



## Migration Profile

### RWANDA

#### A. Executive Summary

Rwanda is a landlocked country that was able to safeguard its political stability after the 1994 genocide<sup>i</sup>. Since the 2018 election, it has had the highest number of female representation in parliament (61% of parliamentary seats)<sup>ii</sup>. Before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, in mid-2019 Rwanda was experiencing an exceptional economic growth exceeding 10%, and its per capita gross domestic product (GDP) had grown 5% annually. In 2020, however, the impact of Covid-19 on the economy was tremendous and the GDP fell by 3.4%<sup>iii</sup>.

The Rwanda's Human Development Index (HDI) is 0.543, and out of 189 countries it holds the 160th place<sup>iv</sup>. Through its National Strategies for Transformation, it plans to become a middle-income country by 2035, and a high-income one by 2050<sup>v</sup>. Agriculture is the backbone of the Rwandan economy, with 62.3% of people employed in this field (71% females and 53% males)<sup>vi</sup>. As one of the fastest-growing African countries in information and communication technology, the government's vision for 2050 is to replace subsistence farming with fully monetized and technology-intensive commercial agriculture and agro-processing<sup>vii</sup>.

Rwanda is a predominantly Christian country, with a 38.2% of Catholic population<sup>viii</sup>. In the country there is just over half million immigrants, mostly coming from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, and Uganda<sup>ix</sup>, while refugees are mainly arriving from the DRC and Burundi. In 2018 the government of Rwanda adopted the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).

#### B. Country Profile

##### I. Basic Information

Rwanda is a small landlocked country in Central Africa surrounded by Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, and the DRC. It is one of Africa's most densely populated countries, with a total surface area of 26,338 sq. km and a population of about 12.5 million people<sup>x</sup>. It is a presidential Republic, whose political capital is Kigali, and has four official languages, namely Kinyarwanda (widely spoken by 93.2% of the population), French, English, and Swahili<sup>xi</sup>.

Rwanda has three main ethnic groups, Hutu (84%), Tutsi (15%), and Twa (1%)<sup>xii</sup>, and is a predominantly Christian country: Protestant 57.7% (including 12.6% Adventist), Roman Catholic 38.2%, Muslim 2.1%, others 1% (including Jehovah's Witness), and 1.1% with no affiliation<sup>xiii</sup>.

## **II. International and Internal Migrants**

Employment in the industrial and service sectors, as well as gender education are some of the main drivers for internal migration in Rwanda<sup>xiv</sup>. In addition, the uneven economic development, inter-regional disparities, and differences in living standards in the countryside are forcing people to leave the rural poor areas to move into the cities<sup>xv</sup>. There are about 1,348,168 internal migrants in Rwanda, and the main destinations are the city of Kigali (33%) and the Eastern Province (14%). Among migrants of working age (16 years old and over), there are more women (52.2%) than men (47.8%)<sup>xvi</sup>, and the Southern Province has the highest rate of migrants (32.2%), followed by the Western (24.3%) and Eastern Provinces (20.2%)<sup>xvii</sup>.

The Rwandan migration flows have fluctuated over the last 25 years, with over 1,244 million migrants in 1997 to as low as -108,094 in 2014, and a relatively smaller negative net of -44,998 in 2017<sup>xviii</sup>.

International migrants in Rwanda increased steadily from 1990 (160,000) to 2015 (514,600), and then plateaued from 2015 to mid-2020 at 513,900 individuals, constituting approximately 4% of the Rwandan population<sup>xix</sup>. Most of the immigrants are from the DRC (250,000), followed by Burundi and Uganda (respectively 135,000 and 95,000), with also a small percentage from Tanzania (about 45,000), and a very small population of a few thousand from Kenya<sup>xx</sup>. In Rwanda, female and male international migrants are equally distributed<sup>xxi</sup>.

## **III. Emigration and Skilled Migration**

The percentage of Rwandan emigrants is 4.7% (588,544) of the entire population, and 5.8% of them (34,359) live in Europe<sup>xxii</sup>. The top 5 destination countries are the DRC (254,225), Burundi (71,294), Uganda (70,635), the Republic of the Congo (25,891), and Belgium (14,930)<sup>xxiii</sup>. There is no data available regarding the total number of skilled emigrants from Rwanda. However, a targeted study in 4 European countries (Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom) attests that, out of 47,357 Rwandans living in these European countries, 68% are skilled immigrants with at least a degree qualification. They are mostly young people between the age of 20 and 40, and their gender is equally balanced<sup>xxiv</sup>. Also, almost half of the medical Rwandan students have expressed the desire to travel abroad because of poor working conditions and low wages in Rwanda<sup>xxv</sup>. For example, despite the scarcity of medical practitioners with a ratio of 1 doctor every 16,046 people, many Rwandan medical students (42.7%) desire to work and study abroad, or are likely to study/work abroad (18.70%), and only 11.55% are interested in the public local health sector<sup>xxvi</sup>. The 2021 human flight and brain drain in Africa indicates that Rwanda is slightly above the world average of 5.25 index point (currently at 6.5%)<sup>xxvii</sup>.

## **IV. Forced Migrants (internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, and refugees, climate displaced people)**

Rwanda had many refugees especially during the genocide (1994–1997). After that period and with peace talks initiated, Rwanda has become more of a receiving country, hosting refugees over the last two decades and coordinating the response effort along with UNHCR, by

providing land to set up refugee camps and looking after their management and security. Rwanda has six refugee camps – Mahama, Nyabiheke, Gihembe, Kiziba, Mugombwa, and Karongi, as well as four refugee transit centres – Nkamira, Nyanza, Bugesera, and Gatore.

In 2020, Rwanda hosted 139,501 refugees, mainly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (74,303) and Burundi (65,037)<sup>xxviii</sup>, including 674 refugees and asylum seekers who arrived during 2021<sup>xxix</sup>. Women and children make up 76% of the refugee population<sup>xxx</sup>. Also, in 2020, 922 Rwandan former refugees returned home from the DRC<sup>xxxi</sup>.

In February 2018, the government of Rwanda officially adhered to the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), thus providing a favourable protection environment for refugees<sup>xxxii</sup>. For example, there is the *de facto* right to work, open borders, and access to durable solutions (resettlement, local integration, and return)<sup>xxxiii</sup>. In 2019, there were 15,222 Burundian and 18,030 Congolese refugee students integrated in the national primary and secondary schools, in line with the refugee integration process into their host communities. Furthermore, there is primary health care provision available for refugees, who are also referred to local health facilities for secondary and tertiary care services<sup>xxxiv</sup>. The Rwandan government, the Refugee Response Plan and other partners are working on enrolling urban refugees into the national health insurance system, that requires substantial support<sup>xxxv</sup>. Food supplies are also provided to all children under the age of five and to other vulnerable groups. While refugees in some camps (such as Gihembe and Mugombwa) receive monetary assistance in place of food vouchers, others receive food assistance partially in-kind and partially in cash, for example in the Mahama refugee camp<sup>xxxvi</sup>.

As part of its commitment to the Emergency Transit Mechanism agreed upon by the government of Rwanda, UNHCR, and the African Union, since 2019 a total of 824 refugees and asylum seekers have been evacuated from Libya to Rwanda<sup>xxxvii</sup>. The evacuees include men, women, children, as well as babies from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, and South Sudan. UNHCR aims at helping them to find durable solutions, such as resettlement to a third country, voluntary return, or local integration in Rwanda<sup>xxxviii</sup>.

Recently, the main cause of internal displacement in Rwanda has been natural disasters, especially flooding and landslides due to heavy rainfalls. For example, in May 2020, floods in three provinces affected seven districts: Gakenke, Rulindo, Musanze in the Northern Province, Ngororero, Rubavu, Nyabihu, in the Western Province, and Muhanga in the Southern Province<sup>xxxix</sup>. In May the following year (2021), a landslide displaced 631 people in the Nyamasheke district. There are about 4,600 internally displaced persons currently living in Rwanda<sup>xl</sup>.

## **V. Victims of Human Trafficking**

The local government and other international organisations are at the forefront in the fight against human trafficking in Rwanda. Because of the growing rate of young people's unemployment in Rwanda (20.6%)<sup>xli</sup>, many of them become victims of human trafficking and are deceived with false promises of better job opportunities in neighbouring countries.

Traffickers also target other vulnerable groups such as orphaned children, children with disabilities, unemployed adults, and internally displaced persons<sup>xlii</sup>.

Unemployment is higher among women than men, and therefore most of those trafficked are women (77.67%). They are targeted because of their lower education level and the increased demand for sexual slavery<sup>xliii</sup>. Rwanda is a Tier 2 country and does not entirely meet the minimum standards for human trafficking eradication, despite its efforts to do so. Human trafficking in Rwanda almost quadrupled from 2018 with 33 cases to 131 cases in 2020<sup>xliv</sup>. This increase can partly be explained because of the easy way for traffickers to smuggle victims across borders, due to a trilateral agreement among the governments of Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda allowing foreign nationals to use national identification in place of a passport<sup>xlv</sup>. In some trafficking cases, victims knew their perpetrators, and occasionally they were the very parents of the victims being trafficked<sup>xlvi</sup>.

Victims of human trafficking in Rwanda include children between the age of 13 and 18, who are lured into commercial sex and begging. Men and women are forced into sex trafficking, labour in domestic work, and in the agricultural, mining, industrial, and in the service sector<sup>xlvii</sup>. Common destination countries for victims of human trafficking from Rwanda include China, India, Kenya, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Uganda, and Zambia<sup>xlviii</sup>. Saudi Arabia has been the most common destination (38.55%), followed closely by Uganda (37.35%), and Kenya (7.23%)<sup>xlix</sup>. Trafficked victims are moved through Uganda and Tanzania before reaching their final destination, which includes African, East Asian, and Middle Eastern countries. In 2019 new routes to the Middle East were used via Kenya and Ethiopia<sup>l</sup>.

The local government set up a network of 44 one-stop centres to assist Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and trafficked victims<sup>li</sup>. They are located in hospitals and district capitals, and provide short-term shelter and psycho-social, medical, and legal services to victims<sup>lii</sup>. The centre referred 21 victims to NGOs for assistance. For the provision of longer-term care, the government runs 16 government and 12 NGO shelters which provide up to six months of hospitality services to victims of human trafficking and GBV<sup>liii</sup>.

## **VI. National Legal Framework**

The most important piece of legislation governing immigration and emigration in Rwanda is Law No 17/99 of 1999, regulating the exit, entry, and residency to and from the country<sup>liv</sup>. Because of the importance and the need of engaging with the diaspora, in 2008 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation created the Diaspora General Directorate, and in 2009 the Ministry prepared the Rwanda Diaspora Policy intending to mobilize and integrate Rwandans in the diaspora into the national development framework. These initiatives have taken place in four European countries (Belgium, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Germany). Today, 82% of Rwandans engage with development in their home country<sup>lv</sup>.

In 2018 Rwanda enacted a new law against human trafficking to prevent, suppress and punish the offense of trafficking in persons and exploitation, which applied to locals, migrants and

members of their families. This law gives protection to victims of human trafficking, but it does not deal with irregular migrants in the context of trafficking.

Rwanda is a member of several regional organisations, such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (CMESA), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (ECGLC), and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Countries (ICGLR), which has as one of its priorities to make more accessible the movement of people within the region. There are also agreements between nations to facilitate the movement of their nationals, for example, the trilateral arrangement among Rwanda, Kenya, and Uganda. At an international level, Rwanda is a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol, the 1969 AU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugees Problems in Africa. Rwanda is also a signatory to the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention).

Beyond the continent, Rwanda is a signatory of the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

## **VII. Main Actors**

### *The State*

The Ministry in charge of Emergency Management ensures the overall protection, security, and safety of persons of concern. The Rwanda Directorate-General of Immigration and Emigration, in consultation with various ministries and stakeholders such as the Office of the President, the Ministry of Public Service and Labour, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, as well as the Ministry of Foreign and International Cooperation, develops and implements all of the Rwandan migration policies and strategies. Other responsibilities of the office of the Directorate-General include issuing visas, permits, citizenship, overseeing border management and collecting statistical data on border crossing. Other relevant departments involved in the refugee response effort include the National Identification Agency and the National Refugee Committee. The Prime Minister's Order No 112/03 of 19/06/2015 laid down the modalities on the organisation and functioning of the National Refugee Status Determination Committee responsible for refugee status determination in Rwanda. With regards to human trafficking, the Rwanda investigation Bureau and the Rwanda National Police oversee the anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts.

### *International Organisations*

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) are the most important international agencies dealing with migration-related issues in Rwanda. UNHCR and IOM, in partnership with the Ministry in charge of Emergency Management and other stakeholders, deliver multi-sector assistance to refugees. They also support the government in implementing projects focused on counter-

trafficking, immigration, and border management, as well as the return and reintegration of Rwandan nationals and refugee resettlement to third countries, labour migration, and human development. To enhance their protection, UNHCR partners with other key government institutions, which include the Ministry of Education, the Rwanda Education Board, and the Rwanda National Police. UNHCR also cooperates with the District Authorities, particularly in areas where refugee camps are located. Other project partners include the Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA), the American Refugee Committee (ARC), the Global Humanitarian and Development Foundation (GHDF), Humanity and Inclusion, Kepler, Legal Aid Forum, Oxfam, Plan International, Save the Children, and World Vision Rwanda.

### *Other Organisations*

The Human Rights First Rwanda Association, through outreach education initiatives, provides legal assistance to refugees thanks to legal clinics run by law students from the University of Lay Adventists of Kigali (UNILAK), allowing refugees to know their rights.

The Initiative for Peace and Human Rights (ipeace) offers legal aid to asylum seekers and refugees and helps members of Africa's Great Lakes Region to peacefully coexist through good governance and human rights education. The Friends Peace House works to promote peace, unity, and reconciliation in Rwanda and to contribute to the development of society and the country.

### *The Catholic Church*

The Catholic Church has a number of organisations and religious communities assisting migrants, refugees, and internally displaced people. In the domain of sustainable development, Caritas provides financial support in the form of loans for business start-ups. At the Mahama refugee camp, Caritas gives help to launch and build small businesses and assistance to women to restore their dignity and financial independence<sup>lvi</sup>. In the area of career development, 85 young women benefited from the Caritas sponsored training program on dressmaking. The institution also provides training skills to grow vegetable gardens and to manage credits and savings, as well as food supplies to over 3,000 people at special risk<sup>lvii</sup>. During the outbreak of Covid-19, Caritas embarked on an awareness campaign through radio broadcasting and printed information on how to prevent infection even before a single case was identified in Rwanda<sup>lviii</sup>.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) works with the Catholic Church and other partners through an integrated approach, combining agriculture, nutrition, and economic strengthening to assist vulnerable people including refugees, internal and international migrants in Rwanda. In 2015, CRS, in collaboration with Caritas Rwanda, assisted refugees from Burundi who were looking for safety and provided nutritional programs in transit camps housing thousands of people, many of them suffering from severe malnutrition<sup>lix</sup>. CRS supports young entrepreneurs in the country through vocational training and financial aid, organising programs like the Huguka Dukore Akazi Kanzi project. In order to reduce the impact of Covid-19 on vulnerable families who were unemployed as a result of the lockdown, CRS provided an unconditional cash transfer to 9,000 struggling families. CRS in partnership with US farmers, agribusinesses,

cooperatives, and universities, provides technical assistance to emerging young farmers in Rwanda, improving agricultural productivity, access to new markets, and preserving environmental and natural resources. Thanks to this project, many young farmers are able to move out of the poverty trap.

The Salesian Missionaries are very active in Rwanda in the area of education and training. This is particularly crucial in places where displaced and orphaned children are located as a result of the 1990-1994 civil war<sup>lx</sup>. Through its educational, skills training, and workforce development programs, leading to long-term employment, Salesian Missionaries help fight poverty in Rwanda. For example, the St. Mary Mazzarello Technical Secondary School, located in the city of Gisenyi in the Western Province of Rwanda, specializes in hotel operations training, equipping students with the required skills to successfully operate a hotel through courses like management, finance, and hospitality<sup>lxi</sup>. Also, in the village of Muhazi, Salesian Missionaries created a vocational centre providing education and training in dressmaking, construction, and catering. Students, attending this educational centre, are provided on a daily basis with a better nutrition program<sup>lxii</sup>. In the community of Rukago in the city of Kigali, where children had to walk more than a mile to get water from a hill in a swampy area, Salesian Missionaries repaired a water tank providing drinking water to students, and also built eight new toilets<sup>lxiii</sup>. In cooperation with Logic Engineering, Salesian Missionaries at the Don Bosco Oratory in the village of Kabgayi in the Muhanga District in the Southern Province of Rwanda completed a water well project<sup>lxiv</sup>.

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<sup>v</sup> The World Bank, 2021a

<sup>vi</sup> US Department of Commerce, 2021

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid

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