls and women, boys and men, are accounted for and addressed.

### **Method**

This report is based on six main sections. Section I identifies the country and CO context in terms of women's development and empowerment. Section II states the four objectives that have been identified as relevant avenues for continued progress in gender equality and women's empowerment. This section also pinpoints several potential challenges to implementing these objectives and proposes strategies to mitigate the risks. Section III to Section VI provide an overview of each objective, including strategic entry points to facilitate their full realization.

### **Recommendations**

This Strategy makes the following recommendations:

1. Ensure that senior management is fully aware and committed to the implementation of the objectives, including the dissemination of the Strategy to the CO staff and ensuring appropriate monitoring and evaluation of all actions to promote gender equality in our work and programmes.
2. Mobilize the Communications Unit to increase awareness of the Strategy, including publishing the Strategy to UNDP Rwanda's website.
3. Translate the Strategy into both French and Kinyarwanda so that it is accessible to all staff and interested parties in Rwanda.
4. Require unit heads to meet with their staff within a month of the completion of the Strategy to discuss: *(i)* how they can incorporate the objectives into their work, *(ii)* how the potential challenges may effect their work, and *(iii)* how they will engage with the strategic entry points relevant to their mandate.
5. Conduct an annual review of each unit's progress in terms of incorporating the objectives into their policies and programmes. Highlight strengths, weaknesses and possible ways forward.



## Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Foreword	4
I. Introduction	5
Country Context.....	5
Rwanda CO Level .....	8
II. Strategic Outline	9
Gender Equality Objectives.....	10
Potential Challenges & Strategies.....	10
III. Objective 1: Gender Mainstreaming	11
Strategic entry points.....	13
IV. Objective 2: Structural Barriers	13
Strategic entry points.....	15
V. Objective 3: Intersectionality	16
Strategic entry points.....	17
VI. Objective 4: Boys & Men	18
Strategic entry points.....	19
VII. Conclusion.....	21
Terminology	21
Appendix A	23

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## Foreword

Dear reader,

Thank you for your interest in UNDP Rwanda's latest Gender Equality Strategy! Gender equality and women's empowerment is one of the top priorities for the United Nations both here in Rwanda and across the world. This document is an expression of our commitment and ambitions as we seek to ensure that the principle of gender equality guides and informs all the Country Office's programmes and operations over the next three years.

As a team, we believe in the fundamental right of every woman, man, boy and girl to be treated equally, and to have equal opportunities to realize their full potential and contribute to the development of their communities and their country. We know, as well, that countries and communities develop faster when the talents of men and women are harnessed equally. As such, it has been a great honor for me to lead the UNDP Rwanda team which is determined and steadfast in its resolve to achieve the gender equality and women's empowerment objectives set forth in this Strategy.

Since our last Strategy in 2014, UNDP Rwanda has made considerable progress and seen great accomplishments. The five objectives set forth in the previous Strategy helped our Country Office to prioritize certain gender equality objectives and improve the way we do business. We have invested significantly in enhancing staff capacity to prioritize gender equality in their work (objective 3) and, as a result, gender mainstreaming has become an increasingly prevalent aspect of all our programmes (objective 1). Resources have been mobilized for gender mainstreaming (objective 2) and partnerships that support gender equality and women's empowerment have been forged and strengthened (objective 4). Lastly, the Country Office has put in place systems to ensure accountability for implementing and monitoring gender equality initiatives (objective 5). Our collective efforts culminated in UNDP Rwanda becoming one of only 6 UNDP offices globally to receive a GOLD Gender Seal Certification in 2017. You can learn more about the concrete programmes we have implemented on gender equality from the UNDP Rwanda website.

What we have accomplished on gender equality and women's empowerment is a result of many factors. First, none of this would be possible without the outstanding staff here in the Country Office that dedicate large portions of their lives to the betterment of humanity. We could not have achieved as much as we did in promoting gender equality if this was not both a personal and professional commitment by our management and staff. Second, a big 'thank you' is owed to our national and international partners, including government entities, donors, other UN agencies, private sector companies, grassroots organizations, and others with whom we have been working to promote gender equality. Rwanda is a global leader on gender equality, and our work has been anchored in the high levels of political will we have seen in the government, and in the supportive atmosphere we have found in both the private and non-profit sectors. Third, we are grateful to the wonderful citizens of Rwanda: you are our inspiration and our 'raison d'être'. Every day we come to work in hopes of playing a part in improving the lives of people all over this country.

Girls and women around the globe are declaring "times up" to the patriarchal norms and misogyny that accompany gender inequality. As fellow human beings, each and every one of us should be supporting this movement. In conclusion, I wish to reiterate our UN Secretary General's statement that the time for gender equality and women's empowerment is NOW. UNDP Rwanda fully intends to be at the forefront of this cause.

**Stephen Rodriques**  
**UNDP Resident Representative**

## I. Introduction

Gender equality has long been established as a human right and essential component of sustainable development.

The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is central to the mandate of the UNDP and intrinsic to its development approach.

Gender equality is considered a development goal in its own right. However, gender also intersects with a variety of other social factors and must therefore be considered within larger frameworks.

The UN Declaration of Human Rights affirms that there are certain inalienable human rights that are intrinsic to all people. Among them is the right to equal treatment, regardless of sex. UNDP Rwanda affirms that the sex a person is born with should have no impact on the rights and freedoms to which they are entitled.

Gender equality has often been viewed as a “woman’s issue.” In reality, gender equality has as much to do with men as it does with women. True gender equality must be a partnership between all people, with boys and men playing an important role in its realization.

The role of boys and men in achieving gender equality has been highlighted in the UNWomen-led HeforShe campaign. The President of Rwanda, H.E. Paul Kagame, is one of 10 Heads of State who are Global Impact Champions for this movement. Strong high-level political leadership and

commitment towards gender equality is one of the reasons Rwanda has experienced increasing economic, political and social success<sup>1</sup>.

Both the management and staff of UNDP Rwanda are fully committed to the principle of Gender Equality and support Rwanda’s vision of a society in which both women and men can realize their full potential and contribute to Rwanda’s continued progress. Through this strategy, a three-year course of action is developed to guide UNDP’s work on helping to identify and eliminate all forms of sex and gender discrimination in Rwanda.

### Country Context

Since the devastating 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, Rwanda has emerged as an impressive story of transformation in Africa. Guided by successive national medium-term plans and comprehensive policy reforms over the last two decades, the country has achieved remarkable socioeconomic

progress. Among many other areas, this has been demonstrated by a more than three-fold increase in per capita gross domestic product (from \$206 in 2002 to \$729 in 2016) and major advances in health, education, social protection, unity and reconciliation.

Rwanda has, equally, become a pioneer and a role model for its dedication to, and progress made on gender equality and women’s empowerment. In fact, Rwanda is one of the global leaders in gender equality



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1 <https://www.heforshe.org/en/node/78>

progress. In 2017, the World Economic Forum ranked Rwanda as the fourth best country in closing gender gaps,<sup>2</sup> behind only Iceland, Finland, and Norway.<sup>3</sup>

Strong political commitment in Rwanda has resulted in significant positive strides in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. In fact, women's representation in decision-making positions makes Rwanda the world leader in terms of women in Parliament (62% after the 2018 Parliamentary elections).

Rwanda's political will to promote gender equality is also visible through its commitment to at least 13 regional and international conventions and protocols on gender equality and women's empowerment and numerous legislative and policy reforms.<sup>4,5</sup>

In education, gender parity has been achieved at the primary and secondary school enrollment levels, where 85% of girls and 84% of boys attend school.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The global Gender Gap Report aims to capture how far countries have (or have not) come in closing the gender inequality gap. This is a measure of progress, not absolute development.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2017.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> A full list can be found in Appendix A.

<sup>5</sup> UNDP Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2018-2023. (2018). *United Nations Country Team – Rwanda*. [Internal Document].

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.lmis.gov.rw/scripts/publication/reports/Fourth%20Rwanda%20Population>

Economically, Rwandan women's labor force participation rate is one of the highest in the world (86%). Furthermore, the wage gap between women and men is lower in Rwanda than in many industrialized countries (88 cents per dollar<sup>3</sup>).

In addition, many women benefit from paid maternity leave (as much as three months per birth<sup>3</sup>), making labor force participation increasingly feasible for women who are considering motherhood.

Despite these and many other progressive strides, Rwanda is still struggling to meet its development goals. From 1971 to today,

Rwanda has consistently been ranked as one of the 47 least developed countries in the world.<sup>7</sup> As such, the country needs to accelerate

development in a

number of areas, including: gross national income, infant and maternal mortality, food security, school enrollment, adult literacy, economic resiliency, and disaster management<sup>8</sup>.

The data also show that female-headed households are more likely to live in poverty and experience higher rates of unemployment than those headed by males.<sup>6</sup> However, female-headed

**“Gender equality in every sector is not a favor, it is your right. It is the way it should be. The right to equality is not something that can be given or taken.”**

-H.E. Paul Kagame

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<sup>n</sup>and%20Housing%20Census\_Gender.pdf

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/ldc\\_list.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/ldc_list.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/LDC\\_Profile\\_Rwanda.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/LDC_Profile_Rwanda.pdf)

households are also more likely to represent single parent households, making this comparison flawed.

Though increasingly higher than previous years, Rwanda's life expectancy at birth (66.6 years of age<sup>9</sup>) still lags behind the global average (72 years of age<sup>10</sup>). As in most countries, women's life expectancy (68.4 years of age) is higher than men's (64.6 years of age)<sup>9</sup>.

Women's literacy rates are lower than men's (65% as compared to 72%<sup>6</sup>). This further constrains women and girls already limited opportunities in terms of

accessing resources, creating and managing small businesses and participating in decision-making processes. Among other things, high illiteracy rates between both genders limits awareness of existing gender-sensitive laws.

Women are still responsible for the majority of unpaid housework and childcare. This remains true even if they attended university or are

engaged in the paid labor market.<sup>11</sup> This "double burden" creates the risk of women burning out and being forced to choose



Kabaya Green Village in Ngororero – constructed to accommodate 11 families that were affected by disasters. © Alice Kayibanda

between having a family or a career.

Gender-based violence among women and girls remains widely prevalent, tolerated, and under-reported. It is estimated that at least two in five girls (41.2%) will have experienced physical violence by the age of 1512—with much of the violence committed by male family members or husbands.

These issues of gender inequality can be

**“Those who love peace must learn to organize as effectively as those who love war.”**

**-Martin Luther King Jr.**

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<http://www.statistics.gov.rw/publication/life-expectancy-birth-rwandan-women-increase-35-years-2020>

10[http://www.who.int/gho/mortality\\_burden\\_disease/life\\_tables/situation\\_trends/en/](http://www.who.int/gho/mortality_burden_disease/life_tables/situation_trends/en/)

11Habimana, O. 2017. Gender differences in time allocation: Evidence from Rwanda. Turin School of Development Working Paper No. 8. International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin, Italy.

12 <http://www.rw.one.un.org/press-center/success-story/partnership-end-gender-based-violence>

viewed as a manifestation of patriarchal norms, outdated laws and inadequate protection of victims. Women, in comparison to men, have been devalued, disempowered and left unable to make their own life choices. Unequal power relations between men and women undermine and diminish the social, economic and political contributions of the latter to the development of themselves, their families, their communities, and the nation.

The UNDP recognizes that gender equality is an important issue in its own right, but also an issue that affects other development concerns. In fact, gender has been marked as one of three cross-cutting issues affecting all the development goals outlined in Rwanda's Vision 2020.<sup>13</sup>

To this effect, UNDP Rwanda's approach to gender equality is two-fold. First, UNDP Rwanda supports the development of gender-specific policies and programmes that serve to empower girls and women. Second, gender concerns are to be mainstreamed into all UNDP policies and programmes.

#### Rwanda CO Level

In 2017, the UNDP Country Office (CO) achieved Gold Seal Certification for its extensive work in gender equality and women's empowerment. Increasing the effectiveness of the CO's gender-related work was a goal highlighted in the previous CO Strategy. Today, UNDP Rwanda is one of

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<sup>13</sup><https://www.sida.se/globalassets/global/countries-and-regions/africa/rwanda/d402331a.pdf>

eight country offices<sup>14</sup> in the world to hold a Gold Certification. This Certification demonstrates the staff's knowledge of gender-equality, their ability to disseminate this knowledge through projects and plans, and readiness to collaborate with a variety of partners to further gender equality. The UNDP CO is striving to meet all the benchmarks necessary for continued Gold Certification and to provide effective service and support to its partners and stakeholders in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

In the office, gender parity has been achieved among staff. According to the 2018 organigram, 49% of staff are women (26/53), including 50% at the level of senior management (1/2). This is an improvement from 2017, when 47% of UNDP Rwanda staff were women. One area that remains of concern is gender parity among UNDP drivers, as only 20% of drivers are women (1/5).

The equal representation of women at all levels of seniority is important to the UNDP. However, in addition to representation, it is important for women to feel comfortable speaking up, and it is important that their voices be heard. The CO's senior management and supervisors are thus making a concerted effort to ask for the opinions of female colleagues and provide a safe and inviting space for them at meetings.

Furthermore, all senior management have gender results incorporated into their 2017/18 Performance Management and Development (PMDs), illustrating their

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<sup>14</sup>Cuba, Dominican Republic, DRC, Ivory Coast, Moldova, Montenegro and Uganda



commitment to gender mainstreaming. Staff are trained in gender mainstreaming and aware of its importance and necessity. Some staff also have gender concerns as part of their PMDs.

However, staff understanding of gender mainstreaming is not uniform, and some staff have limited knowledge of these issues. The CO believes that staff's gender capacities must be enhanced to enable them to understand gender from a more comprehensive and holistic perspective, ultimately improving their ability to mainstream gender concerns into their work.

## II. Strategic Outline

The Corporate UNDP Gender Equality Strategy (2018-2021) has come at a pivotal time in history. In the face of emerging challenges impacting already marginalized populations, the rise of movements such as "MeToo", "TimesUp", and countless international sister functions<sup>15</sup> have shown a surge in political will to address issues of gender inequality and the disempowerment of women. Diverse groups of women across the world have been speaking up and acting against gender-based violence, in particular sexual harassment and assault from men in positions of power.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> These hashtags have been documented in at least 85 countries. There are also countless sister movements, such as the #MyStealthyFreedom in Iran, #NudePhotoRevolution in Egypt, Chile's *Mujeres en Marcha*, and the international Woman's March.

<sup>16</sup>

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-03-06/how-metoo-became-global-movement>

The Gender Equality Strategy for UNDP Rwanda (2018-2021) responds to the objectives and recommendations of the aforementioned Corporate UNDP Strategy. It also responds to Signature Solution 6, which focuses attention on the

### Mission Statement

UNDP Rwanda's mission begins with the simple belief in the **fundamental equality** of all people.

The CO will create policies and programmes which support the development of **all Rwandans**, with increased attention to **leaving no one behind**.

**Gender** will be **mainstreamed** into all development projects so that the **unique concerns and experiences** of girls and women; boys and men, are accounted for and addressed.

fundamental structural barriers that inhibit gender equality.

Above all, this Strategy is meant to provide the CO with renewed vigor and direction to pursue gender equality in Rwanda. UNDP Rwanda believes in the fundamental equality of all humans. Gender equality is simply about improving the lives of women and men; girls and boys. Amidst the busyness of our work, we must never forget that real people, with families, hopes and inherent importance, must be at the heart of all we do.

With the progress of humanity in our minds, the current Strategy provides four (4) gender equality objectives to guide the CO in its development efforts.

## Gender Equality Objectives

The following objectives have been identified by the Rwandan CO as pertinent ways forward for continued progress in gender equality:

1. Ensure all programmes effectively mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment, including programmes involving management and response to environmental crises.
2. Concentrate efforts on programmes that address structural barriers to women's economic empowerment.
3. Increase capacity for a holistic understanding of gender that considers the impact and importance of an array of cross-cutting issues.
4. Focus increased attention on engaging men and boys in supporting gender equality advocacy and action, particularly in regards to gender-based violence.

### Potential Challenges & Strategies

UNDP Rwanda foresees several potential risks to the implementation of its work on gender equality and the above-mentioned objectives. The following require particular attention:

**Challenge 1a:** Difficulty in negotiating terms with Implementing Partners, with some partners having limited capacity for mainstreaming gender in their programmes/projects.

**Strategy 1b:** Provide technical assistance to partners that are experiencing challenges in mainstreaming gender into their work; reconsider partnerships with entities that



are not consistently promoting or committed to gender mainstreaming.

**Rwinkuba Village:** built in 2016 by REMA and UNDP to support ecosystem rehabilitation and protection for pro-poor Green Growth © Alice Kayibanda

**Challenge 2a:** Inconsistent collection of updated and thoroughly-researched gender- disaggregated data.

**Strategy 2b:** Ensure that data collection personnel and agencies are aware of their responsibility to collect gender-disaggregated data. If such data is not available, consider supporting new data collection and/or advocate for partners to develop systems and tools to collect this data.

**Challenge 3a:** Limited or basic understanding of gender mainstreaming among CO staff and as such, inconsistent gender mainstreaming in projects and programmes.

**Strategy 3b:** Conduct yearly or bi-yearly training on gender mainstreaming and

incorporate gender results into all staff's PMDs.

**Challenge 4a:** Limited resources available to recruit gender equality staff (such as a gender specialist<sup>17</sup>) or for investment in learning sessions related to gender.

**Strategy 4b:** Explore other cost-effective ways to increase knowledge. Provide staff with re-fresher training from material that is already created. Provide additional training to one or two staff members for them to become gender equality focal points for the office. Give priority to interns with expertise in gender analysis.

**Challenge 5a:** Resource constraints may result in inadequate and unsystematic tracking and communication of the COs work on gender equality.

**Strategy 5b:** Implement a policy whereby each unit is responsible for working with the Communications Unit to produce short stories and communication pieces on their major gender equality accomplishments.

**Challenge 6a:** Few CO programmes focus on men's role and responsibility to promote gender equality.

**Strategy 6b:** When working on gender-related issues, highlight the impact of men's (in)actions on women's equality. Increase awareness on the link between women's disempowerment and unequal power relations that unfairly benefit men. Further emphasize the ways that some gender norms can also disempower men. Leverage UN Women's HeforShe campaign.

**Challenge 7a:** Knowledge from UN Women is not fully utilized and there is insufficient internal collaboration between the COs various units in terms of gender equality programmes and policies.

**Strategy 7b:** Revitalize partnership between UNDP and UN Women. Invite a UN Women focal person and a representative from each CO unit to UNDP Gender Seal meetings. Find innovative ways to increase partnerships with relevant stakeholders.

**Challenge 8a:** While gender parity has been largely achieved in the CO, there may remain barriers to women's equitable professional participation in all aspects of the CO's work.

**Strategy 8b:** Encourage staff and senior management (male and female) to have honest conversations regarding barriers to participation and brainstorm tangible solutions with them.

III. Objective 1: Gender Mainstreaming

### Objective 1

Ensure all programmes effectively mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment, including programmes involving management and

To fully integrate gender in UNDP's work, and to achieve the goals outlined in the Corporate Strategy, gender mainstreaming must be implemented at the programme level. Programmes that effectively mainstream gender fully account for, monitor and record gender-sensitive outcomes in their implementation.

In addition to UNDP Rwanda's commitment to gender mainstreaming in all programmes, Objective 1 highlights the importance of increasing focus on programmes that address the management of, and response to environmental crises. Signature Solution 6 describes the importance of improving gender-responsive strategies in crisis. Fostering resilience to shocks has been identified as one of the

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<sup>17</sup> As of now, the office relies on Junior Professional Consultants under the UNDP/UNAC partnership.

strategic entry points to address the above-mentioned priority.

According to the UNDP Country Programme Document, 18 Rwanda is highly prone to environmental disasters. These include landslides, floods and lightning in the northwestern areas and droughts in the eastern areas. Under the umbrella of environmental crisis management, it is imperative to address women's specific needs.

#### Did you know...

**Biological differences & gender norms can affect survival during a crisis.**

Four times as many women than men were killed in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and India during the 2004 tsunami. This was due in part because women stayed behind to look after the more vulnerable, and because men were taught how to swim and climb trees at young

In a crisis, women are more vulnerable due to several factors that cross-cut with gender. 19 First, physical and sexual violence against women is statistically higher during conflict and disaster. Second,

18 UNDP, UNPF & UNOPS (2018). Draft country programme document for Rwanda (2018-2023). [unpublished document].

19 <http://blogs.worldbank.org/sustainablecities/why-engaging-women-and-children-disaster-risk-management-matters-and-how-it-makes-difference>

20 [https://www.ifrc.org/Global/Documents/Secretariat/201511/1297700\\_GBV\\_in\\_Disasters\\_EN\\_LR2.pdf](https://www.ifrc.org/Global/Documents/Secretariat/201511/1297700_GBV_in_Disasters_EN_LR2.pdf)

women may have additional physical and

#### Hillside Hope

People who are visually impaired face many **structural barriers** in life due to societies' preconceptions on disability and a failure to accommodate differences. Such barriers include access to education, employment and resources such as food and housing.

In June 2017, Hillside Hope and UNDP Rwanda signed a grant to support the Blessing School for the Visually Impaired (BSVI). Support includes training of teachers to ensure that children with visual impairments are not left behind.

The BSVI currently has 16 students, 3 teachers and 1 caretaker. The school aims to empower visually impaired children through education. The ultimate goal is to help these children fulfill their potential in life and to leave no one behind in the quest for sustainable human development.



medical needs, including those resulting from menstruation, pregnancy, or breastfeeding. Third, women are generally the primary caretakers for babies, youth, the elderly and people with disabilities, limiting their ability to flee from disaster quickly. Fourth, the social standing of

women may result in them being unaware of an impending disaster or unable to make the decision to evacuate.

It is equally as important to note that marginalized men are at an increased risk during crisis. For instance, men with mental or physical disabilities or young boys may also experience heightened vulnerability during an environmental disaster. In addition, poor and rural Rwandans may experience increased vulnerability.<sup>21</sup> As such, crisis management programmes and operations must take them into account.

#### Strategic entry points

To realize the targets that are a part of this over-arching objective, the CO must undertake the following programme-related activities:

1. Ensure continued alignment of the gender marker with current gender seal requirements.
2. Allocate sufficient budget for the design, implementation and recording of gender equality initiatives.
3. Increase awareness of the importance of collecting gender-disaggregated data and disaggregation of existing indicators.
4. Develop programmes that focus on issues that cross-cut with gender (e.g. *young* girls or women with *disabilities*).
5. Increase commitment to programmes which highlight the role of boys and men in gender equality initiatives.
6. Provide sufficient gender-related training for programme managers.

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<sup>21</sup> UNDP, UNPF & UNOPS (2018). Draft country programme document for Rwanda (2018-2023). [unpublished document].

7. Ensure the continued commitment and active engagement of the gender focal team.
8. Enhance local technical capacity for risk assessment and contingency planning with a gender lens.
9. Increase quality and availability of timely meteorological data.
10. Encourage enforcement of environmental regulations and mainstream environmental concerns in economic sectors.

Through the implementation of Objective 1, all the CO's programmes will properly mainstream gender, with a special focus on environmental crisis management.

#### IV. Objective 2: Structural Barriers

##### Objective 2

Concentrate efforts on programmes that address structural barriers to women's economic empowerment.

Objective 2 focuses on UNDP's role as a proactive actor for positive change and not simply as an organization that responds to crises. By taking a proactive role, the CO has the opportunity to facilitate alternative ways of thinking and acting.

The Corporate Strategy lists Signature Solution 6 as a guiding force for gender equality initiatives. Within Signature Solution 6, the removal of structural barriers that prevent women from reaching their full economic potential is of concern. Furthermore, the Country Programme Document states that the UNDP must pay special attention to women's employment strategies. Lastly, improving women's economic opportunities is one of three

commitments set forth by President Kagame in the HeforShe campaign.<sup>22</sup>

Structural barriers to economic freedom are multi-faceted. Institutional, societal, political and legal policies and practices can all be responsible for the perpetuation of economic gender inequality. UNDP Rwanda is concerned with one of the most palpable barriers to women's economic empowerment: their disproportionately low representation and unequal treatment within paid labor sectors.

Several key factors must be considered when discussing structural barriers to women's economic empowerment. First, women in Rwanda experience higher rates of unemployment (17.5%) than men (16.1%).

Second, occupational segregation is prevalent in Rwanda, in which a higher proportion of women work in agriculture and men are concentrated in the industry and service sectors.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the Governance Unit within the CO cites that women are almost twice as likely to be outside the formal labor sector as men.

Once women are engaged in formal employment, they are paid less than men in comparable employment. This gender pay gap in Rwanda is higher than the global average, at 27% (in comparison to 23%). This indicates that women who are working in Rwanda earn an average of 27% less than their male counterparts (73 cents per dollar).

Cultural and legal barriers have also resulted in women having less access to

credit from banks, micro-financing and other income-supplement sources. These barriers contribute to women being boxed into traditionally defined roles and a cycle of poverty and dependence.<sup>24</sup>

With these factors in mind, UNDP Rwanda aims to increase economic opportunities for all Rwandans, with an emphasis on increasing income and job creation opportunities for women and men, and promoting gender equality at the workplace and in working conditions.

UNDP Rwanda CO currently supports two flagship programmes with huge potential to improve job creation, enhance incomes, and create equal conditions for women and men in the workplace. These are the Gender Seal in the Private Sector programme and the YouthConnekt initiative.

The Gender Equality Seal (GES) initiative in Rwanda was launched in November 2017. Implementing partners were ONE UN, UNDP and UNWOMEN, partnering with the Gender Monitoring Office and the Private Sector Federation. This initiative focuses on six critical areas towards elimination of gender inequalities in the workplace: (1) eliminate gender-based violence, (2) improve work-life balance, (3) reduce occupational segregation, (4) eradicate sexual harassment, and (5) promote inclusive, non-sexist communication.

This year, the implementation of the GES programme is accelerating. In addition to the 35 companies that expressed their commitment to the GES, several government institutions have accepted to be a part of this initiative. Specifically, the Rwanda Governance Board, the Ministry of

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.heforshe.org/en/node/78>

<sup>23</sup> The Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme for the Private Sector in Rwanda. *Gender Monitoring Office, Private Sector Federation, One UN Rwanda*. [Internal document].

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<sup>24</sup> UNDP Rwanda (2016). Briefing Note Interview Girls in ICT for the preparation of Miss Geek 2016. [Internal document].

Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of Public Service and Labour.

In 2012, UNDP launched the YouthConnekt Bootcamp as a component of its Youth and Women's Empowerment Programme. The Bootcamp is geared at helping young entrepreneurs increase access to finance and business training in order to start or expand businesses and create new jobs. So far, 630 young entrepreneurs have received training. Over the last six years, these entrepreneurs have created 8309 temporary and permanent jobs. UNDP plans to scale up the Bootcamp, with the goal of creating 2500 jobs for youth every year.

In line with Gender Seal benchmark 6.1, the Gender Seal in the Private Sector programme and the YouthConnekt Bootcamp initiative have facilitated partnerships between UNDP, other UN agencies and national actors.

Taking the experience of these two initiatives as starting points, several lessons can be extracted for future work on women's economic empowerment within Rwanda.

#### Strategic entry points

To tackle structural barriers to women's fair and equal treatment in the paid workforce, UNDP Rwanda commits to working towards the following:

1. Increase the participation of (young) women in programmes dedicated to female economic empowerment.
2. Promote positive hiring practices (i.e. employment equity) that aim to increase the proportion of women in the workforce and reduce occupational segregation.
3. Monitor the effects of UNDP programmes and initiatives on the hiring and promotion of girls and



women and their working conditions

**Rwandan National Police** © Alice Kayibanda

4. Facilitate gender sensitivity training for implementing partners, beneficiaries, etc. with emphasis on questioning traditional gender roles and stereotypes.
5. Advertise UNDP initiatives and programmes in places where young women are likely to be present. Teach beneficiaries the importance of seeking women and girls' participation.
6. Address possible barriers to women and girls participating in initiatives and programmes that aim to increase their economic opportunities.
  1. E.g. Create promotional material for girls to show their parents that explains the importance of women's economic empowerment.
  2. E.g. Allow mothers to bring their babies and young children to workshops.
1. Expand goal of gender equality in the workforce by taking a cross-cutting approach. This will mean considering the experiences of men and women from different

backgrounds and with different privileges/disadvantages.

1. Conduct training on the benefits of employing a diversity of women and men, including people who are young, elderly, disabled, etc.
1. Increase collaboration and knowledge sharing between UNDP and other UN agencies, particularly UNFPA and UN Women.

Focusing on women's economic empowerment, UNDP Rwanda aims to increase initiatives that target structural barriers.

#### V. Objective 3: Intersectionality

### Objective 3

Increase capacity for a holistic understanding of gender that considers the impact and importance of an array of cross-cutting issues.

Promoting inclusive development is a core part of the UNDP mandate. Achieving inclusive development, however, requires an understanding of the complex interrelationships that exist between gender and other social and economic variables. As such, Objective 3 of the current Strategy promotes intersectional approaches to gender equality.

Simply put, intersectionality is a theory used to examine the overlap of an individual's various social identities. Intersectionality acknowledges that we cannot address gender issues separately from issues involving race, disability, faith, sexual orientation etc. because we encompass all our multiple identities at once. As such, a holistic understanding of

gender inequality will consider the differential impacts of many cross-cutting identities in addition to gender.

Importantly, one must understand how gender inequality is not a separate issue

### Intersectional Analysis of Literacy Rates

A gender analysis of literacy rates in Rwanda shows that women are more likely to be illiterate than men (65% for women; 72% for men). An intersectional analysis of literacy rates in Rwanda might compare literacy between rural women and men and urban women and men. Such an analysis would reveal that literacy rates are higher in urban areas (82% for women; 83% for men) than in rural areas (61% for women; 70% for males).

This analysis shows that in comparison to their male counterparts, both urban and rural women are less likely to be literate. However, this analysis also shows that urban women are 12% more likely to be literate than rural men. As such, programmes based on improving literacy rates should account for numerous intersecting identities, two of which could be gender and geographical location, to best determine where there are gaps in development.





from all other forms of inequality. Rather, gender inequality is connected to all other forms of discrimination a person may face.<sup>25</sup>

For instance, women of different backgrounds may experience both gender inequality and other forms of inequality at the same time. For example, a woman who is visually impaired may experience gender inequality in tandem with ableism (discrimination based on ability). Since her experience cannot be divided, fighting gender inequality for this woman will also mean fighting against policies and norms that discriminate against the blind. It is therefore important for the CO to assess compounding inequalities.

UNDP Rwanda commits to taking an intersectional approach to development programmes. Training provided to staff on gender mainstreaming will incorporate a definition and examples of intersectionality. When considering the impacts of a programme on women and men, staff will be expected to move beyond a one-dimensional view of gender. Instead, gendered impacts will be examined through an intersectional lens that accounts for differences in experience depending on other aspects of a person's identity.

In keeping with an intersectional understanding of gender, the 2018-2023 Corporate Strategy listed the following identities as crosscutting with gender:

1. Ethnicity
2. Geographic location (e.g. rural / urban)
3. Identity (e.g. gender and sexual)
4. Migration/refugee status

5. Race
6. Religion
7. Socioeconomic status
8. Age
9. Disability (mental and physical)

UNDP Rwanda has begun analysis of the intersection of age and disability with gender. Examples of this can be seen in the CO's attention to youth employment through YouthConnekt or its work with children with visual impairments.

#### Strategic entry points

To expand its gender mainstreaming process, UNDP Rwanda commits to the following changes in business practice:

1. Require all senior managers to attend a session(s) on a holistic understanding of gender issues.
2. Have senior management encourage discussions on intersectionality and holistic gender mainstreaming with staff.
3. Modify gender training for CO staff to emphasize its cross-cutting nature.
4. Identify the projects and programmes that have the weakest gender mainstreaming components and brainstorm ways in which gender cross-cuts with the main issue at hand.
5. Foster partnerships and collaboration between UNDP, other UN agencies and civil society organizations in the quest for human rights.
6. Conduct gender equality awareness seminars both at UN conferences and outside events.

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/306-ensuring-gender-responsiveness.html>

7. Increase the intersectional nature of the CO's promotional material.

With this cross-sectional approach in addressing differential impacts to development initiatives, it is hypothesized that additional programmes will be able to clearly address gender equality gaps whilst also improving upon gender mainstreaming in a variety of UNDP projects.

#### VI. Objective 4: Boys & Men

##### **Objective 4**

Focus increased attention on engaging men and boys in supporting gender equality advocacy and action, particularly regarding gender-based violence.

Objective 4 emphasizes the importance of engaging boys and men in the fight for gender equality. Not only is this imperative for the empowerment of girls and women, but this approach also offers important benefits for boys and men.

The previous UNDP CO Strategy stated that Rwanda remains a highly patriarchal society. Patriarchy is a system in which men hold the majority of power and control. As discussed in the previous section, there are multiple identities that intersect with gender which may strengthen or weaken a person's power. As such, patriarchy is a complex system that is not solely based on gender.

One of the key ways that boys and men must be engaged is in the eradication of gender-based violence (GBV). GBV refers to the harm inflicted upon a person based on a normative understanding of their gender. This harm can include acts such as early and forced marriage, marital rape, physical

abuse, denial of property rights, verbal abuse, psychological harassment, human trafficking, genital mutilation, sexual assault, and murder.<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately, GBV has long been thought of as a "normal" part of male to female dynamics and as a family issue for which the state need not intervene.<sup>27</sup> Legally, GBV survivors are under-protected. In fact, over half (56%) of victims do not seek help from any source, and only 7% seek help from the police.<sup>28</sup>

Taking an intersectional approach to GBV, we realize that not all women are equally as likely to experience trauma. Evidence suggests that certain characteristics may increase vulnerability to violence. For instance, social realities such as sexual orientation, disability status or ethnicity, and contextual factors such as humanitarian crises can raise the risk of violence. Men who exhibit female characteristics, or trans women, are also more likely to experience GBV.<sup>29</sup>

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26 The Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme for the Private Sector in Rwanda. *Gender Monitoring Office, Private Sector Federation, One UN Rwanda*. [Internal document].

27 <https://www.refworld.org/docid/527b55984.html>

28 UNDP Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2018-2023. (2018). *United Nations Country Team – Rwanda*. [Internal Document].

29 <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>



TASH MCCARROLL/UN WOMEN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Due to women’s globally underprivileged status, GBV is typically inflicted *by* boys and men, *towards* girls and women. As such, the previous CO Strategy reflected upon the fact that GBV needs to be a “man’s issue”, with boys and men taking a lead in its eradication. The UN campaign HeforShe highlights the importance of boys and men acknowledging violence against women and taking a stand against GBV. Eradicating GBV is also one of the three commitments that President Kagame made as an impact champion.<sup>30</sup>

High incidences of GBV can be attributed to social norms, mind-sets and cultural understandings that condone GBV in all spheres of life, including the home, community and workplace.<sup>31</sup>

Since GBV is built upon the intolerance of non-normative gender expressions, one of

the key ways to fight against GBV is to challenge what is considered the role of men and women. Furthermore, the devaluation that is frequently given to “women’s roles” must be questioned.


#### Strategic entry points

The CO has identified the following strategic entry points for the mobilization of boys and men in gender equality, including the eradication of GBV. In order to meet these goals, UNDP Rwanda must increase partnerships between the CO and Rwanda National Police, Rwanda Correctional Service, Rwanda Bar Association, CSOs, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality, and UN-Women.

1. Hold workshops and learning sessions that counter patriarchal thinking (e.g. roles for men and women, how “real men” behave, etc.).
2. Perform an audit of the legal help available to survivors of GBV. Identify gaps in policy or reporting mechanisms.

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.heforshe.org/en/node/78>

<sup>31</sup> UNDP Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2018-2023. (2018). *United Nations Country Team – Rwanda*. [Internal Document].

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3. Focus attention on encouraging survivors of GBV to seek legal help.
  4. Provide training on sexual consent, concentrating on men's responsibility to eliminate sexual coercion.
  5. Work with relevant stakeholders (e.g. police and courts) to have a comprehensive, transparent, client-first space for survivors to come forward.
  6. At the CO level, create an inclusive and gender-neutral "parental leave" (merging maternal and paternal leave). Promote this amongst UNDP partners as well.<sup>32</sup>
  7. Continue emphasizing work-life balance for staff. Allowing and encouraging staff to use alternative work arrangements is key for job retention and satisfaction, especially for female staff.
  8. Work to increase the representation of women in all jobs, senior positions and decision-making bodies. Ensure that women's voices are heard and respected, since representation alone is not enough.

Through the implementation of Objective 4, the CO aims to concentrate efforts on the mobilization of boys and men to further gender equality and eradicate GBV.

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<sup>32</sup> While women may need more time at home during pregnancy and after birth, the policy should support men taking care of their babies, with ample leave time. This will also support adoptive parents and same-sex parents.

## VII. Conclusion

Gender equality is a fundamental human right and also a key indicator of a nation's progress and development. Here in UNDP Rwanda, the CO renews its commit to working towards equality in rights and opportunities for women and men.

This Strategy has identified four objectives for the UNDP CO to strive towards over the next three years. Objective 1 described the importance of effectively mainstreaming gender in all programmes so that they fully promote gender-sensitive outcomes. In addition, objective 1 focused on increasing gender mainstreaming in programmes related to environmental crisis management and response.

Objective 2 addressed structural barriers to women's economic development. Here, the CO aims to take a proactive approach to facilitating innovative solutions to the structural economic barriers that women face today in Rwanda.

Objective 3 explored the intersectional nature of gender equality. It aimed to increase the CO's capacity to consider the impact and importance of an array of issues on gender. Under this objective gender is considered both a standalone issue and an integral aspect of all development projects.

Objective 4 centered on increasing the active engagement of boys and men in gender equality advocacy and action. The objective is to both facilitate and encourage adequate platforms for men to champion

### **Gender**

Refers to the social attributes, opportunities and relationships associated with being a boy/man or girl/women.

### **Gender Equality**

Refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men.

gender equality and also for development projects to debunk the notion that gender equality is a "woman's issue".

These objectives are intended to inspire staff in the CO, guide their development efforts and expand their existing notions of gender equality and women's empowerment. Strategic entry points for each objective provide tangible avenues for implementation.

To facilitate the implementation of these objectives, each section listed strategic entry points specific to the corresponding objective. It has been recommended that each unit head discuss with their staff how the unit can engage with the entry points.

The goals set forth in this Strategy are ambitious. It is only through true collaboration in our CO and with our partners that we will be able to fully realize them. By publishing this Strategy, we wish to encourage its readers to strengthen their commitment to equality in all its forms so that we may all live more joyful, peaceful and meaningful lives.

  
**Gender Mainstreaming**

Refers to the process of assessing the implication for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels.

**Women's Empowerment**

Related to gender equality but distinct from it, women's empowerment has five components: (1) women's sense of self-worth; (2) their right to have and to determine choices; (3) their right to have access to opportunities and resources; (4) their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and (5) their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

**Women's Rights**

The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex.


## Appendix A

Non-exhaustive list of regional and international conventions and protocols on gender equality and women's empowerment, as cited in UNDP Gender Mainstreaming Strategy (2018-2023):

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
2. The Convention on Civil and Political Rights
3. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
4. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
5. The Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages
6. The Convention on the Political Rights of Women
7. The Optional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children supplementing the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, the UN Resolution 61/144 on Trafficking in Women and Girls
8. The Convention on Married Women's Nationality
9. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women
10. The UN Resolution 61/144 on the Intensification of Efforts to Eliminate all forms of Violence Against Women
11. The UN Resolution on Eliminating Rape and other Forms of Sexual Violence in all their Manifestations including in Conflict and Related Situations
12. The Optional Protocol to the African Charter of Human and People's Rights to Women's Rights in Africa
13. The Kigali International Conference Declaration (KICD) on the role of security organs in ending Violence against women and girls (VAWG) which has now been institutionalized into a continental mechanism with a permanent Secretariat in Kigali, and has been endorsed by over 20 African countries

Non-exhaustive list of legislative and policy reforms undertaken by the Government of Rwanda, as cited in UNDP Gender Mainstreaming Strategy (2018-2023):

1. Law No. 32/2016 of 28 August 2016 governing persons and the family, which repeals several provisions discriminatory against women
2. Law No. 27/2016 of 08 July 2016 governing matrimonial regimes, donations and successions, which explicitly prohibits discrimination between male and female children in successions
3. Organic Law No. 12/2013/OL of 12 September 2013 on State finances and property, which enforces accountability measures for gender-sensitive resource allocation across all sectors, programmes and projects through gender budget statements
4. Organic Law No. 10/20/2013/OL of 11 July 2013 governing political parties and politicians, which prohibits any form of discrimination based on gender, sex, race and religion in political parties
5. Law No. 43/2013 of 16 June 2013 governing land in Rwanda, which prohibits discrimination based on sex in relation to access to land

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6. Organic Law No. 01/2012/OL of 2 May 2012 instituting the Penal Code, which prohibits the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
  7. Law No. 54/2011 of 14 December 2011 relating to the rights and the protection of the child, which provides for the same responsibilities for child protection by both parents
  8. Organic Law No. 02/2011/OL of 27 July 2011 governing the organization of education, which provides that the education of the citizen shall not be characterized by any form of discrimination
  9. Law No. 27/2010 of 19 June 2010 relating to elections, which requires that at least 30 per cent of candidates for parliamentary elections on the lists of political parties be women
  10. National Gender Strategic Plan (2016-2020)
  11. National Implementation Plan of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (2012-2017)
  12. National Policy against Gender-based Violence (2011) and its Strategic Plan (2011-2016)
  13. National Gender Policy (2010)