

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



Third Periodic Report of the Republic of Rwanda on the Implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Period covered by the Report: March 2019 - September 2022

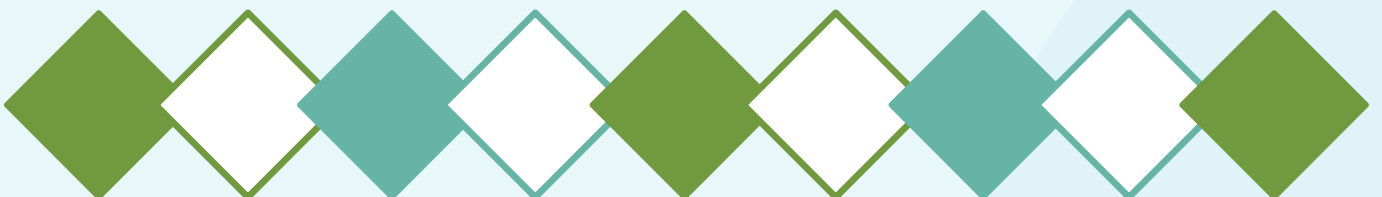


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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACERWC	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CHWs	Community Health Workers
CLADHO	Collectif des Ligues et Associations de Défense des Droits de l'Homme
CRVS	Civil Registration and Vital Statistic System
CPW	Classic Public Works
DDPs	District Development Plans
DS	Direct Support
ECD	Early-Childhood Development
EPWs	Extended Public Works
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
FBO	Faith Based Organization
FY	Fiscal year
GoR	Government of Rwanda
IOSC	ISANGE One Stop Center
IZU	Inshuti z'Umuryango/Friends of Families
JAPEM	Joint Action Plan for the Elimination of Malnutrition
MCCH	Maternal, Child and Community Health
MIGEPROF	Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion
MINECOFIN	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MINEMA	Ministry of Environment Disaster Management
NCDA	National Child Development Agency
NCHR	National Commission for Human Rights
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NISR	National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda
NPPA	National Public Prosecution Authority
NSDS	Nutrition Sensitive Direct Support
NST	National Strategy for Transformation
PWs	Public Works
RDRC	Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission
RIB	Rwanda Investigation Bureau
SBCC	Social and Behavior Change Communication
TMM	Tubarerere Mu Muryango Program/Let's raise children in Families
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPHLS	Umbrella of Organizations of People with Disabilities fighting against HIV/ AIDS and Health Promotion
VUP	Vision 2020 Umurenge Program
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Government of Rwanda is pleased to present to the African Committee of experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), the Third Periodic Report on the implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The report covers the period from March 2019 to September 2022.
2. Elaboration of the State Periodic Report follows the guidelines on the form and content of Periodic State Party Reports Submitted Pursuant to Article 43 (1) (b) of the ACRWC. In addition, the preparation of this report has followed a participatory and inclusive process whereby public institutions, UN Agencies, international NGOs, local NGOs, faith-based organizations and media were involved.
3. In particular, during the preparation of this report, stakeholders' meetings and other interactions were attended by representatives from the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF), Ministry of Justice (MINIJUST), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN), Ministry of Labor and Public Services (MIFOTRA), Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC), Ministry of Emergency Management (MINEMA), National Child Development Agency (NCD), National Human Right Commission (NHRC), Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB), National Public Prosecution Authority (NPPA), Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (RDRC).
4. Non state actors also played an active role in the report drafting process. The institutions involved include Coalition Umwana ku Isonga, Collectif des Ligues et Associations de Défense des Droits de l'Homme au Rwanda (CLADHO), Save the Children, Legal Aid Forum among others.
5. The third periodic report addresses all the issues raised by the committee during the consideration of the previous second periodic report of the Government of Rwanda. It also includes progress in the implementation of domestic laws, policies and programs.
6. Regarding the structure, in addition to this introduction, the pursuant sections provide information directly responding to the concluding observations and recommendations received by the GoR and other new developments registered during the period under consideration. The responses are presented in the order of articles as they appear within the Charter.

I. GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION

7. *The Committee notes that the previous concluding observations of the Committee were made available on the website of the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion. While appreciating that, the Committee recommends that the current recommendations are translated and widely disseminated among various Government organs and other stakeholders.*
8. Upon reception of the concluding observations, the Government of Rwanda through its partners translated the concluding observations into national language (Kinyarwanda). Both versions (English and Kinyarwanda) were made available on the websites of the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) and National Child Development Agency (NCDA), and widely disseminated to government institutions specifically mandated for the implementation such as Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Local Government and its affiliated agencies among others. In addition, these were disseminated to CSOs working in the areas covered by the Charter and also 600 copies were given to children. Furthermore, they were disseminated to media practitioners after receiving training.
9. *The Committee notes with great satisfaction that the State Party has employed commendable effort to implement the recommendations of the Committee on fast-tracking the law reform process including the revision of the Constitution in 2015; the adoption of Law N°71/2018 of 31 August 2018 relating to the Protection of the Child which repeals Law N°54/2011 related to the Rights and Protection of the Child; the enactment of Law N° 27/2016 of 08/07/2016 governing matrimonial regimes, donations and successions which has addressed discriminatory laws in relation to inheritance; and the adoption of Law No 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and family which facilitates the submission of cases to courts by children over 16 and representation of children by CSOs in court cases. The Committee, while commending the law reform processes, encourages that efforts are also employed for the implementation of the revised and new laws.*
10. Children protection is anchored in the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda of 2003 revised in 2015. In the context of protecting the family, article 18 paragraph 3 of the Constitution obligates the State to put in place appropriate legislation and organs for the protection of the family, particularly the child and mother, in order to ensure that the family flourishes. Article 19 specifically stipulates child's rights to protection. The provision makes it clear that every child has the right to specific mechanisms of protection by his or her family, other Rwandans and the State, depending on his or her age and living conditions, as provided for by national and international law.
11. In addition to the Constitution, other laws have been adopted, institutions established and specific programs designed to give effect to the above constitutional provisions and other international standards on

the protection of child's rights. For the sake of this report, due consideration is given to the laws, policies and other frameworks that were put in place during the period under consideration.

12. Complementary to the Law N°71/2018 of 31 August 2018 relating to the Protection of the Child, there are other newly adopted national legal and strategic frameworks that emphasize child protection rights. For instance Law N° 027/2019 of 19/09/2019 relating to the Criminal Procedure which provides for a specialized chamber separate from that of adult offenders; and a detention facility separate from that of adults.
13. Law N° 058/2021 of 13/10/2021 relating to the Protection of Personal Data and Privacy and the Strategic Plan for the Integrated Child Rights Policy (2019-2024). The Child Online Protection Policy (2019) also lays out guidelines for the protection of children from online abuse. It aims at having all Rwandan children empowered to access the digital environment creatively, knowledgeably and safely. Throughout the various policy areas, the policy institutionalized measures and systems for prevention of online-child abuse as well as timely detection and response in case of abuse.
14. The Ministerial Order No 001/MIGEPROF/2023 of 12/01/2023 Relating to the Child Well-Being; a compilation of ministerial orders for the implementation of the Law No 71/2018 of 31/08/2018 relating to the protection of the child, was adopted by the Cabinet in its session of 14/10/2022 and was published in Official Gazette n° Special of 17/01/2023.
15. While implementing the legal and policy framework, some challenges were identified that required the amendment of some laws. For instance, in 2020, the Law n° 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and family was amended with the aim to simplify the process of registration of new births, registration of a judgment establishing paternity or maternity, electronic recording in civil registrars (art 9 to 12, 18 to 20). and harmonize the system on child's identity and certificate provision online. As a result, birth registration improved from 54% in 2015 to 84.6% in 2021 (Rwanda statistical report).
16. *In terms of institutional framework, the Committee notes with appreciation the increased financial and human resources availed for the National Commission for Children (NCC), the establishment of the National Early Childhood Development Program (NECDP) in 2017, and the introduction of the Gender and Family Cluster which has components of child protection and early childhood development. While recognizing the role such frameworks could play in supporting the mandate of NCC in protecting and promoting children's rights; the Committee encourages the State Party to be cautious of avoiding the risk of duplication of mandates and overlapping activities. Hence, the Committee recommends that the NCC should continue assuming its role in coordinating the works of the State Party with regard to promotion and protection of child rights and welfare.*

17. In terms of institutional framework, and to avoid the risk of duplication of mandates and overlapping activities, the National Commission for Children (NCC) was removed in 2020 by the law N° 012/2020 of 28/08/2020 repealing Law n°22/2011 of 28/06/2011. In this new law the NCC and the National Early Childhood Development Program (NECDP) were merged into the newly established institution now known as the National Child Development Agency (NCD Agency) by the Presidential Order N° 083/01 of 28/08/2020 determining its mission, responsibilities, organization and functioning.
18. The general mission of NCD is to foster the development of a child, the promotion and the protection of his or her rights (Article 5). Article 6 lists the responsibilities of the NCD to include coordination, monitoring of the implementation of all activities that support early childhood development program since the conception; promotion and protection of children’s rights and eradication of child malnutrition and stunting.
- 19. Though the Committee appreciates the increase in budget for the child rights sector in the State Party, it notes with concern that there is still a need for greater investment by the State Party particularly to address issues of health, education and other basic services. The Committee particularly notes that the investment on social programs declined in comparison to the total budget increment of the country. Hence, the Committee recommends that the State Party employs its greatest effort to continue increasing its budget for child rights and welfare issues which now stands at 7.3% of the GDP.**
20. The national budget analysis for the child rights sector explores the needs of children in the national development agendas. It analyzes the size and composition of budget allocations, focusing on priority sectors for children. The budget allocations trends for priority sectors for children in Education, Health including nutrition, Social Protection, WASH, Justice and Agriculture has over the years increased according to the figure below: (Ministry of Finance and Planning – MINECOFIN 2023).

Table 1: CHILD RIGHTS AND WELFARE BUDGET TREND BY SECTORS

Sector	2019/2020 (FRW Billion)	2020/2021 (FRW Billion)	2021/2022 (FRW Billion)	2022/2023 (FRW Billion)
Health	17.0	23.1	141.6	53.4
Social Protection	91.2	78.0	73.0	102.5
Justice	3.0	1.4	2.8	4.6
Education	223.3	398.1	355.1	541.5
Water & Sanitation	44.9	41.7	50.1	72.5
Agriculture	2.1	6.7	12.8	8.6
Total	381.5	549.0	635.4	783.0

Total Budget	3017.050505	3464.79604	4440.598248	4764.822593
<i>Child Rights & Welfare as % of Total budget</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>16%</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>16%</i>
GDP	9,383	10,266	11,976	11,976
<i>Child Rights & Welfare as % of GDP</i>	<i>4%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>7%</i>

21. *The Committee recommends that the State Party conducts the Demographic and Health Survey due 2019/2020 and that the Integrated Household Living Condition surveys as planned and include updated data and information from the surveys on the next periodic report. The Committee notes that the information management system has not yet been established despite the recommendation of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to expedite the process of launching the system. The Committee recommends that the State Party undertakes concrete steps to operationalize the system for better data management.*
22. The 2019/2020 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) and 2020/2021 Integrated Household Living Condition (EICV) Survey have been conducted as planned and findings made available to the public. Details on the findings are provided under relevant sections of the report.
23. The Government of Rwanda has developed different child protection related information management systems including: Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) A well developed and functioning civil registration system ensures the registration of all vital events including births, marriages and deaths and issues relevant certificates as proof of such registration;
24. Friends of Family/ *Inshuti z'Umuryango* (IZU Digital Reporting System) for reporting and management of child protection cases at community level; School Data Management System (SDMS) for improving the efficiency of education data production, analysis and use for decision-making and planning; Disability Management Information System (DMIS) for identification of persons with disability and provision of support, Health Management Information system (HMIS) for a review of the quality of data for maternal and newborn health, Information Management System for children reintegrated from child care institutions to family-based care and case management framework. Apart from the highlighted systems, the government of Rwanda is in the process of developing a Comprehensive Child Protection Information Management System.
25. *The Committee reiterates the concern it raised during the consideration of the report that the human resource capacity of the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) mainly depends on volunteers. The Committee, hence, recommends that the State Party continuously increases the budget allocated for the NCHR so that it can run its activities in a sustainable manner.*
26. The Law N° 19/2013 of 25/03/2013 modified by Law N° 61/2018 of 24/08/2018 determining missions, organization and functioning of the National Commission for Human Rights, in its article 3 stipulates that “The Commission shall be independent and permanent. In fulfilling its mission, the Commission shall not be subject to any instructions from any other organ. The Commission shall have legal personality and autonomy in administrative and financial matters.” In this framework, the NCHR independently

determines its organizational structure where it specifies the number of staff needed to achieve its missions, and recruits its staff without any interference.

27. Apart from seven (7) Commissioners including the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson and a Commissioner in charge of Child Rights who work on permanent basis, every Commissioner has 6 Districts of operation in matters related to the promotion and protection of human rights. He/she has at least 2 staff to assist him/her. The NCHR has 42 technical staff coordinated by a Secretary General through four (4) units: a unit in charge of administration and finance, a unit in charge of human rights education and promotion, a unit in charge of Torture prevention and a unit in charge of human rights protection and monitoring which has a staff in charge of the Observatory for the Child's Rights. In reference to article 6 of the above law, the NCHR has established an Observatory of the Child's Rights which is a mechanism that helps the Commission to follow up the respect of child's rights and persons with disability rights in the community. This Observatory is made of volunteers for children's rights and PWD rights whose main role is to feed the NCHR with information regarding child's rights violations/ abuses. This enables the NCHR to quickly conduct investigations on reported child rights violation/abuse cases. These volunteers operate at four (4) different local administrative levels (Cell level: 2,148, Sector level: 2,080, District level 150, and the Committee of the observatory at national level) and are coordinated by the Human Rights Protection and Monitoring Unit and the Commissioner in charge of Child Rights.
28. Regarding the budget, the Government is committed to keep providing the NCHR with required budget to accomplish its mission. Every year, the NCHR receive from the Government a budget to implement its action plan independently. This budget has been increasing progressively based on needs presented by the NCHR and within the available resources by the Government. For example, the budget allocated to the NCHR increased from FRW 1,154,775,717 in 2019 (NCHR annual report 2019-2020) to FRW 1,301,325,342 in 2022 (Law N° 019/2022 of 30/06/2022 determining the State finances for the 2022/2023 fiscal year).
29. The NCHR also signed Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with some members of Civil Society Organizations and Non-Government Organizations for strengthening partnership, enabling the collaboration in various activities and projects aiming at promoting and protecting human rights in general, and the child rights specifically.
30. In the framework of the collaboration between the National Commission for Human Rights and the Civil Society, since 2006, the Commission established a forum known as 'Consultative Forum' between the Commission and Non-Governmental Organizations involved in promoting and protecting human rights.

31. The forum meets every six (6) months in general assembly and whenever deemed necessary in extraordinary meeting and members discuss about activities related to the promotion and protection of human rights and the forum develops every year a common plan of action to be executed within 12months.
- 32. The Committee, while appreciating all the measures undertaken by the State Party for enhanced protection of children's rights, notes with concern the regression recorded in the State Party's ranking on the child friendliness index of African Countries for 2017, which stands at 20; while it's ranking for 2013 stood at 6. This is an indication that the State Party has not progressed in terms of protection and provision of children's rights. Therefore, the Committee strongly recommends that the State Party exerts additional effort to improve its budgeting and child protection mechanisms to ensure that it improves in its child friendliness and keep up its previous records.***
33. Rwanda is committed to progressively improve the child friendly environments through its legal and policy framework and improvement of the child protection system with specific focus on key gaps in the law and policy, institutional mandates, coordination mechanisms, service delivery, workforce and data management.
34. In order to enhance the legal and policy environment, new provisions to improve the implementation of laws and policies were developed. To facilitate users to ease access to information, the Ministerial ordersto implement the Child Protection Law (2018) were consolidated into one Ministerial Order relating to child wellbeing. This Ministerial Order cover five (5) implementation areas: Children's access to information rest and leisure; Taking care of health and welfare of child with special problems; Temporary placement for child in foster family and creation of social welfare institution; and the implementation ofthe Early Childhood Development Program. The only exception is the Ministerial Order on modalities to ensure assistance to a child infected or affected by incurable disease which remains a stand alone.
35. As earlier cited, in 2020 the Family and Persons Law was amended with main focus on birth registration to guide registration of new born at health facility level and harmonize the system on child's identity and certificate provision online. As a result, birth registration improved form 54% in 2015 to 84.6% in 2021 (statistical report).
36. The Child Online Protection policy was passed in 2019, a policy implementation plan was developed in 2022 and it is currently being operationalized through the various established working groups. In line with the implementation of the ICRP's strategic plan 2019-2024, the Ministerial instruction on participation in children forums was develop and implemented. In September 2022, elections have been organized country wide for new members of children's forums from Village to district levels.

37. The newly established National Child Development Agency (NCD) a merger of the former NCC and NECDP is mandated to coordinate and oversee the implementation of national policies and programs on the rights of the child's component among its other child development priorities. NCDA in collaboration with UNICEF conducted an assessment of the current practices, processes, institutional arrangements and legal and policy frameworks for child protection coordination and service provision, leading to the development of a child protection case management framework. The report highlighted areas of focus for prioritization of key recommendations into action plans that would strengthen the child protection system and improve case management framework for children's issues.
38. As previously stated, the child protection system and budget friendliness have been improved from 752.9 billion in the 2019/20 to FRW 968.0 billion in 2020/2021 This is equivalent to an increase of 28.6%
- 39. As the Committee alluded during the consideration of the State Party Report, it is concerned about the limited space available for CSOs in the protection of children's rights; hence recommends that the State Party creates a conducive environment for the participation of CSOs in the protection and promotion of children's rights as well as implementation of the Charter and the recommendations of the Committee.***
40. The Government of Rwanda considers CSOs and other stakeholders as key partners in the protection and promotion of children's rights as well as in the implementation of the Charter and the recommendations of the Committee. CSOs are meaningfully engaged and involved in all national efforts regarding the protection and promotion of children's rights as well as implementation of the Charter and the recommendations of the Committee.
41. To ensure strategic coordination of the implementation of national policies, strategies, and programs, the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion instituted the Gender and Family Promotion Cluster to utilize partners' efforts to improve the quality of interventions, synergize, and avoid fragmentation of efforts and overlaps. From that cluster, a Child Protection Sub-Cluster was put in place to gathers all actors in child protection (Government of Rwanda, Civil society and National and International Development partners) to assess the progress of NCDA activities, child protection issues, give updates and share recommendations on child protection issues. The sub-cluster serves as a coordination meeting where NCDA ensures coordination and implementation of activities on child protection system (both at national and district levels - co-chaired by CSO on a rotational basis).
42. Additionally, the Government of Rwanda has put in place mechanisms to establish a strong collaboration and involvement of CSOs in the child rights protection. For instance, since 2021, NCDA entered into partnership with various CSOs to monitor the implementation on Early Childhood Development whereby the Government of Rwanda provides financial support to CSOs to facilitate their work in this regard.

43. *The Committee encourages the State Party to continue celebrating the Day of the African Child and ensure the meaningful participation of children in the celebrations, particularly by providing them with the opportunity to reflect their views on the theme selected by the African Union (AU).*
44. The Government of Rwanda is committed, and organizes the celebration of the Day of African Child each year on 16th June under the theme selected by the African Union. However, to align the theme to Rwanda's context depending on the issues of concern, a national theme can be selected but the later will always be linked to the AU theme. In Rwanda, this event is an occasion for the Government and its stakeholders to reflect on progress made, issues still affecting children, and next action steps to remedy children's issues.
45. In 2022, at continental level DAC was celebrated under: ***“Eliminating Harmful Practices Affecting Children: Progress on Policy and Practice since 2013”***. The Government of Rwanda opted to mark this important day under the theme: ***“Protect the child, build a better future/ Turengere umwana, Twubake ejo heza”***. This theme was chosen to inspire community members through *Isibo* (the lowest administrative entity closer to the community) towards their roles and responsibilities in child development and protection.
46. To celebrate DAC, the following were the issues that were given more emphasis: low access of integrated ECD services to achieve potential of child growth, persistence of teenage pregnancy, child labor, street children, and school dropout cases among others. The celebration of DAC was conducted from 5th to 16th June 2022 in all districts, as part of the Governance and Family Welfare Campaign that started on 15th May (on International Day of Families) and ended on 16th June (on Day of the African Child).
47. Children's participation is always considered, and children are meaningfully engaged. Children from all categories and administrative levels are represented, and actively involved in the whole process of preparation and celebration of the Day of African Child. For instance, in this year 2022, Children were given space to show their talents, and give their recommendation and wishes. Among the different conducted activities, there was competitions in secondary schools on the selected theme and 127 children from five (5) districts namely Karongi, Kayonza, Musanze, Gasabo and Bugesera received school materials as awards for the 'best debate performers.

II. DEFINITION OF A CHILD

48. The Committee commends that the concern it raised in relation to the waiver for age of marriage in its previous recommendation has been addressed and no such waiver applies anymore.

49. Noted.

III. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

A. Non-discrimination

50. The Committee is still concerned about the urban-rural disparity that exists in terms of accessing basic services as well as the discrimination of marginalized and vulnerable children which the Committee raised on its previous recommendations. The Committee recommends that its budget allocation and various efforts are targeted towards increasing service coverage in rural and remote areas where services are not accessible. Moreover, efforts to eradicate discrimination against children should focus on all groups that are disadvantaged/discriminated by all kinds of groups including society and the private sector, in addition to children with disabilities. The Committee also encourages the State Party to educate and sensitize communities about non-discrimination of children with disabilities, and other vulnerable children.

51. The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda of 2003 revised in 2015 prohibits any form of discrimination and emphasizes the principle of equality and non-discrimination to all citizens. The law no 68/2018 of 30/08/2018 determining offences and penalties in general criminalizes discrimination in all its forms in article 163. The Government of Rwanda has put in place specific legislations and policies, independent institutions and programs to ensure that all children including those with disabilities, affected by HIV and AIDS, or from vulnerable families have adequate access to justice, health, education, socio-economic opportunities without any form of discrimination.

52. In Rwanda, the Social Protection Policy has an inclusive development character and further responds to the regional and international commitments, respectively the East African Community, African Union agenda, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The overriding principle of the SDGs of “Leaving No One Behind”, calls for a more ambitious approach to social protection that is more inclusive and preventative in nature, providing an environment for protection from a range of social risks as well as being transformative for all citizens. Within this framework, the government put in place an initiative to provide proper housing to disadvantaged groups and persons in high-risk areas in all 30 districts to promote proper human settlement, especially in rural areas.

53. Besides the modern villages progressively built in rural areas, the government of Rwanda adopted the Integrated Development Program (IDP) Model Village concept featured with a number of human capital development infrastructures and socio-economic projects across the country. Currently, 130 Integrated Development Program (IDP) model villages have been constructed countrywide. So far, the national IDP Model villages inaugurated since 2016 are as follows: Rweru IDP model village in Bugesera District (296

HHs) in 2016, Kazirankara IDP model village in Nyabihu District (68 HHs) & Nyundo IDP model village in Gakenke District (40 HHs) in 2017, Horezo IDP model village in Muhanga District (116 HHs) & Kanyenyeri IDP model village in Ngororero District (16 HHs) in 2018, Karama IDP model village in Nyarugenge District (240 HHs) in 2019, Gishuro IDP model village in Nyagatare District (64 HHs) in 2020, Kinigi IDP model village in Musanze District (144 HHs) in 2021, and Munini IDP model village (48 HHs) & Cyivugiza IDP model village (104 HHs) in Nyaruguru District (in 2022). (Rwanda Housing Authority, Standards Operating Procedure Manual for IDP model villages' establishment, Management and Maintenance; Institution Report).

54. In 2019/20, the Government of Rwanda allocated FRW 187.1 billion to the social protection sector, up from FRW 141 billion in 2018/19, which reflects an increase of 33% in nominal terms. In 2021/22, a budget of FRW 196.6 billion was allocated to the Social Protection sector. The child-focused social protection budget has also increased from 9.7 % in 2020/21 to 11 % in 2021/22. The budget increase is a testimony of the strong commitment by the Government of Rwanda to improve the wellbeing of Rwandan children. (UNICEF Rwanda 2020-20221 Social Protection Budget Brief)

55. As results Children are supported by the Vision Umurenge social protection Programme (VUP) in a number of components:

- VUP provides unconditional cash transfers and public works programmes to the poorest households in Rwanda.
- In fiscal year 2021/2022, Vision 2020 Umurenge Program (VUP) provided support to 1,244,545 people. 7% of the people supported are below school age and 31% are of school age (between 6 and 18 years.)
- The VUP social safety net programme has three components:
 - Direct Support (DS); providing unconditional cash transfers to poor households without labour capacity;
 - Expanded Public Works (EPW); providing support to poor households with one worker only and caring responsibilities;
 - Classic Public Works (CPW); providing support to poor households with labour capacity.

Table 2: children supported through Vision Umurenge Social Protection Programme (VUP)

	Pre-school children	School age children	Total household members
DS	10,142	60,494	277,728
EPW	37,022	132,508	386,227
CPW	47,897	189,747	580,590
	95,061	382,749	1,244,545

56. The Expanded Public Works component includes the operation of community/home based ECD facilities and support to the children attending these facilities includes regular nutritious meals.

57. In addition to the support identified above, VUP provides support to pregnant/lactating mothers/carers in poor households at risk of malnutrition through a conditional cash transfer component called “Nutrition Sensitive Direct Support (NSDS). It is paid from conception until the child’s second birthday. The objectives of this component are (i) to reduce malnutrition and to enhance cognitive development and healthy life and (ii) promote the uptake of ANC and PNC services. In fiscal year 2021/2022, NSDS provided support to 166,075 mothers and children.

B. The best interests of the child

58. The Committee encourages the State Party to ensure that laws, policies, and guidelines provide for clear procedures on how to protect the best interests of the child in judicial, administrative and law-making procedures. The Committee also encourages the State Party to continue providing trainings and reach out more judges and law enforcement officers.

59. The Government of Rwanda is strongly committed to ensuring that the best interest of the child is given priority in all matters and mainstreamed in relevant laws, policies and programs; and this has been achieved and continue to be implemented. Among other laws, Law N°71/2018 of 31/08/2018 Relating to the Protection of the Child is very pronounced on the child protection principles of best interest of the child. For instance, Section 2, art 11 of this law (regulating the Placement of a child in the custody of a third party i.e. alternative care) emphasizes that the best interest of the child should be a principle of consideration.

60. Similarly, the Justice for Children Policy (2014) under Section 2.2.5 underlines that “From a child rights perspective, justice for children broadly entails fair and responsive approach, processes, and outcomes by the justice system for the best interests of children to make maximum contribution to the goals of child rights to survival, development, participation, and protection”. Under Section 2.2.9 of this policy, the Best Practices in Justice for Children that relate directly to child protection principles are unpacked. For example, the Child Protection law in its article 23 provides for a social investigation inquiry (personal welfare) for children in conflict with the law as part of the submissions in a court hearing involving child, and this constitutes reason for case review in case of failure to submit it.

61. In regard to strengthening the capacity of judicial, administrative and law makers in child rights and protection, trainings have been provided to the executive and the judiciary on child rights and protection with the special focus on the principle of the “Best interest of the child” to ensure that this principle is taken into account during judicial and executive decision-making processes in all matters affecting children. A total of 293 males and 230 females’ judges and law enforcement officers have been trained at Institute of Legal Practice and Development (ILPD) on the following topics:

- Aspects of Child Psychology in Child Justice as well as Child Rights and Social Justice;
- Juvenile Justice and Rights of the Child victim as well as Protection of Child Rights in the Digital Age;
- Child Rights Monitoring Systems and Child Rights in Civil Matters;
- Law Governing Persons and Family, Matrimonial Regimes, Liberalities and Successions;
- Law Relating to the Prevention, Suppression and Punishment of Trafficking in Persons and Exploitation of Others;
- Integrated electronic case management system (IECMS);
- National treaty body reporting task force on the human rights-based approach in development process building on the Voluntary National Review (VNR) and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) outcomes.

C. Right to life, survival and development

62. The Committee, in its previous recommendations and list of issues sent to the State Party raised the issue of access to clean drinking water as a concern that needed to be addressed. The State Party Report highlights that Integrated Household Living Condition Survey (EICV4) for 2014/2015 showed significant increase in access to improved water both in urban and rural areas. However, the Committee notes with concern about the high rate of chronic malnutrition whereby one in three children under the age of five are malnourished. Despite the positive progress, child and maternal mortality as well as access to water, sanitation, and hygiene need to be further addressed. The Committee is also concerned that there is lack of positive attitude towards accessing health centers in cases of illness of children which has been attested by UNICEF statistics, for instance only 28% of children with diarrhea received oral rehydration salts.

63. The Committee recommends that the State Party enhances its investment on the right to life, survival and development of children; assesses its campaigns and actions targeted to address malnutrition; integrates nutrition issues in agriculture; creates awareness on nutritious foods that can be made from readily available household goods; provides nutrition supplements in areas where malnutrition is prevalent; and increases the rate of immunization for other vaccinations which play enormous roles in preventing deadly diseases. The State Party is encouraged to provide safe water, sanitation and hygiene facilities by giving specific attention to households with children under five or pregnant women.

The Committee recommends that the State Party undertakes sensitization to educate parents and caregivers to access health facilities in cases of illness as well as prenatal and postnatal care.

64. The Government of Rwanda considers malnutrition a challenge for Rwandan children, and the reduction of chronic malnutrition of children is a high priority of the country. NCD Agency has been put in place to take the lead on various projects undertaken by the Government in this domain of combatting malnutrition, including the provision of support and information based on three areas: nutrition specific, sensitive and enabling environment.

65. Efforts continue to be made to eradicate severe acute malnutrition at all health centers. In this regard, there is provision of nutritious foods and milk through “One Cup of Milk per Child” program. There is also distribution of fortified blended food (FBF) where by 63,753 of pregnant and lactating women and 115,496 children between 6-24 months in vulnerability (*Ubudehe*) Category 1&2 received FBF. Further, the Government provides micronutrients (Vitamin A and MNPs): 81% of children 6 to 59 months received nutrition supplementation (Vitamin A), 80 % of children 6 to 23 months received nutrition supplementation (MNPs *Ongera*). Currently, 6,975 under 5 malnourished children are getting milk and 917,970 children attending ECD services that received milk/one cup of milk program, and 3,587,276 eggs distributed through cooking demonstration in 13 districts with high rate of malnutrition.

66. Through the social protection sector, Nutrition Sensitive safety net known as Nutrition Sensitive Direct Support was introduced since 2018 to deliver cash transfer to poor pregnant and lactating mothers to ensure the uptake of nutrition and health services. In regards to Nutrition sensitive interventions, ECD centers have been established (at least 3 per village) to serve as entry points to malnutrition screening, referral and follow up. So far 29,333 ECD settings are established; Minimum WASH guidelines for ECD Centers and National strategies to address Human Security issues (decent houses, decent latrines, hygiene, malnutrition prevention and treatment, etc.) have been elaborated and implemented countrywide.

67. Concerning building an enabling environment, the following are key achievements: Implementation of SBCC strategy to enhance maternal, infant and young children nutrition practices; Development of District Plans for Elimination of Malnutrition (DPEM); Nutrition Budget tagging, Ministerial Instructions that provides the guidance to all institutions to prioritize nutrition services in their planning and budgeting process. Furthermore, the school feeding program is being implemented in all pre-primary, primary, Twelve Years Basic Education (12YBE) and secondary schools countrywide with a significant budget increase in 2021.

68. Through Joint Performance contract (Joint *Imihigo*), the GoR has developed the Joint Action Plan for the Elimination of Malnutrition (JAPEM) and continue to implement it through an inter-sectoral approach and institutions playing different roles in efforts to address child malnutrition, with 5 strategic objectives:

- to reduce all forms of malnutrition;
- to improve household's food and nutrition security;
- to ensure social protection for food and nutrition insecure households;
- to improve nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in schools and
- to improve knowledge, attitudes and practices on optimal nutrition across the lifecycle.

69. According to DHS 2019/2020, childhood stunting has decreased in Rwanda, from 48% in 2000; 38% in 2015 to 33% in 2019-2020. During the same period, the proportion of children underweight has declined from 20% to 8%. Childhood wasting has decreased from 8% to 1% over the same period. In addition, different campaigns have been launched and conducted countrywide to combat malnutrition and to improve the nutrition status of children under five years, pregnant and lactating mothers and to educate parents and caregivers to access health facilities as prenatal and postnatal care.

70. According to statistics of the DHS 2019/2020, in Rwanda, 80% of households have access to an improved water source compared to 73% in DHS 2014/2015, with urban households having much better access (96%) than rural households (77%). The most common sources of drinking water in urban households are water piped into the household's dwelling, yard, plot, or neighbor yard (50%) and public taps or standpipes (26%). Rural households obtain their drinking water mainly from protected wells or springs (36%) and public taps or standpipes (31%). This survey also highlighted a positive change that have been made in terms of reducing the distance to access the drinking water, where in urban areas they are using distance around 200m to access the improved water while in rural area they are using 500m.

71. In terms of vaccinations for preventing deadly diseases, the 2019-2020 DHS indicates that overall, 96% of children have received all basic vaccinations, and 84% have received all age-appropriate vaccinations. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of children have received BCG, 99% have received the three doses of pentavalent, and 98% have received three doses of oral polio. Coverage of vaccination against measles is 98%. Less than 1% of children in Rwanda have not received any vaccinations.

72. Furthermore, the above survey shows that the infant mortality rate was 33 deaths per 1,000 live births for the 5 years preceding the survey. The child mortality rate was 13 deaths per 1,000 live births, while the under-5 mortality rate was 45 deaths per 1,000 live births. With respect to other early childhood mortality rates, the neonatal mortality rate was 19 deaths per 1,000 live births and the post-neonatal mortality rate was 14 deaths per 1,000. Children with diarrhea are given increased fluids, a fluid made from a special packet of oral rehydration salts (ORS) shows that 42% of children under age 5 with diarrhea in the 2 weeks before the survey received some form of ORT (ORS packets, recommended home fluids, or increased fluids). Thirty-seven (37%) percent of children with diarrhea were given zinc, and nineteen (19%) percent received a combination of ORS and zinc. Antibiotics were given to 4% of children with diarrhea. Twenty-seven (27%)

percent of children with diarrhea did not receive any treatment. The GoR is committed to continue deploying efforts to deal with diarrhea.

73. The 2019-20 DHS results show that practically all of Rwandan women (98%) who gave birth in the 5 years preceding the survey received antenatal care from a skilled provider at least once for their last birth. Forty-seven percent (47%) of women had four or more Ante-Natal Care (ANC) visits. 94% of the births in the 5 years preceding the survey were delivered by a skilled provider and 93% were delivered in a health Facility.

D. The views of the child

74. The Committee recommends that the State Party provides more support to the children who participate in the Summit as well as the Children Forum Committees so as to empower them to have meaningful engagement.

75. In Rwanda the children forums at all administrative levels serve as platforms that enable children to express their views and opinions, which are then incorporated into government plans of action and also considered during the development of various policies and programs. It provides for the integration and mainstreaming of children's perspectives into planning and decision-making; creating opportunities and enabling environment for ensuring that children are informed and consulted in the development of policies and programs in all matters that affect their lives directly and indirectly (judicial, administrative, social, economic, etc.).

76. For instance, the committee of children's forum participate in the parliament in the budget consultation, and in different meetings where they provide recommendations, children take over. Also, the forum meets regularly during school holidays and they receive annual trainings and technical support to empower them to have meaningful engagement to exercise their rights. This year, through their elections, new children's forum has been elected from village to district levels.

77. In relation to the participation of children in judicial proceedings and other issues affecting them, the Committee is concerned that the Law No 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and family does not have any procedure that allows children to participate in custody cases at the time of divorce. The Committee recommends that the State Party reviews such procedures and ensure that children's views are considered in decisions that concern or affect them.

78. During divorce proceedings, testimonies of children are taken into consideration. As we are reviewing the Law No 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and family a provision that allows children to participate in custody cases at the time of divorce will be considered to ensure that children's views are considered in decisions that concern or affect them.

79. Despite that, the Justice for Children Policy (2014) under Section 2.2.4 incorporates the “right for a child to be heard in all criminal, civil and administrative matters affecting her/him, and for her/his evidence to be given due weight in these matters”. The same, article 14 of the Law N°71/2018 of 31/08/2018 Relating to the Protection of the Child (“child has the right to attend any proceeding aimed at separating him/her from his/her family or his/her guardian and give his/her opinion”) makes a clear provision for children’s participation in matters that affect them. The Integrated Child Rights Policy, 2011 (Policy strategy 7.4); also provides for child participation (in accordance with his/her age and maturity) in proceedings of judicial or administrative decisions concerning adoption or custody of the child (in case of separation/divorce of parents).

IV. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

A. Right to name, nationality and birth registration

80. The Committee welcomes the adoption of Law No 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and family which addresses some of the concerns that the Committee has pointed out in its previous recommendations. Particularly, the law extends the period for birth registration from 15 days to 30 days, and it has removed the fine that was previously imposed on late birth registration as affirmed by the State Party during the constructive dialogue. The Committee further notes with appreciation that birth registration is being provided in health services and sensitization campaigns are undertaken to increase the rate of birth registration. Following the recommendations of the Committee, the State Party has provided procedures where one parent can register a child without barriers, which the Committee appreciates. However, the Committee notes that the rate of birth registration remains very low where birth notification stands at 58%, and birth registration at civil registry and certification are even lower. The Committee is also concerned that birth registration is not accessible in some areas; birth certification is not immediate as provided by law; and people have to travel long distances to obtain the birth certificate.

81. Following a 2016 assessment of Rwanda's Civil Registration System, which identified several gaps to achieving the vision to "make every life known and count" by registering all vital events, the Government, through the National Identification Agency embarked on the process to upgrade its Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system. The results of this process included the amendment of the Law No. 32/2016 governing persons and family. Changes made by the new law include extending the powers of civil registrar previously at the sector level to more decentralized structures specifically cells and health facilities by bringing civil registration closer to the public at health facilities and cell levels where the two major life events of birth and death occur, journeys and the costs thereof previously borne by the public are eliminated. As result, according to the National Statistical Report of 2021, the completeness of birth registration is on 84.2%.

82. Article 9 of the Law n° 001/2020 of 02/02/2020 amending law n° 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and family stipulates that "Every child is declared immediately after birth in the health facility where he/she was born upon presentation of a medical birth certificate issued by a medical professional from the health facility where the child was born." This implies that for births (93% were delivered in a health Facility, DHS 2020) that occurs in health facilities, registration and issuance of certificates are completed there while those that occur in the communities are registered at the cell level, so there is no longer distances made. This encourages all people to ensure that every life event is timely and correctly registered, which is vital to enabling those concerned enjoy their rights and various services provided.

83. The Committee would like emphasize the fact that birth certification is an essential element of Article 6 of the African Children’s Charter as it is required to prove registration of one’s birth. As the Committee, in its General Comment No 2 on Article 6 of the African Children’s Charter, clearly prescribes, States should ensure that a birth certificate is issued immediately after registration and the first copy should be provided for free. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the State Party work towards increasing access to birth registration for all children born in all areas of the Country, including in remote and rural areas particularly by establishing mobile birth registration centers, among others. Moreover, the Committee recommends that the State Party decentralizes birth certification services so that it is issued at the sametime with birth registration. In addition, the Committee encourages the State Party to continue the ongoing extensive sensitization to achieve universal birth registration and certification of all children born in its territory.

84. For easy access to birth registration, every child born at the health facilities is immediately registered by the health facility (93% were delivered in a health facility, DHS 2020). For those born in communities, the civil registrar at Cell level, which is the nearest administrative entity to population, receive birth declaration and immediately register the newborn. The new system came with interoperable capabilities to link the National Centralized and Integrated CRVS, the National Population Registry, the CRVS web and the Health Information Management System, among other databases to ensure all institutions with stake in civic information receive the same data without having to do multiple entries.

85. To increase capacity of new civil registrars, MINALOC, MIGEPROF, NIDA, NCDA and other stakeholders undertook trainings of data managers and health facility managers in all public and private hospitals across the country. 1100 people were trained to bring them to speed on their role established by the new law. Training of 2148 cell Executive Secretaries was conducted on the new system and given IT facilities like tablets to take on the responsibility of registering deaths and births that occur in the communities.

86. Birth certificate can be requested and received through *Irembo* public digital portal (a comprehensive public services system) from everywhere you are. This online service is accessible countrywide and government has facilitated in allowing different agents at sector level and independent providers of *Irembo* services to support users (parents) to access/obtain the birth certificate of their children.

B. Freedom of expression, access to appropriate information, freedom of thought, conscience and religion

87. In addition to the forums where children participate through representation in the child parliaments and child forum committees, the Committee is of the view that all children have the right to fundamental freedoms. The Committee acknowledges that the State Party has a legal framework that provides for freedom of expression and freedom of assembly including the Law on the Rights and Protection of the Child. The Committee recommends that the State Party couples the legal framework with sensitization of

communities so that children have freedom to embrace their rights. Moreover, the Committee recommends that the State Party establishes additional platforms for children to express their views in schools and on media. In relation to children's right to access information, the Committee encourages the State Party to provide child friendly sources particularly designated for children to ensure their protection and safety in accessing information. The Committee also recalls its recommendation for the State Party to ensure the protection of the right to privacy of child victims and child witnesses.

88. The government of Rwanda has set up children's forum, which operate at all levels, in accordance with the revised guidelines on the establishment and functionality of Children forums of 2020. Also new guidelines on meaningful child participation in governance, and curriculum on child access to information were developed for approval by Cabinet (2022).

89. There is also a national children summit organized annually which brings together children's delegates from across the country to meet with policy makers, government officials, civil society and partners to ensure meaningful child participation and express their views.

90. The children have also full access to the information through various media including television, radio, newspaper and social media. The government of Rwanda has put in place proper measures and policy to prevent harmful information that can be accessed by children who use different media channels (The Government adopted the "Child Online Protection policy in 2019). Ministerial instructions on child online protection have been developed. As far as religion is concerned, any Rwandan including child has the freedom to participate in religion of his/ her choice.

C. Protection against abuse and torture

91. Despite the legislative framework that bans corporal punishment, the Committee observes from the constructive dialogue that corporal punishment is highly practiced. The Committee is also concerned that no information was provided by the State Party as to banning corporal punishment in all settings including in alternative care facilities. In view of the foregoing, the Committee encourages the State Party to undertake the following measures:

- Ensure that corporal punishment is explicitly prohibited in all settings including residential care facilities, correction centers and other facilities;*
- Provide training for teachers, parents and police on positive discipline and preferably provide guidelines on positive disciplining measures;*
- Investigate and prosecute cases of corporal punishment specifically in schools, and alternative care facilities;*
- Engage traditional and religious leaders in sensitizing communities about the negative impact of corporal punishment and establish community- based prevention and protection mechanisms.*

92. In Rwanda, corporal punishment is prohibited in all alternative care settings (foster care, institutions, places of safety, in schools, etc.). The Law No 71/2018 of 31 August 2018 relating to the Protection of the Child, specifically in its article 28, states that: “A person who harasses a child or imposes severe or degrading punishments including corporal sanctions on him/her, commits an offence. Upon conviction, he/she is liable to imprisonment for a term of not less than two (2) years and not more than three (3) years, and a fine of not less than two hundred thousand Rwandan francs (FRW 200,000) and not more than three hundred thousand Rwandan francs (FRW 300,000).”

93. Schools are regularly monitored on the observation of the regulations and rules set by the Ministry of Education concerning corporal punishment for children. Once, punishment occurs despite these measures, the institution takes administrative sanctions and even brings to justice the culprit. This is provided by the Ministerial Instructions No 001 of 10 May 2017 of the Ministry of Education that prohibits corporal punishment.

94. For correction option, the government established the “National Parenting Curriculum” which is being used in schools and ECD centers. Trainings are conducted on laws and policies related to the protection of the child and up to May 2022, law enforcers, managers of transit centers; teachers and care givers and 29,674 Community based child and family protection volunteers (*Inshuti z’umuryango*-Friends of the family) have been trained on positive discipline.

Table 3: prosecuted cases of corporal punishment specifically in schools, and alternative care facilities.

Crime	Period	Case Received	Number of accused			Cases submitted to court	Closed cases	Total case handled
			Male	Female	Total			
Inflicting severe suffering on a child, harassing or imposing severe punishments on him/her	2019-2020	77	49	36	85	60	17	77
	2020-2021	100	65	36	101	56	42	98
	2021-2022	148	95	61	156	72	76	148

Source: report of National Public Prosecution Authority

Table 4: Cases pronounced by Court on Inflicting severe suffering on a child, harassing or imposing severe punishments on him/her / 2019-20

Crime	Period	Pronounced cases	Accused			Cases won by Prosecution	Cases lost by Prosecution
			Female	Male	Total		
Inflicting severe suffering on a child, harassing or imposing severe punishments on him/her	2019-2020	17	11	9	20	16	1
	2020-2021	32	11	31	42	27	5
	2021-2022	41	17	37	54	36	5

74. *Source: report of National Public Prosecution Authority*

95. Both public, private and civil society organizations have engaged religious leaders and opinion leaders in sensitizing community about positive discipline, positive parenting and positive teaching. It has increased the level of understanding of both teachers and parents on prevention of humiliating and corporal punishment at school and at home.

96. It is worth noting that in the Rwandan context the traditional leaders' structure does not exist.

V. FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE

A. Parental guidance and parental responsibilities

97. The Committee is concerned with the lack of data on the status of children in kinship care; the Committee also notes reports, with concern, that indicate children taken care by elderly kin are disproportionately economically disadvantaged. Hence, the Committee recommends that the State Party collect data on the status of children in kinship care and provide support to kinship care givers who need support. The State Party should also consider placing special attention in supporting child headed families.

98. The government of Rwanda, during the implementation of National Strategy of Child Care Reform, children living in institutions were reunified with their biological families and extended family members. A total number of 843 children were reintegrated into kinship care (extended families) and they are being followed up and monitored through family visits and meetings.

99. The National Child Development Agency in collaboration with NIDA are conducting a mapping of children in informal care arrangement in order to help them in the process of civil registration. The care arrangement of all mapped children will be formalized. The Government of Rwanda put much emphasis on the support of vulnerable children and families including children heading families. Through the social protection programs, children heading families are provided with direct support (cash transfers), medical and education support.

100. In cases where parents are alive, the Committee recommends that the State Party undertakes family tracing, assessment and reunification in a systematic manner where the best interests of the child are given the primary consideration.

101. In Rwanda our approach is family-based care. The Government of Rwanda is committed to ensuring that all children grow up in safe and protected families. In 2011, Strategy for National Child Care Reform was endorsed with the establishment of the *Tubarerere Mu Muryango* (TMM - Let's Raise Children in Families) program to ensure that all children living in institutional care in Rwanda are reunited with their families or placed in suitable forms of family-based alternative care.

102. The family tracing is conducted in order to identify relatives who could care for the child. These may be parents or other relatives such as grandparents or aunts and uncles so as to maintain the child's ties with his/ her family. During the reintegration process family tracing, assessment, preparation and follow-up of children in their respective families are conducted.

103. In relation to foster care, the Committee commends that efforts of the State Party in introducing programs to promote foster care, deinstitutionalizing children and recruiting more social workers. However, there Committee notes with concern that there is no information about the status of children placed in foster care. The Committee reiterates its recommendation on the previous report where it states more social workers should be trained and recruited to sustain the deinstitutionalization process and to make foster care effective and reliable. The Committee encourages the State Party to strengthen its support provided for foster families to encourage foster care as opposed to residential care.

104. The Government of Rwanda has developed foster care as an alternative to placing a child in institutional care. Caregivers take children for a short period and look after them while assessments are made about

whether they could return to families or be placed for adoption. As of 2022, a total of 394 children are in foster care. The Government provides support to foster caregivers, ensuring that children are safe and secured. A total of 2262 foster caregivers were identified from all villages and trained on the care of children. The existing 35 Child Protection and Welfare Officers based at District level provide coordination and supervision of deinstitutionalization and placement of children in foster care. All have been trained on deinstitutionalization process in addition to the 30 Gender and Family Promotion Officers at District level.

105. The Committee recommends that residential care facilities are monitored and evaluated regularly in addition to the reports they have to submit to the Government. The care and facilities availed for children in institutional care should be standardized and inspected to ensure the protection of the rights of children.

106. In implementing the alternative care reform, 95% of children living in institutional care have been reintegrated. The few remained residential care facilities are monitored and evaluated and the reports are submitted to the government on quarterly basis. The target of the Government of Rwanda is that “every child has a family.”

107. The Government of Rwanda adopted a Ministerial Order relating to Child Wellbeing which has a component on children’s institutions; modalities of creation, requirements and supervision of children’s social welfare institutions. Again, the Government of Rwanda developed the minimum standards and indicators for institutions for children, youth and adults with disabilities to ensure quality of care for children living within those institutions.

108. The Committee notes with concern that some reports indicate that the number of children with disabilities who are in institutional care are higher than the average rate. The Committee recommends that the State Party undertakes sensitization on non-discrimination of children with disabilities and promotes the foster care of children with disabilities, among others, by providing additional subsidy for foster parents who take care of children with disabilities.

109. The Government of Rwanda is putting much effort in the making its child protection system inclusive and in ensuring that no child is left behind. In 2019, the National Survey on Residential Centers for Children with Disabilities was conducted in order to generate evidence essential to inform advocacy and social mobilization on issues affecting children with disabilities and their families. A total number of 115 children with disabilities were living in residential care centers across the country.

110. In the same year, the operational guide was developed and train the social workforce to equip them with specialized skills that help them to care for and reintegrate children with disabilities into families. Mass media campaigns accompanied the reintegration in order to change myths towards people with disabilities in the community, avoid discrimination and stigma towards children with disabilities and their families, and promote their rights to live in families and harm of institution care upon them. As a result, a total number of 64 children with disabilities were reintegrated into families from residential care centers.

111. Children with disabilities who do not have families are reunified with trained special foster caregivers and supported within their families. Mobilization and sensitization campaigns are conducted with the involvement of local authorities across all sectors, *Inshuti z’Umuryango* (Friends of Families), community health workers and others.

112. Community based programs such as *Umuganda* (Community work), *Umugoroba w'imiryango*, *Inteko rusange y'abaturage* (community meetings), and community markets are used to provide non-discriminatory messages. Different guides like "Parent and operational guides" were developed for the use of awareness and sensitization in order to ensure that the messages conveyed do not reinforce stigma and exclusion.

B. Adoption

113. The Committee notes that the State Party lifted the suspension on inter-country adoption in 2017. The Committee recommends that the State Party complies with international standards of inter-country adoption through establishing safeguarding rules on identification of adoptive parents, accreditation and regulation of adoptive bodies, probationary period, right to participation for children below the age of 12 based on their evolving capacity, and identifying the cost for adoption procedures to prevent sale of children. The Committee is concerned about the lack of centralized data on domestic adoption; therefore, recommends that the State Party establishes centralized data collection and monitoring mechanisms for domestic adoptions. The safeguarding rules recommended above for inter-country adoption should also apply in the context of domestic adoption.

114. In 2010 the Government of Rwanda ratified The 1993 Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption and Cooperation in Respect of Child Rights. Thus, the process of the intercountry adoption follows provisions of this convention and other domestic legal framework.

115. Intercountry Adoption in Rwanda is governed by two sets of laws and guidelines: the Law No 32/2016 of 18/08/2016 Governing Persons and Family; the Ministerial Order No 001/MIGEPROF/2017 of 16/01/2017 determining conditions to be considered in Intercountry Adoption, its Procedure thereof and Guidelines on Intercountry Adoption of 10/08/2018. According to the above-mentioned Ministerial Order, article 3 states that "*intercountry adoption only occurs when it is the only way possible to adopt the child after determining that there is no other family in Rwanda wishing to adopt the child.*" The Ministerial Order goes further to mention that the national organ in charge of child protection (NCD Agency) called "Organ" by the Order is responsible to approve that the person intending to adopt the child fulfils the requirements.

116. The Ministerial Order No. 001/MIGEPROF/2017 of 16/01/2017 determining conditions to be considered in Intercountry Adoption and its procedure thereof is very pronounced on adoption. It entitles an adopted child to a stable family environment and spells out the minimum care standards to be met by the adoptive parents as determined by the national organ in charge of child protection (Article 2).

117. Article 3 of the just mentioned Order prioritizes domestic adoption over intercountry adoption as well grants children with special problems the opportunity to have family life through adoption. It provides for the right to privacy of both the adoptive family and adopted child's family– in the best interest of the child (Article 4). This Order further prohibits procurement of an adoption order with an ulterior motive (which equates to child trafficking in view of the Palermo Protocol of 2000). It further provides safeguards for children in orphanages by protecting them from unauthorized persons whose intentions may be unscrupulous (Article 5).

118. By spelling out non-eligible person to intercountry adoption, the Ministerial Order safeguards children from individual that are likely to pose a risk of harm to them i.e. people that are unfit. These include person sentenced by the courts for violation of the rights of children, rape to a minor, minors trafficking, domestic violation, genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious crimes; a person with a sickness that may compromise the welfare of the child and a person deprived of parental authority (Article 6).

119. To prevent sale of children, the mentioned guidelines determine the eligible adoptive parents, right to participation for children below the age of 12 based on their evolving capacity and identifying the cost for adoption procedures.

For centralized data collection and monitoring mechanisms for domestic adoptions, as on 10th August 2020, Rwanda inaugurated the National Centralized and Integrated Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (NCI-CRVS) system; from August 2022, child adoption event is one among modules that are currently under this system. at all the points of services according to Rwanda legal instruments and arranged for supporting children in informal care. An effective civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) provides essential data, rates and other quantitative measures for the accurate planning of programs designed to promote the well-being of the citizens. For instance, from August 2022 to date, 17 children were domestically adopted.

VI. BASIC HEALTH AND WELFARE

119. The Committee notes that the State Party is undertaking efforts to build more health centers and referral hospitals, train more physicians, provide health insurance, and employ more health extension workers. While the positive achievements are notable, the Committee is concerned that the ratio of health budget to national budget declined in the past few years and the physician to population ratio is one of the lowest in the continent. Access and quality of health services are still areas where the Committee believes more actions need to be taken. Furthermore, the Committee notes that there is an increase in the rate of child pregnancy.

120. To achieve Universal Health Coverage, the Government of Rwanda continues to invest in the capacity development of all health systems, with a special focus on the quality and increase of the quantity of Human Resource for Health. The health sector is continuously increasing the number of qualified health Professionals. According to the Health Sector performance report 2021-2022, the number of Health Professionals' ratio per populations improved as follows:

- Doctors per population ratio has improved from 1/8,247 in 2020 to 1/6,793 in 2022
- Nurses per population ratio has improved from 1/1,198 in 2020 to 1/1,170 in 2022
- Midwives per population ratio has improved from 1/ 2,340 in 2020 to 1/2,272 in 2022.

The health worker density per 1,000 populations in Rwanda is 1.1 skilled health workers (physicians, nurses and midwives) while the recommended minimum WHO health workforce density is 4.45/1,000 to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

To improve access and quality of health services, the following actions have been undertaken,

- Five new Hospitals were constructed and started offering quality health services (Gatonde, Gatunda, Nyarugenge, Nyabikenke and Munini).
- Construction and operationalization of Health Posts: Currently 1153 are functional including 60 Second Generation Health Posts.

121. Teenage pregnancy is a major health concern because of its association with higher morbidity and mortality for both the mother and the child. Childbearing during adolescence is known to have adverse social consequences, particularly regarding educational attainment. According to Rwanda Demographic Health Survey 2019-2021, the percentage of teenagers who have given birth or are pregnant with their first child has declined since 2014-15, from 7% to 5% in 2020.

122. As response to these issues, the Ministry of Health in collaboration with its partners continue to scaling up of the Isange one Stop Centres (IOSCs) services from 46 Hospitals to the decentralized health facilities countrywide; currently among almost 510 Health Centers, 482 (94%) are actively providing basic GBV services and ensure effective and efficient referral pathway to the victims.

123. In different districts of Rwanda, the community (individuals, couples, families, communities and groups in the community like *Umudugudu* (village) or Families' Forum "*Umugoroba w'Umuryango*" – (UWU) were actively involved in sensitization against GBV: GBV legislation and the legal justice system, existing health services, GBV prevention and reintegration of victims in the community.

124. Trainings were done for clinical psychologists, mental health and social worker on mental health and psychosocial support for gender-based violence victims, to equip them with a fundamental understanding of trauma, its effects on individuals who suffer gender-based violence, and how to deal with these effects through psychosocial care.

125. The trainings for IOSC district-based mentors on GBV case management and referral process entry and exit Health- Centers and IOSC were conducted.

126. There was also production and dissemination of IEC materials and training manuals. 112 banners: displayed at health centers, 3,706 leaflets: displayed in 3706 villages, 3706 posters, 9 pull up (one per district), 210 training manual used in the training of opinion leaders and 3706 booklets distributed in the villages.

127. There has been continued effort to fight against Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in Rwanda. As a result, a total of 38,066 GBV victims were reported to the health facilities. Of these 51% were victims of sexual violence, 40% were victims of physical violence and of all victims 44% were under 18 years of age. A total number of 1,184 abortions were legally induced. The main reason for seeking safe abortion was rape at 65%, 22% for therapeutic abortion and 10% for child defilement. 44% of safe abortions were performed with medicine, 16% were done by medical and surgical methods (combined).

128. The Ministry of Health in collaboration with partners is conducting a research on factors and risks associated to teenage pregnancy in order to establish further prevention and response strategies based on current evidence.

129. The Committee recommends that the State Party increases its budget allocation to the health sector and does not primarily target the health or education sectors in cases where budgets need to be cut off. The Committee encourages that the State Party increases investment in medical education to train more physicians and to sustainably retain available physicians. The Committee also recommends that Government interventions to achieve universal health coverage, incorporate programs and actions to improve the quality of health services provided at all levels. In this regard, the Committee encourages the Government to seek partnership with the private health sectors and other stakeholders.

130. In February 2020, the Government of Rwanda established a national Human Resource for Health Secretariat (Prime Minister's Order N° 040/03 of 28/02/2020) and gave it the following mission "To build health education infrastructure and capacity of health workforce necessary to create a high-quality and sustainable healthcare system". In the FY 2021-2022, The Secretariat has registered some other achievements relevant to its mission and responsibilities as follows:

- Ensuring the Quality of Health Professional Teaching;
- Capacity Building for Institutions Providing Health Professional Education and Training;
- Adequate Infrastructure and Equipment for Quality Health Professional Education;
- Coordination of Faculty Recruitment and Management;
- Oversight of Health Professional Education and Training ;

- Attracting Students to Enroll in Health Profession Education;
- Coordination of Teaching Sites Expansion;
- Academic Partnership at National, Regional and International Level;
- Continuous Professional Development in the Public and Private Health Sectors.

131. The HRH Program builds the healthcare education infrastructure and workforce necessary to create a high quality, sustainable healthcare system in Rwanda by addressing the country's most challenging health care obstacles: Critical shortage of skilled health workers; poor quality of health worker education; inadequate infrastructure and equipment in health facilities; and inadequate management of health facilities.

132. In order to bridge the gap in quality health care professional teaching the Ministry of Health through HRH secretariat has selected 15 hospitals across the country to function as Level-2 teaching hospitals (Annual Health Sector Performance Report, Fiscal Year 2021-2022).

133. In regard to the need to increase the budget allocation to the health sector, Rwanda spent approximately RWF 461, 597 652 billion on Health during the FY 2017-18, 2018-19 and 652 billion in 2019-2020 respectively. Per capita budget increased from RWF 38,167 (USD 43) in 2017-18 to RWF 48,243 USD 55 the following year and RWF 51,526 (USD 56) in 2019-2020.

134. Over the years, domestic sources have increased to fund almost 60% of the total health spending in 2019-2020 with 33% and 24% from public and private sources respectively. ¹

135. The Country maintained budget allocation to health above 15%.

136. The Committee highlights that child pregnancy is one of the causes for maternal mortality and adversely affects the teenage bearing the baby in terms of education, economy, and social stigma. The Committee would like to stress that teenage pregnancy can be prevented if sexual reproductive health services are made available to adolescent girls. The Committee recommends that the State Party sensitizes adolescent girls on contraception options including emergency contraception pills and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV. While schools are one of the most important places to raise awareness on such issues, the Committee recommends that sensitization program also target out of school and economically disadvantaged girls as they are the most vulnerable when it comes to teenage pregnancy. Moreover, the Committee recommends that the State Party makes contraception available for adolescent girls.

137. Teenage pregnancy is a major health concern because of its association with higher morbidity and mortality for both the mother and the child. Childbearing during adolescence is known to have adverse social consequences, particularly regarding educational attainment, they are more likely to drop out of school.

138. According to Rwanda Demographic Health Survey of 2020, the percentage of teenagers who have given birth or are pregnant with their first child has declined since 2014-15, from 7% to 5% in 2020 as it has been already indicated in the previous paragraphs.

1. HRTT Report : <https://www.moh.gov.rw/publications/reports>

139. In different Districts of Rwanda, the community (individuals, couples, families, communities and groups in the community like *Umudugudu* (village) or Family's Forum "*Umugoroba w'Imiryango*" – (UWI) were actively involved and sensitized to GBV, GBV legislation and the legal justice system, existing health services, GBV prevention and reintegration of victims in the community. There are also modules on reproductive health and positive parenting developed and disseminated.

140. In Fiscal Year 2020-2021, the Maternal, Child and Community Health (MCCH) Division supported provision of a package of services for Gender-Based Violence cases reporting to its health facilities. Isange One Stop Centers (IOSC) were set up for treatment and counselling provided to 33,636 victims of which 52% had experienced sexual violence, and 41% physical violence. Just under half (46%) were under 18 years of age (earlier cited). Community sensitization for early presentation at the IOSCs for preventative services against HIV infection and pregnancy is ongoing.

141. The Government of Rwanda has put in place youth corners in all 499 health centers across the country and 33 youth centers one by District except Rubavu and Nyarugenge Districts each one has 2 youth centres for providing youth-friendly health services to accommodate sexual reproductive Health needs of adolescents. children and youth are educated about sexual reproductive health, and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. The services are accessible to all adolescents.

142. Emergency Contraception pills (Levonorgestrel 0.75mg) are available in all health facilities and supplied through the national supply chain of reproductive health commodities for both public and social marketing programs.

143. The emergency contraceptives have been decentralized to all health centers. 5, 891 GBV victims received emergency contraception within 72 hours from 2020-2022.

144. More than 60,000 adolescents and young people in humanitarian settings and more than 5000 in 9 University of Rwanda campuses were reached with SRH information, including prevention of HIV/STIs, teenage pregnancies, GBV and its response.

145. Training of more than 1074 peer educators on FP/ SRH were conducted to create awareness including availing free condoms and facilitating linkage to health facilities for HIV testing and contraceptives, training of 150 local authorities, 226 teachers, and 64 ASRH focal points to support school clubs as well 24 youth-friendly service providers to deliver quality YFS were conducted.

146. In total, 120 school-based health clubs were newly established or equipped to provide SRHR/GBV, MHM information to youth and providing ASRH information through social media, radio/TV and web-based platforms and distribution of education materials.

147. Distribution of 100 TVs for health centres in Rwamagana, Ngoma, Nyanza, Nyamagabe, Musanze, Ngororero, Rubavu, Rutsiro, Gicumbi, Kamonyi, Gasabo districts for awareness raising mostly targeting out of school and economically disadvantaged girls.

148. ASRH mentorships in all health facilities for quality friendly services provision were done.

149. The Parliament of Rwanda as the initiator of the law N° 21/05/2016 of 20/05/2016 relating to Human Reproductive Health is in the process of its review and consultations with concerned line Ministries and stakeholders for its amendment.

150. The Committee recommends that the State Party employs its continued efforts to ensure the protection of the rights and welfare of children with disabilities. The Committee recommends that children with disabilities are not excluded from health services such as immunizations and nutrition supplements. Health facilities should also be accessible to children with disabilities; and health workers should be trained to provide disability friendly services that can cater for the special needs of children with disabilities.

151. The Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Umbrella of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities in the fight against HIV/AIDS and for Health Promotion (UPHLS) have done the following actions (from 2019 – 2022):

- Conducted accessibility check in 81 health centers countrywide and DISC (Disability Inclusion Score Card) for health facilities.
- Renovations of Health Facilities (Installation of walkways/ramps, put in place directive sign posts, merging accessible toilet and Parking for people with disability): 27 health facilities were renovated.
- In total, 644 health care providers including: 314 Health Care professionals from different health facilities supported by MOH CDC CoAg, 154 heads of health centers supported by MoH CDC CoAg, 101 community health workers, 50 customer care and 23 HIV clinical mentors from hospitals supported by MoH CDC CoAg were trained on disability, specific needs of persons with disabilities basic sign language, mobility and orientation.
- Reproduced and distributed the disability mainstreaming toolkit/guide (Appropriate disability terminology, accessibility check, basic sign language poster, etc.) for local authorities and involved partners in HIV.
- Reproduced adapted IEC tools on ART, OI and PMTCT (Posters, Image boxes, etc.) for Persons with disabilities around PEPFAR supported HCs.
- In total, 1206 sign language posters, 605 image boxes, 945 Booklet in ordinary print, 189 disability mainstreaming tool kits and they were distributed.

152. The Government of Rwanda respects the principle of Non-Discrimination. Children with disabilities are not excluded from health services, all children are equally cared for. In all projects undertaken in domain of combatting immunization and malnutrition, the children with disability are well considered and the programs are inclusive. For example, the provision of nutritious foods and milk under “One Cup of Milk per Child” program, the distribution of fortified blended food (FBF) and provision of micronutrients (Vitamin A and MNPs). Additionally, from recommendation of physician, children with disability can benefit more nutritious food with special consideration.

153. Regarding trainings, all 59,348 Community Health Workers have been trained on integration of ECD services in community health package. Specifically, they were trained on early disability and developmental delay detection and referral, support to children with disability. All 29,674 IZU (Friends of Family) made of one male and female in every village across the country have been trained on inclusion, care and support to children with disability; and 95,000 ECD care givers have been trained on provision of inclusive ECD services. Furthermore, the Government of Rwanda has put the body lotion of albinos on the list of medicines allowed to be prescribed on the community health insurance.

VII. EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

154. The Committee notes with concern the decline in the percentage of the budget allocated for the education sector; the low pre-primary education enrolment at 13%; the very low completion rate of primary education which stands at 54%; low secondary education enrolment rate with enrolment at lower secondary education being 30% and higher secondary education being 15%; and high pupil to teacher ratio. Moreover, the Committee notes with concern that article 26(4) of the Ministerial Instruction No 001 of 10 May 2017 establishing guidelines for setting up general or TVET, Nursery, Primary or Secondary School's internal rules and regulations provides prostitution as a ground of expulsion from schools. The Committee recommends that the State Party undertakes the following measures to ensure a better protection of the right to education for all children:

- Finalize the study that assesses dropout and repetition trends as soon as possible and based on the outcome develop action plans and programs that address the causes of dropouts and repetitions;
- Increase the budget allocated for the education sector proportionally with the increase of the total budget of the Country as there are various remaining issues that need to be addressed;
- Build more public pre-primary schools and provide the existing public pre-primary schools with the necessary budget and human resource for their proper and effective operation;
- Strengthen efforts in introducing school retention programs such as expanding the school feeding program to a wide range of schools; providing bursaries and other support for children from economically disadvantaged families; and reducing any related cost students might be required to incur to remain in school;
- Promote secondary education enrolment by making secondary schools more accessible, provide financial supports, sensitize parents to send their children to secondary education;
- Continue training more teachers until the pupil to teacher ration lowers to the acceptable standard and build the capacity of teachers through pedagogical trainings to increase the quality of education;
- Remove prostitution as a ground of expulsion from school; rather establish the necessary referral mechanism for children involved in prostitution to ensure their rehabilitation and reintegration without dropping out from school.

155. The budget allocated for education has not decreased. In fact, it has been increasing over the years. The budget allocated to education has increased from RWF 313.4 billion in 2019/2020 to RWF 492.0 billion in 2020/2021. According to MINECOFIN, the budget allocated to education in 2021/2022 is FRW 479.4 billion and in 2022/2023 is RWF 573.5 billion. This stands for an increase of 16.4%. The budget allocated to pre-primary schools: FRW 5,248,744,448, and teachers & caregivers recruited in the fiscal year 2021/2022 were 3,384 for pre-primary schools and 63,140 for ECD centers.

156. In preventing drop out, there has been efforts to increase access to education by building more rooms and equipping them to encourage pre-primary children school attendance. According to National Child Development Agency report of 2021/2022, 31570, Early Childhood Development centers (ECDs) caring for 935,225 children were initiated in its 4 categories: Model ECD, Center Based ECD, Community based ECDs and Home based ECDs.

Table 5: Summary of ECDs by types in all districts

ECD type	#of ECDs	#of Children 3-6
Model ECDs	143	12,690
Center based ECDs	3,213	203,914
Community based ECDs	2,428	92,123
Home based ECDs	25,786	626,498
Total	31,570	935,225

Source: NCDA report 2021-2022

157. The school feeding program has been strengthened and expanded from primary to secondary levels. According to the Education Statistical Year Book 2020/2021, in 2020/21 a total of 874,244 students were fed at school. This corresponds to an increase of 77,988 students compared to 2019. The majority of students, who received school feeding are in primary (309,419) and general secondary/12 years' basic education (468,493) level of education. In school the feeding program, the Government has allocated FRW 35,508,471,544 and fed 3,272,890 students in 2021-2022 academic year. During the academic year 2022/2023 the Government allocated FRW 44,322,761,340 in school feeding for 3,443,882 students. (Source MINEDUC). However, school feeding has not yet reached the target and parents are as well encouraged to provide their contribution depending on their capacity.

158. The Ministry of Education has constructed 22,505 classrooms. In the 2020/2021 school year, the total number of in-use classrooms was at 76,133 which signifies an increase of 17,101 classrooms in use between 2019 and 2020/21. This was done in order to make schools more accessible to students. In collaboration with local authorities, sensitizations still continuing to mobilize parents to send their children in school especially in secondary school.

159. The Government of Rwanda has continued to provide capacity building to teachers in order to increase the quality of education. The number of staff trained in special needs and Inclusive Education increased from 7,769 in 2019 to 12,501 in 2020/21. The total staff trained in Special Needs Education, and Inclusive Education in pre-nursery exponentially increased from 39 in 2019 to 258 in 2020/21. (Source: Education Statistical Year Book 2020/2021).

160. The existing teachers in 2021/2022 are 3600 teachers. (Rwanda Basic Education Board Administrative Data). Teaching staff in primary increased from 43,878 in 2019 to 60,666 in 2020/21, this increase contributed to the improvement of pupil teacher ratio which stands at 45:1 in 2020/21 compared to 57:1 in 2019. In secondary level, teaching staff increased from 23,585 in 2019 to 28,578 in 2020/21. However, the pupils: teacher ratio increased from 24:1 in 2019 to 27:1 in 2020/21, which shows that the increase in teachers was not proportional to the increase in students. Though there is an increase of trained staff in special needs and Inclusive Education, this represents only 10.2% of the total staff (121,659), which implies that there is need to train more teachers.

161. The term “Prostitution” is misused in this recommendation. The term “*gusambana*” in the Guidelines of the Ministry of Education was not related to prostitution but to “having sexual intercourse among children at school”. This provision was repealed, and there has not been any reported case of child expulsion from school for ground of sexual intercourse.

162. The Committee recommends that already existing schools should also be renovated to become child friendly by putting the necessary infrastructure and facilities. Moreover, the Committee recommends that teachers are trained with special needs education and schools should be provided with teaching and learning materials that are accessible to children with all forms of disabilities to translate inclusive education strategy to reality.

163. At Nursery level, the percentage of schools with adapted infrastructure and materials for Learners/ students with Disabilities increased from 10.5% in 2019 to 15.5% in 2020/21. In Primary Education, the percentage of schools with adapted infrastructure and materials for Learners with Disabilities increased from 23.2% in 2019 to 37.7% in 2020. At Secondary level, the percentage of schools with adapted infrastructure and materials for Learners with Disabilities increased from 30.5% in 2019 to 43.6% in 2020/2021.

164. The Committee encourages the State Party to continue the good work it is undertaking to have playgrounds in schools and communities and to make sports and leisure a habit in the community. The Committee encourages the State Party to ensure that basic facilities are provided in schools and youth centers for play and leisure and to ensure that such playgrounds are also accessible for children with disabilities.

165. For the newly built schools, playgrounds that are accessible to children with disabilities have been taken into consideration. The Government is willing to continue to provide facilities that are child and disability friendly. There are new spaces reserved to children leisure in public places.

VIII. SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES

A. Refugee children

166. The Committee notes with appreciation that the State Party has taken the approach of integration of refugees and has adopted a refugee response plan. The Committee, however, remains concerned about the instances of sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation against refugee children. Reports show that there are many out of school children among refugees. The Committee is concerned that the shelters are congested and do not have basic facilities or adequate protection from the rain. The Committee also observes that there are a large number of children who need special protection such as unaccompanied minors and child headed refugee families. The Committee recommends that the State Party improves the condition of the refugee camps and increases its budgetary allocation for food supply for refugee children. The Committee recommends that unaccompanied minors are provided with family tracing and reunification services or when that is impossible with alternative care mechanism. Skills training and support should be provided to child headed families and neglected children. In addition, refugee children should be provided with education and the means to enroll in schools.

167. The Government of Rwanda continue to demonstrate its commitment to the protection of the rights of refugee children and unaccompanied refugee children in particular. As of 31st May 2022, refugee children totaled 50833 including 24076 females and 26757 males, representing 53% and females 47 % of the total refugees' population in Rwanda. The Management of the Refugee camps has mentioned that there are no issues of neglected children in camps. Regular follow ups are done and parents are sensitized on the rights of the child.

168. Child Protection Committees have been established in all refugee camps to identify issues of child abuse, neglect and exploitation. These Committees work closely with the management of the Refugee camps, local authorities and CSO. Four hundred thirty-three (433) children were referred to RIB and Isange One Stop Center (IOSC) due to sexual abuse during the reporting period and legal action has been taken.

169. School feeding is one of the measures taken by the Government of Rwanda to restrain drop out for all children. Parents are also sensitized to take children to school. In 2021, Refugees from Gihembe in North Province and part of Kigeme refugees in Southern Province have been moved to appropriate shelters at Mahama in Eastern Province, in order to respond to issues of congested shelters and risk zones.

170. The Government has also adopted and has been implementing the Ministerial Order No 01/ MIDIMAR/13 of 03/12/2013, determining appropriate measures of tracing family members of unaccompanied refugee children for reunification through this program of reunified refugee children with their families. In this regard, from 2019 to 2022, five hundreds sixty-three (563) unaccompanied children were reunified and families of four hundreds eight (408) children are being traced for further reunification. From 2019 to 2022, three hundred sixty-two (362) unaccompanied and separated children have been placed in foster families. The government of Rwanda in partnership with stakeholders provided skills training and support to 1695 refugee children including 72 children headed families.

171. The Committee would also like to draw the attention of the State Party in identifying practices and customs within refugee children in two folds: first refugee children in the territory of the State Party may be subject to harmful practices that are not practiced in the State Party such as FGM and child marriage, hence it becomes important to protect those children; second such practice may spread in the communities of the State Party if not addressed early due to the integration approached opted by the Government. Therefore, the Committee encourages the State Party to identify harmful practices exercised by refugees and include response mechanisms in its refugee response plan.

172. Harmful practices such as female genital mutilation are not cultural practices in Rwanda. The Government conducts regular awareness on child rights, including harmful practices and child marriage. Moreover, the Government is pleased to report that during the reporting period there has been no incidence related to female genital mutilation practices reported or identified within Refugee camps or outside. Rwandan penal code is explicit on the prohibition of any kind of human parts mutilation.

173. Rwanda does condone child marriage. The law N°32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and family set the majority age at 18 years (Article 113). The same law sets the marriageable age at 21 years (Article 168). Sexual related acts committed against children is criminalized and punishable by the law (Article 133 of the by Law No 68/2018 of 30/08/2018 determining offences and penalties in general) and carry heavy penalties ranging from 20 years' prison term to life imprisonment. Specifically, the same provision makes it clear that if child defilement is followed by cohabitation as husband and wife, the penalty is life imprisonment that cannot be mitigated by any circumstances. To the prevention of harmful practices, the right to physical and mental integrity is protected by the Constitution of Rwanda as well as national laws and guaranteed to all without discrimination including to migrants and members of their families. The mentioned law determining offences and penalties in general prohibits and punishes acts of sexual exploitation and violence, and provided equal protection to nationals and non-nationals.

B. Children in armed conflicts

174. In its previous recommendations, the Committee has raised the issue of Rwandan children recruited to fight in neighboring country Democratic Republic of Congo. On one hand the State Party indicated that it does not have information in this regard, on the other hand, it provided information on the number of children repatriated from Democratic Republic of Congo who were involved in the conflict. The Committee strongly recommends that the State Party undertakes an assessment of the situation including which parts are affected most, what puts children in risk for recruitment by armed groups from neighboring countries, and the number of children recruited. The Committee recommends that the State Party strengthens its border security and other preventive mechanisms to ensure that none of its children are recruited. The Committee recommends that the State Party continues to repatriate, rehabilitate and reintegrate children who have been recruited and, in cooperation with neighboring countries, ensures that perpetrators are investigated and prosecuted in line with the penal law which penalizes recruitment of children. The Committee also recommends for a thorough de-radicalization and monitoring structure to be adopted and implemented by the State party towards monitoring the progress of the rescued children.

175. All repatriated children from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) involved in armed conflicts are not recruited from Rwandan territory, they are instead children of exiled parents from Rwanda after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, of whom some are part of militia groups located in the DRC. Within Rwandan territory, there is a strong control on children who cross borders. Any unaccompanied child cannot cross Rwandan border without parents' consent.

176. Regarding the repatriated children, the Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (RDRC) provides rehabilitation and reintegration for child Ex-combatants. The rehabilitation includes registration, medical and psychosocial support, full board accommodation with complete catering services, civic education, life skills training, sports and leisure activities, cultural therapy (music, dance, drama, and folklore), family tracing, family mediation, and family reunification.

177. Since 2019, ninety-two (92) (43 boys and 49 girls) children associated with armed groups rescued from Armed Groups operating in Eastern DRC were repatriated through Rubavu and Rusizi Border Posts. After the screening, they are separated from adults and relocated to the Child Rehabilitation Center where they receive a range of services including rehabilitation services such as civic education program, art therapy, psychosocial support, medical support, family tracing, family mediation, family reunification and follow up on the effectiveness of reunification.

178. In Mutobo Child Rehabilitation Centre, a clinical psychologist manages daily follow up to all mental cases individually (one by one counselling), group counselling, or by psycho-education counselling. The Centre also offers life skills training to the children under rehabilitation. This includes training in agriculture, hygiene, home keeping and social skills.

179. For the period under consideration, 32 Children with illiteracy problems were equipped with literacy and numeracy lessons before they were assisted to enroll to formal education or vocational training.

180. Since 2019, 88 children formerly associated with armed groups have undergone skills trainings in different trades as follow; 18 boys in welding; 13 boys in masonry; 40 girls in tailoring; 7 boys and 8 girls in hairdressing, and 3 boys in mechanics. This is also accompanied by civic education that includes the discussed topics on norms and values to help beneficiaries regain the sense of childhood in themselves. After rehabilitation programs, RDRC continues to support vulnerable ex-combatants through provision of reintegration grant (RG) and Vulnerable Support Window (VSW). Children are taken into account during this process so as to improve their economic reintegration into the community.

181. For the best interest of the child, Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (RDRC) ensures the well-being and protection of the child rescued from armed groups operating in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) by providing them rehabilitation services, civic education, ensuring effective reunification (family tracing, family mediation and reunification), and community sensitization to prepare them for successful reintegration. The preventive measures to avoid any tendency to recruit Rwandan children in armed groups have been put in place and community awareness strengthened. The ongoing responsibility remains to join efforts so as to repatriate those remaining in DRC jungles.

C. Children in conflict with the law

182. The Committee commends that the State Party has considered the recommendations of the Committee in good order and established Juvenile Chambers in all Intermediate Courts where trained judges are entrusted with cases involving children. The State Party reports also mentions that there are separate rehabilitation centers for children in conflict with the law. While this is notable, the Committee notes with concern that children are always sentenced to custodial sentences and still detained with adults in many prisons such as in Gikondo. Moreover, some reports indicate that there have been instances of arbitrary detention of children without due process. There are also indications that the prisons where children are detained do not have sufficient basic necessities.

183. Gikondo is not a prison but a transit center for delinquency. The NCD Agency liaises with the Ministry of Local Government and NRS in the coordination of interventions ensuring that street children regain their rights to live in their families, extended families, or other family-based care.

184. The Gikondo transit center makes regular screening of children removed from streets before they are transferred to other rehabilitation centers with integrated care and protection services (food, health care, hygiene, clothing, psychological, moral and social rehabilitation) for six (6) months while the social worker force is in family preparation in other hand on child preparation for family reunification.

185. Children sentenced to custodial sentences are detained in Nyagatare juvenile prison which is a child specific facility separate from those accommodating adults. Children awaiting trial and transfers to Nyagatare prison for custodial sentences, are detained in juvenile units that are separate blocks from adults at Musanze, Muhanga and Nyagatare prisons.

186. The Committee recommends that the State Party consider its obligation under article 17 of the Charter and particularly to:

- Undertake continuous training to juvenile chamber judges to inform them about the specific rights of children they should uphold including giving priority to non- custodial sentences;***
- Ensure that children are not arbitrarily arrested by training the police and taking measures against arbitrary detentions;***
- Build correctional centers for children to ensure that they are not detained with adults and until such centers are built to establish juvenile units in the current prison cells to separate children;***
- Provide rehabilitation, education and skills training services for children in conflict with the law;***

- ***Ensure that children in detention are in no way subject to physical abuse and are treated with respect and dignity; provided with their basic needs including but not limited to adequate food, sanitation, education, and health services.***

187. The Government of Rwanda has undertaken continuous training on child protection within the judicial system. In 2022, 56 males and 36 female's judges from the Juvenile chamber and the Military Court, plus 19 males and 11 females from the Rwanda Correction Services (RCS) were trained on Juvenile Justice and Rights of the Child victim as well as Protection of Child Rights in the Digital Age.

188. The Criminal Justice Policy has been approved by the Cabinet of 8th September 2022. The Policy is the first of its kind and gives priority to non-custodial sentences. Further, the Policy's implementation is expected to reform Rwanda's Criminal Justice System including Juvenile justice. Members of the Committee of Experts will be provided with updates on the implementation of the Policy in the next report. No arbitrary detention against children is perpetrated, in fact it is prohibited by law (refer to article 24 of the Constitution of 2015 and article 143 of the Law N° 027/2019 of 19/09/2019 relating to the criminal procedure).

189. During the period under consideration, 15 males and 20 females Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB) staff have been trained on Aspects of Child Psychology in Child Justice as well as Child Rights and Social Justice, and in RIB there is a department in charge of Child Protection.

190. Nyagatare Correctional Center is reserved to Children and complies with U.N Rules for the Protection of Juvenile Deprived of their Liberty, and the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners with regard to the standards of detention of children and to take into account the Guidelines on Children in the Justice System in Africa. Children in juvenile centers are enrolled in schools and received same education as other children in the Country. Moreover, 68 children have been granted Presidential pardon after passing the National exam since 2017.

191. The Law criminalizes any physical abuse against children (Article 121 of Law No 68/2018 of 30/08/2018 determining offences and penalties in general. The law No 71/2018 of 31st August 2018 relating to the protection of the child provides for numerous rights related to basic needs including but not limited to adequate food, sanitation, education and health services (articles 4, 6, 7 and 8).

D. Children of imprisoned parents or care-givers

192. The Committee notes that the State Party has ECD for children under the age of 3 who are incarcerated with their mothers and after 3 years the children will be reintegrated with the other biological parent or placed in foster care. The State Party report further provides that children incarcerated with their parents are provided with health, birth registration and other basic services. Nevertheless, the Committee comes across various reports, including that of UNICEF, which highlight that infant of incarcerated mothers are imprisoned with their mothers where the conditions are not ideal for infants. The Committee recommends that the State Party provides clear guidelines and procedures to give priority to non-custodial sentences for mothers or primary care givers of children. Where non-custodial sentence is not an option for the crime committed, the Committee recommends for the State Party to establish well maintained and

equipped ECD centers for such mothers and caregivers. Children of incarcerated caregivers placed in such centers should be provided with the daily required meals, nutritional supplements, vaccinations, birth registration, as well as leisure and play. The Committee stresses that the children incarcerated with their mothers are innocent children who should be protected non-discriminatorily in spite of the status of their parents. Such protection obligation lies on the State Party and these children should not be exposed to an environment that has negative impact on their physical and psychosocial wellbeing. It is with this view that the Committee recommends that the State Party does not imprison children on the basis of the crime committed by their parents.

193. All prisons have well maintained ECD centers, equipped with trained caregivers. The daily required meal, nutritional supplements, vaccinations, birth registration, as well as leisure and play are provided. A Ministerial order relating to child wellbeing has been approved by the Cabinet on 14/10/2022 and provides for the above basic rights. Non-custodial sentences for mothers are provided in the new Criminal Policy to restrain children from going to prisons with their mothers who committed crimes. Only children aged below 3 stay with their mothers in prisons.

E. Child Labor

194. The Committee Commends the adoption of Ministerial Instructions No 01/2017 of 17/11/17 on the prevention and fight against child labor which applies both in the formal and informal sector and which imposes penalty on businesses that employ children below the minimum age of employment as well as on works not permitted for children. The Committee, however, notes that according to UNICEF's 2016 report on the State of the World's Children 29% of children are victims of child labor; the number of labor inspectors does not match the workforce; and there is low conviction rate against those who perpetrate child labor. The Committee recommends that the State Party recruits more labor inspectors and train them how to identify child labor in all sectors; shows due diligence to prosecute and convict perpetrators; provide rehabilitation and reintegration for children withdrawn; and strengthens its social programs to prevent child labor.

195. There were reforms in the number of labor inspectors in sensitive areas of labor (capital city): Nyarugenge district has 4, Kicukiro with 3 and Gasabo has 5 labor inspectors. In total there are 34 inspectors allocated in each District. The Ministerial instructions of 09/12/2021 establishes Child Labor Steering Committees from the Village level to inspect and fight against child labor. The responsibilities of these committees are integrated into Districts' "Imihigo" (Action Plans) for accountability purposes. These committees are also trained on annual basis to ensure that they pose required capacities to fulfil their responsibilities.

196. The Law No 66/2018 of 2018 governing Labor in Rwanda criminalizes child labor. In line with the Labor Law, the Government of Rwanda adopted a Ministerial Order Ministerial Order N° 02/MIFOTRA/22 of 30/08/2022 on occupational safety, employees' and employers' organizations, child employment, employment of a foreigner, the child and circumstantial leave which state clearly the prohibited forms of works for a child. The National Policy on the Elimination of Child Labor (Section 2.4) provide a range of strategies for the elimination of child labor including:

- Withdrawal of all children engaged in child labor, in worst forms of child labor and in hazardous work by the provision of education opportunities such as technical and vocational education and training (TVET);
- Rehabilitation of all children withdrawn from child labor and its worst forms by providing a comprehensive psycho social counseling, talent identification and recreation services, life skills building sessions and medical care;
- Preventing children who are at-risk of engaging in child labor by providing direct services;
- Raising community awareness and behavior change communication vis-à-vis child labor and its worst forms; Strengthening the government institutions and community so that the child labor phenomenon is well understood;
- Monitoring and Evaluation of activities related to child labor elimination and carrying out research to allow trend analysis.

197. On investigating and prosecuting child labor: The Government of Rwanda has criminalized child labor through Article 117 of the Law N° 66/2018 of 30/08/2018 regulating labor in Rwanda. Like other offences, Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB) is a specialized Government Institution competent to conduct investigation on child labor.

f. Child trafficking, abduction and sale

198. The Committee in its previous recommendation indicated that protection should be provided to children who are trafficked in to Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Uganda, and other countries for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. The Committee also notes that children are being internally trafficked in for worst forms of child labor and sexual exploitation. While the Committee appreciates the legislative and other measures undertaken, including prosecution of perpetrators, it encourages the State Party to identify internal and external trafficking routes and regulate the movement of people in those areas as well as strengthen border security; enhance its prevention mechanism including social programs for vulnerable groups. The Committee recommends that the State Party establishes a cross-border cooperation with neighboring countries for prevention, identification of victims, repatriation, family tracing and reunification. Furthermore, the Committee encourages the State Party to continue prosecuting perpetrators and ensure that children found in situations of prostitution or other activities due to trafficking are treated primarily as victims and are provided with rehabilitation services.

199. The Committee is concerned that sexual exploitation and abuse against children, both girls and boys, is increasing in the State Party. The Committee notes that children are abused mostly by family members, relatives or people they know. The Committee further notes that reporting on cases of sexual abuse and exploitation is significantly low, mainly due to fear and shame. The increase in sexual exploitation has also led to an increase in teenage pregnancy. Moreover, reports show that over 80% of Rwandan children who have been sexually abused or exploited dropout of school.

200. The GoR put in place various measures for human trafficking prevention and response, these includes the Law N° 51/2018 of 13/08/2018 relating to the Prevention, Suppression and Punishment of Trafficking in Persons and Exploitation of others, the Prime Minister's Order N° 019/03 of 29/08/2021 determining the

Organ responsible for providing necessary means for repatriation of the victim of crime of trafficking in persons, the Ministerial Order N° 013/MOJ/AG/21 of 29/08/2021 providing for other particular means for supporting the victim of the crime of trafficking in persons. In addition to a strong legal framework, a specific Directorate in Charge of Human Trafficking was established within the Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB). This Directorate is in charge of prevention, detection and investigation of human trafficking cases that are domestic and cross border. Remedial measures undertaken. Such as fund for repatriation of human trafficking victims, it dedicated 233 million Rwandan francs (\$233,000) in 2019; 206 million Rwandan francs (\$206,000) in 2020 and 181.3 million Rwandan francs (\$181,300) for victim care in 2021. The government continued to operate its network of 44 one-stop centers to assist GBV and trafficking victims. Four shelters affiliated with NGOs and 17 government-affiliated safe houses also offered services.

201. The GoR deployed efforts to raise the public awareness on human trafficking issues and its effects. Additionally, capacity strengthening programs were implemented to raise the knowledge of Immigration officers, Rwanda National Police and Rwanda Investigation Bureau officers in detection, prosecution and referral of cases of human trafficking including those for children.

202. Specifically, for children, there are regulations of the Directorate of Immigration and Emigration (DGIE) on how a child is allowed to cross border. Only parents or those legally exercising parental authority on a child can apply for a passport on behalf of the child. In the case of a child who is not accompanied with his/ her two parents, the State Organ in charge of children has the responsibility to validate the eligibility of a child to get a passport.

203. To enhance the prevention mechanisms, the GoR put in place socio-economic programs for cross border districts namely in Nyagatare, Burera Gicumbi, Nyaruguru, Nyamagabe and Rusizi, and these programs are implemented in 35 sectors. In total, 66 socio-economic programs/projects were initiated including job creation (intensive public works, skills development programs), construction of improved health infrastructures, schools, roads, trade cooperatives, water and electricity, provision of essential materials among others. Since the start of these programs/projects, a total of 8610 households benefited from job creation initiatives and 2,617 people, mainly youth benefited from the skills development programs and 92 trade cooperatives formed. In terms of infrastructures; 12 health posts, 1520 classrooms, and 10 mini markets were constructed. Other agribusiness infrastructures such as boreholes were established and the GoR is still committed to continue investing in those cross-border projects. (MINALOC reports)

204. In Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB), there are specific protection mechanisms including establishment of a Specific Child Protection Unit under the Directorate General for the criminal investigation responsible to child protection and offering service at free cost to children victims. Child friendly spaces are constructed in Kicukiro and Gakenke Districts to enhance child friendly environment during the investigation and handling a child either as a victim, a witness and or even a suspect.

205. For prevention of sexual abuse, awareness raising programs continue to be conducted. Campaigns conducted in targeted schools to inform children about the crime of sexual abuse, how they can protect themselves from it and where they can seek support in case it occurs. Regarding awareness raising on fighting

against defilement offences and use of drugs in schools; in May 2022 the NPPA conducted a campaigns in 16 Secondary Schools in Four Districts mainly Burera, Musanze, Nyagatare and Gatsibo, a total number of 8,536 students and their teachers have attended.

206. So far, campaigns have been conducted in 123 schools across country and 72 sites. During the year 2019-2022, a total number of 15,681 cases of child sexual abuse were registered involving 15,150 females and 531 boys.

207. The Government of Rwanda has maintained strong political will in eradicating gender-based violence in general and child defilement in particularly. The developed guideline of minimum package of interventions (based on prevention, response and follow up) is followed up by each stakeholder in providing interventions regarding teenage pregnancy and child defilement matters and related shared Joint Action plan. In the same framework NCD and other partners continue to conduct GBV Clinics at community level. In this regard, they provide integrated services to prevent child defilement through mass education on reproductive health to the adolescents.

208. Regarding measures that have been put in place, the Government has deployed efforts to fight discrimination against teen mothers in schools; there is hotline (711) of NCDA and 3512 for RIB established to facilitate timely and confidential reporting. There are 44 Isange One Stop centers within District hospitals that provide comprehensive services including safe rooms for teen mothers and other GBV victims. Safe shelters have been established at hospitals namely Munini, Mibilizi, Gakoma, Rwinkwavu, Ngarama.

209. Also, Sexual offender registry was launched by the National Public Prosecution Authority (NPPA). Publishing the convicted sex offenders aims at discouraging and deter others from committing the same crimes as well as prevent the convicted persons from repeating same offences. the link of Sex offenders Registry: www.sor.nppa.gov.rw

210. On the Penalties to the Child defilement, there are severe punishments as stipulated by the Law N°68/2018 of 30/08/2018 determining Offences and Penalties in General. Upon conviction, the following penalties can be pronounced:

- Imprisonment for a term of not less than twenty (20) years and not more than twenty-five (25) years.
- If child defilement is committed on a child under fourteen (14) years, the penalty is life imprisonment that cannot be mitigated by any circumstances.
- If child defilement committed on a child of fourteen (14) years of age or older has resulted into an incurable illness or disability, the penalty is life imprisonment.
- If child defilement is followed by cohabitation as husband and wife, the penalty is life imprisonment that cannot be mitigated by any circumstances.

Table 6: prosecuted cases of sexual abuse/child defilement 2019-2022

Crime	Period	Cases received	Number of accused			Cases submitted to court	Close d cases	Total cas- es han- dled	Pend- ing	%
			Mal e	fe- male	Total					
sexual abuse/ child de- filement	2019-2020	3,793	369 7	126	3823	2532	1237	3769	24	99. 4
	2020-2021	5292	511 6	190	5306	2983	2292	5275	17	99. 7
	2021-2022	4740	458 6	155	4741	2296	2411	4707	33	

Source: report of National Public Prosecution Authority 2021-2022

Table 7 : Cases pronounced by Court on child defilement /2019-2022

Crime	Period	Pronounced cases	Accused			Cases won by Prosecu- tion	Cases lost by Prosecution
			Female	Male	Total		
Child defile- ment	2019-2020	1,727	39	1,742	1,781	1,281	446
	2020-2021	2,117	49	2,213	2,262	1,426	691
	2021-2022	2,353	71	2,390	2,461	1,518	835

Source: report of National Public Prosecution Authority 2021-2022

211. The Committee notes with appreciation that the State Party has launched a campaign to end violence against children and conducted a survey on violence against children. The Committee also notes the State Party's effort to prosecute and convict perpetrators. The Committee recommends that the State Party work towards making its one-stop centers as child friendly as possible where children feel safe to report cases. Other reporting mechanism that are close to the community should also be introduced including in schools to encourage the habit of reporting on cases of sexual abuse. The Community, including traditional leaders, should be sensitized to prevent and report on incidents of sexual abuses perpetrated against children. Moreover, the Committee encourages the State Party enhance its efforts in prosecution and conviction to deter further violence. The Committee also encourages the State Party to provide emergency contraception, medical, psychosocial, and educations services for victims of sexual **abuse and exploitation**.

212. The Government of Rwanda is committed to protect children from any form of abuse and exploitation. There is a child friendly room in all Isange One Stop Center where children report sexual abuse and exploitation receive comprehensive protective services including emergency contraceptive, safe abortion and psycho-social support. Evening families' forum (*Umugoroba w'Imiryango*), anti-GBV clubs in schools and Friends of Families (*Inshuti z'Umuryango*) are local structures where sexual abuse and exploitation are discussed. The waiver of criminal liabilities for abortion is provided by article 125 of the Law No 68/2018 of 30/08/2018 determining Offences and Penalties in General if the pregnant is a child.

g. Children in street situation

213. The Committee notes that there is increasing number of children in street situation particularly in urban areas like Kigali. The Committee recommends that the State Party assesses the situation, identifies the cause and prevent the situation of children on the street. The Committee also encourages that the State Party to withdraw children from the street, reunify them with their parents or provide them with alternative care, provide them with skills training, and reintegrate them in the community.

214. An assessment of the street children situation was conducted in all the 30 districts of Rwanda in 2019. The latter indicated that a total of 2,882 street children were enumerated, including 2,621 boys (91%) and 261 girls (9%). In the street, boys are ten times more represented than girls. This finding seems to back the idea that there are generally more boys in the street than girls due to the fact that boys are not only under less risk of abuse than girls when in the street, but also girls face increased social constraints or pressure than boys to stay at home. Among this total, 1,629 children, have both their mum and dad which is 56.52% of the total. 202 have only their fathers, while 490 have their mums only. However, the remaining 135 are orphans with neither of the parents. The street kids interviewed said that they cannot live at home because of unending family conflicts, others their parents do not care about them and others cited poverty. From 2019 to June 2022, a number of 4401 children were withdrawn from street, taken to transit center for screening and reunified with their families; and 400 children placed in foster family and adoption.

215. Rwanda National Rehabilitation Services (NRS) was established to support the rehabilitation of children in centers and after a given period, to work with Districts to reunify children with their families, and in most of cases, NCDA staff based at District level support this process of taking children from rehabilitation centers to their families. They also work with Districts in the post reunification follow-ups.

216. The Ministerial Order No 001/MIGEPROF/2023 of 12/01/2023 relating to the Child Well-Being has a specific section on provision of temporary placement for children in a foster family and creation of social welfare institution that will help address the issues of abandoned children. Once instituted, it will support in providing temporary shelter for children removed from the streets while preparation of family reunification or other alternative care options is ongoing.

217. Considering the challenges and gaps in prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration to address the delinquency issues, the existing rehabilitation, prevention and reintegration interventions have been revised to ensure that the gaps and challenges are addressed holistically.

h. Harmful practices

218. The Committee notes with great appreciation that child marriage is at a low rate and FGM is not a cultural practice in the State Party. The Committee encourages the State Party to be vigilant and prevent the occurrence of child marriage or female genital mutilation (FGM) which can be brought with cross border movements. The Committee recommends that the State Party criminalizes FGM and cooperate with neighboring countries to prevent cross-border FGM.

219. Harmful practices such as female genital mutilation are not cultural practices in Rwanda. The Government conducts regular awareness on child rights, including harmful practices and child marriage. Moreover, the Government is pleased to report that during the reporting period there has been no incidence related to female genital mutilation practices reported in its jurisdiction.

IX. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHILD

220. The Committee commends that the State Party conceptualizes the responsibilities of the child from the perspective of child participation and positive parenting. The Committee further encourages the State Party to educate children about their responsibilities and empower them to be able to deliver their responsibilities in schools and through other initiatives. Children should be educated about their responsibilities towards their families, their nation, and the environment and involved in activities that are appropriate for their age such as cleaning the environment, providing support for elderly and so forth.

221. There are different forums where children learn about their rights and responsibilities like children's holiday program: "intore mu biruhuko" where children are put in groups according to their age for learning their responsibilities through civic education, culture, norms and behaviors. In the same framework the religious leaders organize holiday activities like children camps and others. The National Child Development Agency provides for curriculum which includes the Rights and responsibilities of the Child.

X. CONCLUSION

222.Rwanda expresses its high political will in child rights promotion and protection, by effectively implementing its regional and international commitments including the ACRWC, through a progressive legal, policy and strategic frameworks.

223.While appreciating the role of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in advancing the principles of child rights, the Government of Rwanda is fully committed to continuously promote and protect child rights at all levels and improve the living conditions of all Rwandan children in cooperation and collaboration with all stakeholders working on child rights including Civil Society Organizations, Faith-based Organizations, Private Sector and its Development Partners.

224.The Government of Rwanda takes this opportunity to reiterate to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child the assurances of its highest consideration.

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA

