

RWANDA

In 2020, Rwanda provided protection to 143,287 refugees and asylum-seekers from 10 countries, with most coming from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi. Most Congolese refugees in Rwanda have been in the country since 1996, making it a particularly protracted situation. Most Burundian refugees in Rwanda arrived over the past five years due to election-related violence in Burundi, which has significantly increased the number of refugees by 70,000. Many Rwandans have had their own experiences as refugees and the country has adopted an open refugee policy, offering opportunities for socioeconomic integration of refugees. This is reinforced by the fact that the economy in Rwanda has experienced strong growth in recent years, even though Rwanda is still classified as a low-income country.

KEY POPULATION DATA

142,949

Refugees

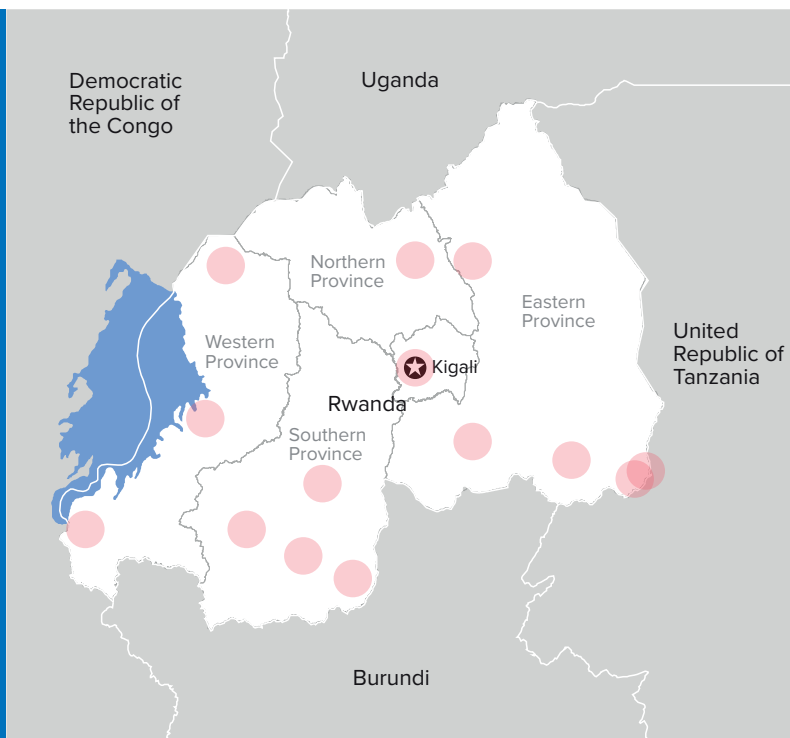
338

Asylum-seekers

1.13%

of the country's population (12,626,950)
are refugees and asylum-seekers

IDA 18 RSW / IDA 19 WHR ELIGIBILITY:
NOVEMBER 2018



Most refugees live in six camps which are dispersed throughout the country. A few refugees live in rental arrangements in urban areas such as in Kigali, Nyamata and Huye areas. In 2020, the urban refugee population was estimated at 11,411, approximately 8 per cent of the total refugee population. Refugees live near host communities with whom they have daily interactions.

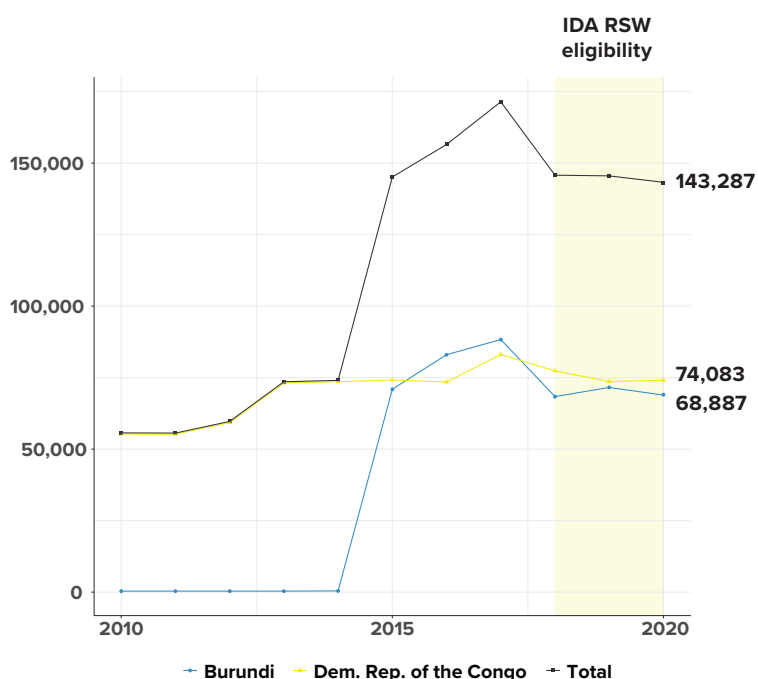


Figure 1: Number of refugees and asylum-seekers of the largest refugee population groups

OVERVIEW OF REFUGEE POLICY ENVIRONMENT (JULY 2017–JUNE 2020)

The Government of Rwanda is active in implementing policy related to refugees at the national level. Key policy elements and initiatives are as follows:

- Refugee students are integrated into the **national school system at the primary and secondary levels**. To this end, classrooms and related facilities have been constructed for over 30,000 refugee students.
- About 75 per cent of refugees were issued with **refugee ID cards**, and a National Statelessness Taskforce was created. The Task Force launched the [Ending Statelessness in 2024 National Action Plan](#) that is meant to, inter alia, ensure access to **birth registration** for all refugees born in Rwanda.
- All refugees from camps and cities gained **improved access to financial and socioeconomic services**, supported by NGOs.
- Pursuant to a GRF commitment, joint agricultural projects between refugee and host community households were initiated in Mugombwa as part of **livelihood creation** targeting 1,427 farmers' households, of which 300 were refugees.
- Urban refugees were included in the **National Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI)** in 2019. Screening and treatment for Hepatitis B and C is being progressively integrated into regular health activities for refugees; nearly 80 percent of refugees have been screened.
- An environmental plastic ban was introduced in 2019 with the adoption of the new [Law No 17/2019](#), in line with government pledges on environmental protection in refugee-hosting areas and providing clean and renewable energy solutions to refugee and host community households. As a result, nearly half of refugee households had access to **clean cooking energy** at the end of the period under review.

These policy developments are in line with commitments and pledges made by Rwanda at the international level in relation to refugee and host community protection and which reaffirmed the active role of the government in refugee affairs. This dates back to the adoption of the [Global Compact for Refugees](#) in 2016 on the occasion of the September 2016 New York Leaders' Summit on Refugees and subsequently anchored in the [National Strategic Plan for Refugee inclusion \(2019–2024\)](#) as part of the IDA-18 Refugee Sub-Window (RSW) eligibility process. Through these platforms the Government of Rwanda pledged to facilitate refugee livelihoods, enrol refugee students in primary and secondary school, include all urban refugees in the national health insurance system and provide all refugees with identify cards. Rwanda reiterated these pledges at the [Global Refugee Forum \(GRF\)](#) in 2019 alongside a new priority pledge related to energy and environment. The pledges are consistent with the Rwandan [National Strategy for Transformation \(2017–2024\)](#) and form an essential part of national Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework ([CRRF](#)) implementation (of which Rwanda became a roll-out country in 2018), promoting an inclusive and enabling environment for refugees that also benefits host communities.

POLICY DIMENSIONS (AS AT 30 JUNE 2020)

1 Host Communities

1.1 Support for communities in refugee-hosting areas

The stress placed on infrastructure by the presence of refugees and refugee camps in certain areas determines the interventions of the relevant ministries (the Ministry in Charge of Emergency Management/MINEMA and the Ministry of Local Government/MINALOC working through with the Local Administrative Entities Development Agency or LODA and in coordination with the Ministry in Charge of Infrastructure or MININFRA) which may also benefit host communities. Additionally, District Development Plans take into account the presence of refugees and refugee camps.

The National Social Protection Policy and Sector Strategic Plan (2018/19–2023/24) provides for social protection coverage for all Rwandan nationals, including through safety nets and social cash transfers. The Policy entrusts the [Ministry of Local Government \(MINALOC\)](#) with responsibility for citizens' social protection. While there are no specific considerations for host community members negatively affected by an inflow of refugees, host community members who are Rwandan nationals are able to benefit from these nationwide programmes.

1.2 Social cohesion

The Ministerial instructions no 02/2016 of 1/6/2016 determining the management of refugees and refugee camps suggest the promotion of social cohesion in refugee hosting areas by including the concept of “good neighborhood” with Rwandan community and the settlement of disputes between refugees and local residents. The Government of Rwanda thus implements inclusive policies that positively contribute to social cohesion among refugee and host communities in a holistic sense in line with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF). For example, as provided for by the Strategic Plan for Refugee Inclusion 2019–2024, refugees are integrated into national services such as education and health and benefit from socioeconomic and financial inclusion. Some livelihoods policies and programmes supported by the Government have contributed indirectly to peaceful coexistence, such as an agricultural project in Gisagara District, the location of Mugombwa refugee camp, involving both the refugee and host communities in a joint farming cooperative covering 100 hectares of marshland made available by the District. Additional hectares have been identified that would potentially extend this project to bring it close to two other camps, thereby confirming the success of the pilot project.

Overall, refugees living in camps and in urban areas have developed social, economic and family ties with the host community, with whom they share cultural and linguistic similarities. As a result, the Rwandan host population has a positive attitude and a fair level of acceptance towards the refugees, despite underlying issues that could challenge social cohesion such as overcrowding of schools, soil erosion and deforestation in and around some of the camps. The transition operated by WFP & UNHCR from in-kind and food assistance to cash-based intervention in camps has also contributed to better social cohesion as a result of cash flowing from camps into the local markets in hosting areas. Members of the host community often attend celebrations in the refugee camps, while refugees and citizens alike take part in compulsory community work called Umuganda that takes place nationwide in the morning hours of every last Saturday of the month, except during the COVID period.

[Organic Law No 02/2010/OL on the Mediation Committee](#) provides for committees at cell and sectoral levels (*Abunzi*) consisting of seven elected residents with proven integrity and mediation skills. These committees provide mediation services as a prerequisite before any party can bring an action before a competent court. Mediation Committees have jurisdiction on any civil matter and on some specific criminal offences. They primarily operate for the benefit of Rwandan citizens, and refugees cannot be elected as *Abunzi* committee members. In refugee settings, there are separate refugee-led conflict resolution

committees that aim to prevent issues from escalating and to resolve conflicts informally. Conflict between refugees and nationals are addressed by an *Abunzi* committee. Alternatively, refugees can ask the camp manager from [MINEMA](#) or one of the legal partners of UNHCR for intervention/support. At Mahama refugee camp, the Peace Dialogue Committees of refugee and host community leaders, placed under the supervision of MINEMA, facilitate the monthly discussion and resolution of various issues.

[The Constitution of Rwanda](#) (Articles 10, 16, and 100) commits to protecting citizens and foreigners in Rwanda against discrimination and division based on ethnic origin, family or ancestry, clan, skin colour or race, sex, region, economic categories, religion or faith, opinion, fortune, cultural differences, language, economic status, physical or mental disability, or any other form of discrimination. Rwanda is also one of a few African countries whose constitutions criminalize discrimination. Different laws have been enacted to deal with the offence of discrimination, which is punishable under Article 163 of [Law No 68/2018](#) determining offences and penalties in general. Overall, refugees in Rwanda enjoy a conducive protection environment and there is no systematic discrimination or denial of rights targeting refugees based on the grounds mentioned above. While discrimination might occur in some situations, for instance in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity, this is true for both refugees and members of the host community.

1.3 Environmental management

The [Biomass Energy Strategy](#), the [Water and Sanitation Strategy](#) and the Environmental Law (Law No 48/2018 of 13/08/2018 on Environment) generally provide the legal and policy framework for environmental management in Rwanda. Further, the Ministerial Instructions no 02/ 2016 of 1/6/2016 determining the management of refugees and refugee camps includes environment management in camps and includes the restoration of the environment in refugee-hosting areas. However, a lack of resources has posed a challenge for the implementation of the activities.

The [Ministerial Instructions Determining the Management of Refugees and Refugee Camps](#) require refugees to participate in activities intended to protect the Environment, including participation in joint community work. In 2017, the National Leaders (*Umwiherero*) passed a resolution to sensitize the population, including refugees in camps, regarding the use of Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) and other environmentally friendly energy sources for household cooking and public institutions.

In October 2018, the Government of Rwanda issued a directive to end the use of newly chopped firewood in the refugee camps, signalling a shift to alternative clean cooking solutions. In compliance with [Law No 17/2019](#) on single-use plastic items, corrugated iron sheets are gradually replacing plastic sheets for roofing in the camps and settlements. These policy measures were further reaffirmed by the country's commitments during the December 2019 GRF to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources by providing clean and renewable energy solutions in refugee and host community households; take environmental protection and rehabilitation measures in refugee-hosting areas; and build resilient refugee settlements that promote conscious land use and reduce the adverse impact on the environment.

1.4 Preparedness for refugee inflows

The Government of Rwanda, through MINEMA, has proactively developed several [contingency plans](#) to respond to various potential situations including refugee inflows. The Refugee emergency response is part of the National Contingency Planning framework regarding population influx. In recent experience, the response to refugee inflows has been coordinated by the Ministry in charge of Emergency Management with significant support by UNHCR and partner funding, guided by inter-agency Refugee Response Plans (RRPs), which address primary emergency needs.

2 Regulatory Environment and Governance

2.1 Normative framework

Rwanda has been a State party to the [1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees](#) since 15 November 1979. It is also a State Party to the [1967 Protocol related to the Status of Refugees](#), the [1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa](#), the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, as well as the majority of international and regional human rights treaties. Article 95 of the [2003 Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda](#) (as revised in 2015) provides for a hierarchy of laws in which the Constitution prevails, followed by organic laws, international treaties and agreements ratified by Rwanda and then ordinary law and orders. Based on this article, ratified international conventions are locally applied, and should be integrated into the national organic laws. The practice has been to incorporate the provisions of international and regional treaties by integrating the provisions into an amended or new law.

[Law No 13ter/2014 of 21/05/2014 Relating to refugees](#) mirrors most of the provisions of the 1951 Convention. The 2014 Law is complemented by [Prime Minister's Order No 112/03 of 2015](#). Article 18 of the 2014 Law stipulates that “without prejudice to other laws, any person having obtained refugee status in Rwanda shall enjoy the rights and liberties provided for by international instruments on refugees ratified by Rwanda”. By virtue of this broad formulation and in the absence of any contradictory legal provisions, refugees are legally entitled to enjoy a wide range of social, economic, civil and political rights. Rights accorded to asylum seekers and refugees are reflected in Law No 13ter/ 2014 of 21/05/2014 relating to Refugees and Ministerial Instructions no02/ 2016 of 1/6/2016. These instruments may further benefit from more precision given to specific rights granted to refugees as well as asylum seekers

The Congolese population that arrived during the inflows of 1996 and in 2012–2013, as well as the Burundian nationals who arrived in 2015, were recognized as refugees by the Government of Rwanda on a prima facie basis in line with Article 13 of the Refugee Law. While newly-arriving Burundian nationals continue to be recognized as refugees on a prima facie basis, all other new asylum-seekers must undergo the national Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process on an individual basis.

The National Refugee Status Determination Committee (NRSDC), which is in charge of RSD in Rwanda, was established by the 2015 [Prime Minister's Order Determining the Organisation and Functioning of the National Refugee Status Determination Committee \(NRSDC\) and Benefits granted to its Members](#). This Ministerial Order defines the composition, functions and frequency of meeting of the Committee and contains provisions outlining access to asylum procedures. Under this framework, the Directorate-General of Immigration and Emigration (DGIE) performs an initial screening of asylum-seekers before they are referred to NRSDC.

Article 7 of the Ministerial Order includes the provision of UNHCR being invited to NRSDC committee meetings as an observer, in line with Article 35 of the 1951 Convention. Although procedures for asylum seeking are publicly disclosed on MINEMA and DG-Immigration and Emigration (DGIE) websites, upon reception at the entry points and in reception centers, together with periodic awareness campaigns in refugee camps, UNHCR continues to inform on how to access asylum procedures during counselling sessions conducted by UNHCR and partners.

The Government, in collaboration with UNHCR and other partners, is making efforts to raise awareness on refugee rights to work and to access socioeconomic opportunities.

2.2 Security of legal status

All registered refugees on Rwandan territory receive a Proof of Registration (PoR). All refugees above 16 years old are also entitled to a refugee ID, issued in collaboration with [MINEMA](#) and [NIDA](#), which is considered to constitute a residence permit and proof of legal identity. Currently 75 per cent of those eligible have IDs, according to Government estimates. The format is the same as the ID card for nationals.

These cards are issued at a low cost of RWF 500 (approximately \$0.50 cents), which is covered by UNHCR and is commensurate with the cost of issuance of national IDs. The cost of renewal is the same as for initial applications and the replacement cost in the event of loss is 1,500 RWF, or approximately \$1.50. The ID card is valid for a period of five years and can be renewed as long as the person holding it remains a refugee in Rwanda. Registered asylum-seekers hold a temporary residence permit with a validity of three months, which is renewable.

Under Article 19 of the Refugee Law in line with the provisions of [Organic Law No 30/2008 on Rwanda Nationality](#), refugees can acquire Rwandan citizenship through marriage, birth and residence in Rwanda or naturalization.

Article 21 of the 2014 Refugee Law enshrines the principle of non-refoulement, which is generally respected. From March 2020, even though land borders were closed as a preventive measure against the spread of COVID-19, and life-saving flights from Libya have continued through the pandemic and other asylum seekers have been received as well during the period. UNHCR is not aware of any case of refoulement or unlawful termination of refugee status in the last year .

2.3 Institutional framework for refugee management and coordination

The Ministry in Charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA) is the primary institution in charge of refugee management at national and local level. MINEMA shares decision-making and operational responsibilities with other ministries and institutions, such as the [Ministry of Finance And Economic Planning \(MINCOFIN\)](#), the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI), the Ministry of Justice, the [Ministry of Local Government \(MINALOC\)](#), the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation \(MINAFFET\)](#), the [Ministry of Health \(MoH\)](#), the [Ministry of Education](#), the [Ministry of Environment \(MoE\)](#), the [Directorate General of Immigration and Emigration \(DGIE\)](#), and Rwanda National Police (RNP), bringing a wider spectrum of Government actors into the field of refugee protection and assistance. These collaborations have been further strengthened since the introduction of the CRRF approach. MINEMA and UNHCR jointly ensure coordination among donors through quarterly meetings. Additionally, MINEMA engages with other Ministries bilaterally or with several of them jointly if the matter requires such a collaborative approach.

Refugees are explicitly included in the Government-approved [United Nations Development Assistance Plan](#), which is aligned with the [National Strategy for Transformation \(NST1\)](#). Pursuant to SDG 16.9, refugees are part of the Government's objectives to achieve universal registration and documentation. In March 2019, a Strategic Plan for Refugee Inclusion 2019–2024 (SP) was issued by the Government. The Government of Rwanda has also committed to the [Ministry of Education's](#) Education Management Information System (EMIS)/School Data Management System (SDMS), which is used to register both refugee and national students and to track their progress throughout their learning

A Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM) exists in the camps depending on the sectors of interventions. Refugees in camps can also approach the MINEMA offices and raise concerns directly with MINEMA staff. Additionally, MINEMA and UNHCR organize large community meetings at which refugees can ask questions on different policies and services, including newly-introduced initiatives. More generally, the Government engages citizens regularly on national decisions and policy changes through open forums on the radio and via hotlines that refugees can also access. Multi-stakeholder consultations are also conducted jointly among refugee and host communities, notably on education. The norm being, that each school in the country has a Parent teacher Association, an association made up of host community and refugee parents regularly meets and takes decisions on education issues. The refugee community has a structured, elected executive committee and chooses leadership to the quartier and village level. In addition to the refugee community leadership, there are different representation bodies in the camps, such as youth groups, women's groups, sports groups, etc. UNHCR would like to see women playing a greater role in the various community structures at camps level.

2.4 Access to civil registration and documentation

Recognized refugees over 16 years of age can also apply for a refugee identity card. Rwanda committed during the 2016 New York Leader's Summit on Refugees to ensuring that 100 per cent of refugees on its territory would be in possession of valid refugee identity cards issued by the Government. This commitment was reaffirmed through the protection/documentation pledge made at the GRF in December 2019. The Government is planning to issue documents to the 25 per cent of eligible refugees who do not have them yet. Access to the medical insurance scheme in urban areas requires refugees to be in possession of a refugee ID card. Having a refugee ID card also enables refugees to access other essential services such as telecommunications (SIM cards/contracts), banking and financial services, employment opportunities, etc. and greatly facilitates socioeconomic inclusion.

The proof of registration (PoR) issued by UNHCR and MINEMA to all refugees on Rwandan territory (see sub-dimension 2.2) is a document including the family composition and biometric details of each individual, which enables them to access most humanitarian services. However, for legal and administrative processes in the country, a refugee ID is required.

The Government of Rwanda has cleared registration related cases since 2018, including in urban areas. However, new asylum and on hold cases were still observed (except for extremely vulnerable cases, those recognized as refugees after NRSDC deliberations and those in transit or reception centres). This prevents some individuals from accessing certain basic services. With the planned roll-out of Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI) in 2018, the Government of Rwanda conducted a verification exercise in urban areas to ensure that those who were to be enrolled in CBHI were indeed present in the country. This verification exercise was combined with new registration. Discussions are ongoing about the possibility of restarting verification/registration countrywide.

Machine Readable Convention Travel Documents (MRCTDs) are issued to refugees by the Directorate-General of Immigration and Emigration (DGIE) for the purposes of travel for business, schooling abroad and any other valid reasons, as per Article 23 of Law No 57/2018 on immigration and emigration. These documents meet International Civil Aviation Organization standards.

Refugees have access to civil registration services to register birth, marriages, divorces, and deaths occurring in Rwanda and to obtain corresponding civil documentation. Civil registration services are managed under the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC). Recent amendments to Law [No 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 Governing Persons and Family](#) introduced a decentralized birth registration procedure to be carried out at health facilities and at cells (local administration) level to ensure that every child's birth is registered immediately after delivery. In line with its pledges made on documentation and civil registration to ensure that any refugee born in Rwanda is issued with a birth certificate, the Government committed to holding a regular "civil registration week" in refugee camps to raise refugees' awareness of the importance of birth registration.

Refugees not born in Rwanda whose birth has not been registered in their country of birth or who may have fled without their birth certificate in their possession may have access to substitute birth registration documentation. This practice, in line with administrative assistance provided to refugees under the 1951 Convention, is not commonly used by refugees.

2.5 Justice and security

In general, refugees enjoy a similar level of security to Rwandan nationals. MINEMA, in collaboration with the Rwanda National Police (RNP), ensures the security of refugees living in camp settings. Considering the generally high level of safety and security in Rwanda, refugees and asylum-seekers mostly feel secure and do not face serious security concerns. Criminality affects them in much the same way as it affects Rwandan nationals and they enjoy police protection on a par with nationals.

Rwanda has ratified and incorporated key regional and international instruments on gender equality and women's empowerment. [Law No 59/200813](#) criminalizes sexual and gender-based violence in all its forms, including trafficking, especially of women and girls, and marital rape. [Organic Law No 01/2012/OL of 2 May 2012/15](#) prohibits the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) is the responsible government entity monitoring gender mainstreaming and actions against GBV and gender-based discrimination in the society as a whole, but has minimal involvement in refugee settings. National structures offer multisectoral response to child victims of abuse and to GBV survivors across the country and are fully accessible to refugees. In parallel, UNHCR implements GBV prevention and response activities for refugees in the camps, with a focus on awareness-raising among all stakeholders and reinforcing the capacity of law enforcement forces.

As per Article 18 of the Refugee Law and Article 12/g of the Ministerial Instructions Determining the Management of Refugees and Refugee Camps, asylum-seekers and refugees enjoy the right to access justice. Refugees generally have access to information on these rights and can be provided with free legal counselling and representation at all levels thanks to local UNHCR partners. They can also use a free telephone number, paid for by UNHCR, to access legal aid services.

3 Economic Opportunities

3.1 Freedom of movement

For several decades, refugees have settled upon arrival in Rwanda in camps designed to host and take care of them. They usually settle in camps according to their regions of origin, which determines the location of the camp and their affiliations. Article 18 of the [Refugee Law](#) enshrines into national law the enjoyment of all rights accorded to refugees by the 1951 Convention, including freedom of movement. Refugees can therefore move and settle wherever opportunities are available within the country including in urban areas. However, camp-based refugees need to request permission to leave the camp. Those who chose to reside outside of the camp may do so in line with Article 25 (2) of the Refugee Law.

This permit is issued for a period of three months, on the recommendation of the camp management, and must be renewed at the camp. If not renewed, the refugees lose their entitlement to camp-based assistance, except access to health insurance and legal support. In practice, once refugees have settled in a new place of residence, they have to report to the local authority at village level, as do citizens. Like nationals, refugees are expected to carry an identity document whenever moving around (PoR or refugee ID card).

COVID-19 measures that have been in place since March 2020 have placed varying restrictions on the mobility of the whole population, including refugees, in order to halt the spread of the pandemic.

3.2 Rights to work and rights at work

Refugees in Rwanda are entitled to seek wage-earning employment. In the absence of a specific legal provision on refugees' right to work and in accordance with Article 18 of the [Refugee Law](#), recognized refugees in Rwanda benefit from the same level of worker protection as nationals, including salary levels in the private sector. No additional documentation or work permits are needed for refugees. To apply for a job, they need only to provide a document that establishes their identity and legal status. Refugees who hold a refugee ID card face an easier process for accessing employment than those who hold only proof of registration (PoR). Refugees in possession of a driving licence stand a higher chance of finding employment because it is a marketable skill. Despite this enabling environment for refugees to access wage-earning employment, securing a job is difficult to achieve for various reasons: employers' misconceptions about refugee's right to work, inadequate skills set, unavailability of jobs, etc.

As per normal business procedures, refugees are allowed to open businesses in the same manner as nationals and register them under their own name. Camp-based refugees can register their business at sectoral level and have to pay monthly taxes. In urban areas, only refugees with a refugee ID card can

register their business at the Rwanda Development Board ([RDB](#)). They are issued with a certificate of registration and a Tax Identification Number (TIN) and have the same tax obligations as nationals.

3.3 Land, housing and property rights

Articles 34 and 35 of the [Constitution](#) enshrine the inviolable right to private property, including the right to land. [Law No 34/2013](#) Governing Land entitles foreigners to emphyteutic lease (contract that allows the holder the perpetual right to the enjoyment of a property within a specified time) over land, from a private person or the State. Article 18 of the [Refugee Law](#) enables refugees to enjoy the provisions relating to emphyteutic land leases for business and agricultural purposes without obstacle. Asylum-seekers cannot exercise this right until a decision has been taken on their status.

Article (12/c) of the 2016 [Ministerial Instructions on Determining the Management of Refugees and Refugee Camps](#) provides for the right for refugees to own immovable and movable property in a similar way to citizens. In practice, however, very few refugees can afford to buy a house. Refugees in camps are provided shelters and for other basic needs but are not included in social housing programmes intended for Rwandan nationals, nor are they part of most other formal Government social protection initiatives, except for the Community Based Health Insurance, which is available for urban based refugees, supported by UNHCR.

3.4 Financial and administrative services

Refugees can open bank accounts using their Government-issued refugee ID cards. It is also possible with proof of registration (PoR) as per a Central Bank waiver. The introduction of cash assistance across refugee camps has boosted access to various banking services and increased the level of financial inclusion of refugees as a whole. Refugees have access to micro-finance and loans from formal financial institutions and social enterprises and may also use services relating to village savings and loans, remittances and utility payments. To date, over 40,000 bank accounts have been opened by refugees in Rwanda and over 11,000 refugee households have accessed various forms of financial services.

As at June 2020, all refugees in the camps can receive food and non-food cash allowances directly to a bank account linked to a debit multi-wallet smart card. Refugees can obtain a SIM card with their ID card and, in certain situations, this is possible on the basis of a PoR. The availability of mobile money facilities offered by the various phone companies has also expanded refugees' access to a wider range of digital financial services (payment, deposits, withdrawals, savings, receiving remittances, etc.). About two thirds of households in refugee camps are registered with a mobile money provider and one in 10 households in refugee camps has saved money on a mobile wallet account.

Skills development initiatives mainly provided by UNHCR implementing partners, with the support of MINEMA, that are made available to refugees are being promoted as part of the objective to increase refugees' economic inclusion. Such initiatives focus on building refugees' skills and capacities to access wage employment or self-employment opportunities.

4 Access to National Public Services

4.1 Education

The 2018/19–2023/24 Education Sector Strategic Plan makes no reference to refugee education or education in emergency situations. In the absence of a specific policy document on refugee education, Article 18 of the 2014 Refugee Law applies; this provides refugee children access to learning in the same way as nationals. In practice, refugee learners are included in the national education system at all levels (following the national curriculum, participating in the same extracurricular activities, etc.) and are expected to meet the same standards for certification and accreditation as nationals. Refugee students are integrated into national education systems.

Some 61 per cent of early childhood development (ECD) refugee children are enrolled in programmes under the national education system (compared to 29.8 per cent for the host community). The gross enrolment ratio (GER) among refugees in the national education system is 127 per cent at primary level (138.8 per cent for the host community) and 62 per cent at secondary level (42.5 per cent for the host community). The number of refugee students enrolled in universities is minimal (estimated at 4 per cent of the age group for tertiary education) as a result of unaffordable fees (approximately \$4,000 per academic year) and the very limited number of scholarships available. The Government pledged at the [Global Refugee Forum](#) in December 2019 to improve the quality of education in refugee and host-community settings through upgraded infrastructure and increased equipment and teaching and learning materials, to expand technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and to support the country's TVET infrastructure and provide related equipment.

Kinyarwanda is the language of instruction in pre-primary and lower primary education, whereas English is the language used at all other levels. To ensure the adequate and timely integration of refugees into the national education system, learners are supported with language training in Kinyarwanda, by humanitarian partners. Students who arrive after the start of the academic year are provided with catch-up classes supported by humanitarian actors. However, this latter programme has been scaled down as students have been progressively integrating into the national system.

Refugees can obtain administrative documents and certification of their foreign diplomas for employment or education purposes. The Rwandan Education Board has a dedicated certification process for foreign diplomas. Access to national driving licences and recognition of driving licences from the country of origin, require possession of a refugee ID card.

4.2 Healthcare

Following up on the [commitments](#) made during the [2016 New York Leaders' Summit on Refugees](#), the Government took the necessary policy steps in 2019 to integrate urban refugees into the national Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI), a scheme managed by the national insurance administrator. All urban refugees who wish to enrol and present refugee ID Cards are enrolled in the Community-Based Health Insurance system. Thanks to their enrolment in the CBHI, urban refugees have access at 10 per cent cost to all the primary care services provided by public health centres and can be referred to secondary or tertiary reference hospitals if required.

Refugees in camps receive health-care services from the UNHCR-supported health facilities run in collaboration with the Government and partner organizations as part of the humanitarian refugee response in the country. These include primary health care, sexual and reproductive health services, mental health and psychosocial support, care for non-communicable diseases as well as nutrition screening and management. Secondary-level health care is provided at district and national hospitals with which agreements exist. At tertiary level, one implementing partner of UNHCR has an agreement with various health facilities and receives refugee patients from locations all across the country.

Urban female refugees enrolled in CBHI can access sexual and reproductive health services, including maternal and neonatal health services, and other women's services through the national health system. Even if not yet enrolled in CBHI, refugee women and girls can, like Rwandan women, access sexual and reproductive services that are free of charge for nationals. Other sexual and reproductive health services are accessible, but they are not free, such as antenatal care, normal and C-section delivery, management of childbirth complications, treatment of sexually transmitted infections, etc. HIV and Hepatitis screening and treatment, as well as contraceptives, are available free of charge at public facilities for nationals and refugees equally, regardless of CBHI enrollment. In rural areas, all refugee women and girls can access sexual and reproductive health services through humanitarian NGOs. Refugees routinely and fully avail themselves of the right to these services.

In keeping with national priorities to eliminate Hepatitis C in Rwanda by 2024, all refugees in Rwanda (in camps and urban settings) have been integrated into the national subsidised hepatitis elimination

programme since September 2019. This is in addition to the existing national subsidised health programmes for immunization, family planning, malaria, HIV and TB, which cover refugees in all settings. The commitment to eliminate Hepatitis C was reiterated in a pledge made by the Government at the GRF in December 2019.

The draft national COVID-19 response plan includes refugee camps as high-risk, vulnerable locations. In leading the COVID-19 response, the Government conducts testing and case management for refugees across the country.

4.3 Social protection

Rwanda implements different schemes and programmes in the social protection sector as part of its economic development and poverty reduction strategy. As illustrated above, some of the schemes that cover the majority of Rwandans also extend to urban refugees.

As at June 2020, approximately 40,000 refugees were registered with specific needs, representing 25 per cent of the refugee population in Rwanda. In the refugee camps, identified vulnerable refugees, including elderly persons and those living with disabilities, receive blanket cash assistance and have access to specialized service (devices, supplementary feeding, psychosocial services, rehabilitation, etc.) Supported by UNHCR and provided by its partners. In urban settings, identifying refugees with special needs is challenging, as is their referral to specialized health services where available. UNHCR provides limited financial support to the most at-risk urban refugees on a case-by-case basis.

The commitment of the Government to the [CRRF](#) provides a platform to initiate a dialogue between the authorities and international partners, with the aim of gradually aligning humanitarian aid and support with the objective of broader social and economic inclusion and fostering development opportunities for refugees and local communities alike. Technical working-level meetings are planned to be held in each thematic pledging area and a steering committee should meet every six months to review the progress made.

Other avenues allow for dialogue between the authorities and a broad range of humanitarian and development actors on refugee inclusion and socioeconomic development through existing frameworks and strategic engagement, such as in the United Nations Development Assistance Plan II – UNDAF II, 2018–2023 – which is linked to the [National Strategy for Transformation](#) (NST1), which focuses on economic and social transformation and transformational governance.

4.4 Protection for vulnerable groups

Rwanda has ratified the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) through Presidential Order No 773/16 of September 1991, the [optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of children in Armed Conflict](#) through Presidential Order No 32/01 of February 2002 and the [Optional Protocol on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography](#) through Presidential Order No 32/1 of February 2002. In 2001, Rwanda passed [Law No 27/2001](#) of 2001 Relating to Rights and Protection of the Child Against Violence and, in 2018, Law [No 71/2018](#) Relating to the Protection of the Child.

A National Commission for Children (NCC) was established by [Law No 22/2011](#) as an independent body under the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion ([MIGEPROF](#)) mandated to promote and protect children's rights. In 2011, the [National Integrated Child Rights Policy \(ICRP\)](#) was issued with a view to fulfilling all children's rights, including those of refugee children as per Article 5.7 ("All refugee children in Rwanda, accompanied or unaccompanied by adult family members will have all the rights stipulated in this policy"). Subsequently, a Road Map for National Child Protection Systems and Protection of Refugee Children (2017–2022) was developed by MIGEPROF and NCC with the support of UNHCR and UNICEF. The Government of Rwanda is committed to strengthening child protection systems at all administrative levels through a cadre of professional staff and the involvement of other relevant Ministries. The competent child protection institutions are going through structural reforms and a new Bill is before the Parliament.

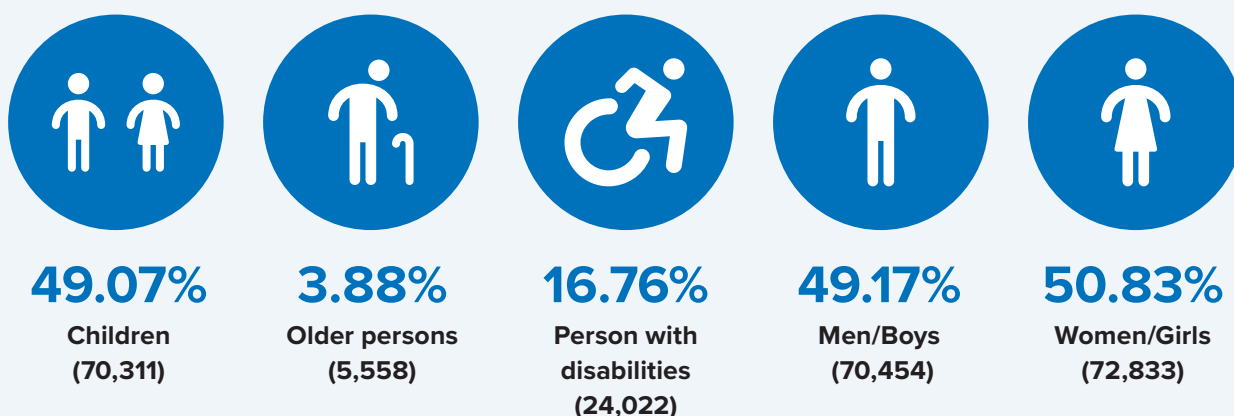
At camp level, UNHCR leads the protection response for at-risk refugee children in collaboration with the partners & authorities, notably the camp management & national social service workforce, and within the framework of the existing roadmap for child protection. In parallel, efforts have been made at the district level by the NCC to engage with refugees and host communities to address child protection issues and build their respective capacities. The best interest determination process for refugee children involves government staff. Best care options are explored in line with national alternative care policies and in coordination with the NCC.

National structures like Isange One-stop Centres provide multisectoral responses to child abuse and SGBV cases. They are accessible to refugees. UNHCR continues to provide SGBV-related services in the camps through its non-governmental partners.

A National Technical Working Group on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and Gender has been established, by the United Nations country team, in collaboration with ONE United Nations and a national PSEA action plan has been developed. It is on a quarterly basis to discuss updates, issues and challenges. Several trainings have been organized under the action plan.

5 Cross Sectors

Characteristics of registered refugees and asylum-seekers in total refugee population*
as at 30 June 2020



5.1 Gender

Rwanda has a progressive legal framework in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment, which provides for the prevention of gender-based violence and for the protection of survivors of such forms of violence.

5.2 Social inclusion

While generally refugees are included in policy and Government support and oversight in Rwanda, their inclusion could be improved in terms of practical application. For example, as the Government has made great commitments towards refugee inclusion in social and economic life of the country, implementation and advocacy still need to be initiated. Refugee inclusion in the social safety net concerning health care has been exemplary, even under the tight conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Refugee inclusion in the education system has been eased both by investment of international actors, and the benefit of a shared common language and culture between the refugees and their hosting communities. However, tertiary education is expensive for both refugees and host communities, but because of relative income disparity, refugees have extremely limited options to access tertiary education, whether in Rwanda or abroad.

* The refugee numbers reported here do not fully match the numbers on the front page because demographic characteristics are not available for all refugees (e.g., pre-registered refugees, etc.).

We note that refugee women face, as above, a disadvantage in terms of job opportunities and livelihood interventions because of their generally lower level of education. Furthermore, attention could be paid to ensure the access to protection services for vulnerable persons for both refugee and hosting communities, particularly female headed households, women and girls living with disabilities, elderly women, unaccompanied and separated girls and female victims of human trafficking. Being a refugee adds an extra layer to this complexity.

UNHCR would be interested in further assistance by the Government in terms of advocacy with the private sector in clarifying the availability of refugees as workers, as well as training and hiring refugees, particularly in the urban areas. It would also be useful, in our view, to expand the marshland projects into other areas to facilitate inclusion of refugee agriculturalists into their communities.

Annex on Key International and Regional Instruments ratified or adhered to

- [Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 \(Protocol I\)](#)
- [Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 \(Protocol II\)](#)
- [African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, 1981](#)
- [African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1990](#)
- [African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa \(Kampala Convention\), 2009](#)
- [African Youth Charter, 2006](#)
- [Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984](#)
- [Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, 1962](#)
- [Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa \(the OAU Convention\), 1969](#)
- [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979](#)
- [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2007](#)
- [Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989](#)
- [Convention relating to the Status of Refugees 1951¹ \(Ratification date: 3 Jan 1980\)](#)
- [Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, 1954](#)
- [Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons of 1949](#)
- [ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 \(No 105\)](#)
- [ILO Discrimination \(Employment and Occupation\) Convention, 1958 \(No 111\)](#)
- [ILO Employment Policy Convention, 1964 \(No 122\)](#)
- [ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 \(No 100\)](#)
- [ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 \(No 29\)](#)
- [ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 \(No 87\)](#)
- [ILO Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 \(No 81\)](#)
- [ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 \(No 138\)](#)
- [ILO Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 \(No 98\)](#)
- [ILO Tripartite Consultation \(International Labour Standards\) Convention, 1976 \(No 144\), 1976](#)
- [ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 \(No 182\)](#)
- [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965](#)
- [International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1990](#)
- [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\), 1966](#)
- [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966](#)
- [Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Organized Crime \(2000\)](#)
- [Protocol relating to the status of refugees, 1967²](#)
- [Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, 2003](#)
- [UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education, 1960](#)

Reservations/declarations:

- 1 Article 26 reserving the right to determine the place of residence of refugees and to establish limits to their freedom of movement.
- 2 Article IV (settlements of disputes).