

RWANDA

2023 IFRC network country plan

Funding Requirement **CHF 4.4M**

Appeal number **MAARW002**

In support of the Rwandan Red Cross



30

National Society branches



92

National Society staff



68,000

National Society volunteers

People to be reached



250,000

Climate and environment



100,000

Disasters and crises



2.5M

Health and wellbeing



80,000

Migration and displacement



50,000

Values, power and inclusion

IFRC network multiyear focus

Longer term needs

- Anticipatory action • Climate change adaptation
- Community health and water, sanitation and hygiene
 - Protracted refugee situations

Capacity development

- Digital transformation • Regulatory frameworks
 - Human, material and financial capacities
- Results-based management and accountability
- Resource mobilization and partnership development

Key country data

Population **13.3M**

INFORM Severity rating **medium**

Long-term Climate Risk Index **117**

Human Development Index rank **165**

Population below poverty level **38.2%**



IFRC country cluster delegation for DRC, Congo, Rwanda & Burundi, Kinshasa

Hazards



Floods



Landslides



Windstorms



Disease outbreaks

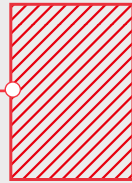


Population movement

Funding requirements

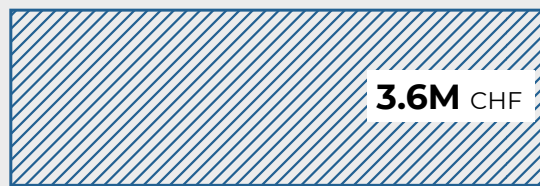
Total 4.4M CHF

Through the IFRC



→ **817,000** CHF

Through Participating National Societies



3.6M CHF

IFRC Breakdown

Longer term needs

100,000 CHF
Climate and environment

180,000 CHF
Disasters and crises

282,000 CHF
Health and wellbeing

30,000 CHF
Migration and displacement

30,000 CHF
Values, power and inclusion

195,000 CHF
Enabling local actors

Participating National Societies

American Red Cross*

Austrian Red Cross

Belgian Red Cross (Francophone and Flanders)

The Canadian Red Cross Society*

Finnish Red Cross

Japanese Red Cross Society

The Netherlands Red Cross*

Spanish Red Cross

Swiss Red Cross*

Turkish Red Crescent Society*



NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The Rwandan Red Cross was established on 1 July 1962 and legally recognized on 29 December 1964. It operates through a network of 30 branches, 416 sector committees and 1,498 cell committees across the country. The National Society has members, volunteers and youth committees based at national, branch and sub-branch level.

The Rwandan Red Cross envisions healthy, self-sustained and resilient communities. As a leading humanitarian organization, its mission is to prevent and alleviate human suffering, save the lives of the most vulnerable people, support livelihoods and promote human dignity.

The Rwandan Red Cross relies on two approaches to improve its management systems and address the main needs of the population it serves: The 'performance contracts' approach involves engaging district and local committees in the decision-making process and the implementation of programmes, by setting targets that measure change and the improvement of service quality. The integrated 'model village' approach responds to poverty and vulnerabilities by mobilizing communities,

focusing on priority activities, and channelling resources to selected villages for greater impact and rapid change.

A new strategic plan is being finalized for 2022–2026 and focuses on the following areas:

- National Society capacity development
- Promoting humanitarian diplomacy and conveying a positive image
- The model village approach for community resilience
- Disaster emergency management
- Public awareness for health promotion and care

The cross-cutting themes that will be integrated into all programmes are:

- Protection, gender and inclusion
- Community participation and accountability
- Promoting youth engagement
- Digital transformation

IFRC NETWORK ACTION IN 2023

Joint situational analysis

Rwanda is a small, landlocked country in Central Africa. It is bordered to the north by Uganda, to the east by Tanzania, to the south by Burundi and to the west by the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The total land area of Rwanda is more than 26,000 km², with a population density of more than 475 people per km². The population grew from 2.1 million in 1950 to 13.1 million in 2021, and it is still growing. More than two-thirds of the people live in rural areas, so the population and the economy depend heavily on agriculture.

Rwanda has maintained political stability since the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, which claimed over a million lives. Paul Kagame, the President of Rwanda, was the commander of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) that stopped the killings. Since then, the hallmarks of the President's leadership have been peace and reconciliation, the empowerment of women, the promotion of investment and entrepreneurship, and access to information technology. Police forces, security services and the armed forces exercise strong control over the

territory. In the parliamentary elections of September 2018, women filled 61 per cent of the seats, the RPF maintained an absolute majority, and the two opposition parties (the Democratic Green Party of Rwanda and the Social Party Imberakuri) won two seats each.

Rwanda has made great progress by achieving its current level of stability, and is steadily embarking on long-term economic prosperity. It now expects to reach middle-income country status by 2035 and high-income country status by 2050. Rwanda experienced economic growth of 7.2 per cent per year on average between 2009 and 2019, during which time there were substantial improvements in living standards. Child mortality dropped by two-thirds, and there was nearly universal primary school enrolment. Poverty levels dropped from 77 per cent of the population in 2001 to 55 per cent in 2017, while the average life expectancy at birth increased from 29 to 69 years between the mid-1990s and 2019. In the same period, the maternal mortality ratio fell from 1,270 per 100,000 live births to 290. However, in this predominantly rural, agrarian society,

there are still significant challenges with access to land, safe water and other key utilities.

The lockdown and social distancing measures that were critical to controlling the COVID-19 pandemic sharply reduced economic activities. GDP fell by 3.4 per cent in 2020, the first major drop since 1994. The poverty rate increased by 5.1 per cent (more than 550,000 people) in 2021, compared with pre-pandemic years. The impacts of COVID-19 have put decades of progress and improvements in the quality of life in Rwanda at risk – specifically poor nutrition, limited health services, school closures, and the likelihood that children – particularly adolescent girls and children from lower-income households – may

never return to school because of the pause in education during the pandemic.

Rwanda has a young population, with 60 per cent aged below 35, and this presents a challenge for human competence resources. The growing unemployment rate poses a huge threat to stability and prosperity, while the political instability in the region makes Rwanda susceptible to mass population movements, adding pressure to an already challenged society.

Other challenges that threaten Rwanda's hard-fought economic achievements and cause severe impacts on the population include a variety of meteorological hazards, exacerbated by climate change, and the threat of volcanic eruptions.

Strategic priorities

Climate and environment

Rwanda has a tropical climate with hilly topography stretching from east to west. The country is divided into four main climatic regions: the eastern plains, the central plateau, the highlands, and the regions around Lake Kivu along the western border. Rwandan territory is covered with diverse ecosystems, including mountain rainforests, gallery forests, savannah woodland, wetlands, aquatic forests and agro-ecosystems. Approximately 52 per cent of the country's total land area is arable. The total cultivated area covers 66 per cent of the national territory, and more than 93,000 hectares of marshland are under cultivation.

It is expected that climate change will increase Rwanda's vulnerability to hydrometeorological hazards. Since the early 2000s, the frequency and severity of disasters, particularly caused by floods, landslides and droughts, have significantly increased. The number of human casualties and economic and environmental losses is also increasing.

In Rwanda, the effects of floods have worsened, because population growth and land scarcity have pushed people to settle in flood-prone areas. Heavy rainfall and, at times, flash flooding have become increasingly common. This can trigger landslides and mudslides, leading to infrastructure damage and loss of life. While flooding is expected to occur across much of the country, the areas that are particularly vulnerable are Nyabarongo, Sebeya, Nyabisindu, Mukungwa and Kagitumba.

Rwanda is also highly exposed to landslides because of its many hills, plateaus and mountainous areas where there is small-plot cultivation. Approximately 40 per cent of the people in Rwanda are at risk because they live in vulnerable landslide-prone places – with high slopes and heavy rainfall – in the highlands of the Congo-Nile Ridge in the Western, Southern and Northern Provinces.

Water availability will be affected by periods of drought in eastern and southern zones – in particular the districts of Kayonza, Gatsibo, Kirehe, Nyagatare, Rwamagana, Ngoma and Bugesera in the Eastern Province. It is expected that there will be significant consequences for the hardest-hit regions, where there will be poor crop harvests and damage to livestock.

Other weather-related hazards include windstorms, thunderstorms, lightning and hailstones, which occur mostly in eastern parts of Rwanda.

The Government is responding to the impacts of climate change and hydrometeorological hazards. It has made plans for resettlement in safer areas, and is encouraging people living in high-risk zones to relocate.

Population density also increases pressure on natural resources. Between 2002 and 2021, Rwanda lost 486 hectares of humid primary forest – a 0.9 per cent decrease. In 2010, the country had 406,000 hectares of natural forest covering more than 20 per cent of its land area. In 2021 alone, it lost 1,300 hectares of natural forest, equivalent to 852,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions. The Government has pledged to plant 43 million trees to tackle desertification and, through a

large-scale programme of tree replanting, it has already covered 1.2 per cent of its total tree cover loss. Overall, the country intends to restore two million hectares of degraded land by 2030 – about 80 per cent of its total land. Rwanda has also committed to generating net zero CO₂ emissions by 2050, but has not yet defined a decarbonization pathway that is compatible with the Paris Agreement. Climate mitigation actions are included in the country's key long- and short-term plans, which indicates that addressing climate change is a priority for the Government.

Main actions and areas of support

The Rwandan Red Cross's new strategic plan includes community resilience to climate change and the implementation of environmental management interventions. Over the years, it has frequently responded to disasters caused by weather-related events. Its disaster risk reduction programme includes the continuous mobilization of communities and the communication of early warning messages for appropriate early actions, through its branch and local disaster response teams. The National Society works closely with Rwanda's Meteorological Agency to effectively disseminate weather forecast information to vulnerable communities, including advice on appropriate risk reduction and mitigation measures. It plans to increase efforts to reduce and avoid the humanitarian impacts of weather-related events that are exacerbated by climate change, by making greater use of [forecast-based action](#).

The Rwandan Red Cross has implemented [nature-based solutions](#) for disaster risk reduction, including promoting tree planting on domestic plots and vulnerable places, digging terraces and installing anti-erosion trenches on steep slopes. The National Society has also contributed to governmental plans for combatting desertification. Between 2020 and 2021, it planted more than 274,000 tree seedlings and maintained 550,000. In line with the IFRC Pan-African initiative on Tree Planting and Care, the National Society aims to plant one million trees in the most at-risk districts each year.

With support from the IFRC, the Austrian Red Cross, the Belgian Red Cross (Francophone), the Belgian Red Cross (Flanders) and the Japanese Red Cross Society, the Rwandan Red Cross is planning the following activities in 2023:

- Developing a strategy for the implementation of forecast-based action approaches into National Society disaster management processes

- Strengthening community and volunteer action groups on climate change, ensuring they get the resources they need to undertake local action and share information
- Developing participatory and joint planning with communities to address the rising and evolving number of climate and environmental risks
- Increasing the capacity of community members for environmental protection and conservation through sensitization and training
- Integrating climate and environmental risks and mitigation measures in all Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) and Emergency Appeal operations
- Promoting tree planting initiatives in the highest risk districts, planting one million trees every year
- Engaging in the promotion of energy-saving practices within communities, such as fuel-efficient cooking systems

Disasters and crises

For real-time information on emergencies, see IFRC GO page [Rwanda](#)

According to the Rwanda Ministry in Charge of Emergency Management, the country experienced about 3,300 disasters between 2011 and 2019. Recurring disasters take place in nearly all parts of the country, leaving affected populations vulnerable and causing economic damage and loss of life. The high frequency of disasters affects community resilience, as there is not enough time to recover from one to the next.

In addition to being exposed to climate-related hydro-meteorological hazards, Rwanda is also at risk of earthquakes. Nearly 70 per cent of the population is exposed to magnitude 6.0 earthquakes and 30 per cent is exposed to magnitude 5.0 earthquakes. Other hazards include wildfires, diseases and epidemics, and all of these events have significant impacts on the lives and livelihoods of the population.

Civil unrest and conflicts in neighbouring countries regularly spark sudden mass influxes of people seeking refuge in Rwanda, which already hosts thousands of refugees from the DRC and Burundi.

Food insecurity is a particular concern after disasters that damage and degrade land and infrastructure. Dangers arise from land erosion, flood-induced crop failure, nutrient leaching and fungal growth resulting from increased humidity. In Rwanda, the World Food

Programme has launched an initiative to support innovation in food security. The programme seeks pioneering solutions in areas such as resilience to shocks and stress, access to safe and nutritious food, improving food supply chains, empowering smallholder farmers and advancing food security for all.

The Rwanda National Disaster Management Policy also includes actions to combat food insecurity, alongside its objectives for managing disasters. Rwanda is part of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States – European Union Natural Disaster Risk Reduction Programme, established in 2011, which is funded by the EU and managed by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery. It aims to build resilience to natural disasters by enhancing disaster risk management and climate change adaptation in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. In Rwanda, it supports the authorities with identifying disaster-prone areas and designing targeted, contextualized risk reduction and adaptation programmes, while adapting them to local contexts.

Main actions and areas of support

The Rwandan Red Cross will continue to respond to the disasters that affect the population. It will strengthen its preparedness and readiness, and community resilience to the compounding effects of shocks and hazards. It will also focus on improving the quality of its response to people's needs – including scaling-up the provision of cash and vouchers for dignified assistance, alongside emergency food and non-food items, shelter, water, sanitation, hygiene, health and livelihood interventions.

The Rwandan Red Cross is part of the IFRC Pan-Africa Zero Hunger Initiative. It aims to strengthen food security and livelihoods through cash modalities as safety nets. This includes planning for multiple cash and voucher assistance payments (according to the seasonal calendar), vocational training and linkages with social protection systems.

The National Society plans to leverage its integrated model village approach to strengthen community resilience. It will expand its community-based disaster risk reduction activities, by promoting measures that mitigate risks and enhance the capacity for responding to disasters and crises.

The National Society recognizes that localized preparedness for effective response to disasters requires strong, forward-looking branch development plans and multi-hazard operational plans. The Rwandan Red Cross's disaster preparedness and response agenda

will build upon the IFRC's Pan-African Red Ready initiative, which has a clear roadmap for action. This will be achieved through an assessment of the National Society organizational framework and capacity, using the IFRC's Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) approach, and assessment tools including the Branch Organizational Capacity Assessment (BOCA). The National Society will prioritize a review of its disaster and crisis preparedness policies, volunteer management and engagement systems, and accountability models. It will also develop a risk matrix and review resource and partnership development. This aligns with the Government's objectives and the auxiliary role of the Rwandan Red Cross.

With support from the IFRC, the Austrian Red Cross, the Belgian Red Cross (Francophone), the Belgian Red Cross (Flanders), the Japanese Red Cross Society and the Spanish Red Cross, the Rwandan Red Cross is planning the following activities in 2023:

- Strengthening its capacity to implement cash and voucher assistance by increasing its number of skilled staff and volunteers, incorporating protection, gender and inclusion into cash programming, and linking cash actions to nutritional awareness activities and health referrals
- Digitalizing and speeding up response assessments
- Setting up community feedback systems and participatory approaches across all operations
- Developing participatory and joint planning with communities to address rising and evolving risks, including by using the enhanced vulnerability and capacity assessment (EVCA <https://www.ifrcvca.org/>) approach
- In model villages, providing economic packages (in the areas of livestock, village savings, loan associations and other livelihood initiatives) and set up disaster risk reduction and climate-smart activities
- Promoting community participation and ownership in model villages, through participatory needs assessments and planning and competitions, while investing in the model village mindset (in terms of health, hygiene and sanitation, nutrition and environmental protection)
- Supporting an additional 30 model villages
- Strengthening and certifying the best performing model village, after learning and evaluation
- Promoting disaster risk reduction initiatives in all National Society branch committees

- Reinforcing the capacities of branch committees and volunteers in rapid emergency assessments, and in sharing information to enable rapid action and decision-making in disasters
- Decentralizing preparedness for effective response at each district level through assessments, risk mapping and contingency plans
- Implementing the PER workplan
- Enhancing engagement with public authorities (at national and local level) to provide a better understanding of the National Society's emergency management activities
- Advocating for the recognition and inclusion of the provisions set in the Rwandan Red Cross law, in all national emergency management coordination committees and platforms
- Increasing the visibility of the National Society emergency management activities in traditional and social media

Health and wellbeing

Health indicators in Rwanda show that there have been significant improvements over the last five years, in terms of access to life-saving health services. The average time it takes to reach the nearest health facility was halved from 95 to 47 minutes in 2020, although timely access to health care remains a challenge for many. The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes the Rwandan Government's innovative approach to bringing more health facilities closer to communities, with the aim of reducing walking time to less than 25 minutes by 2024.

According to GBD Compare 2019, the top 10 causes of death in Rwanda are lower respiratory infections, neonatal disorders, stroke, tuberculosis, ischemic heart disease, diarrheal diseases, malaria, HIV/AIDS, cirrhosis and road injuries.

Cases of malaria decreased substantially from eight million in 2016 to 1.2 million in 2021. Successful treatment of tuberculosis increased from 58 per cent in 2003 to 88 per cent in 2018. Rwanda faces a complex HIV/AIDS epidemic, with a prevalence of three per cent among the general population and 50 per cent among the most at-risk populations. In 2020, Rwanda began implementing tuberculosis preventive therapy to reduce infection and deaths among people living with HIV/AIDS, and 66 per cent of all people living with HIV/AIDS were enrolled in this preventive therapy by 2022. The treatment completion rate is 94 per cent.

Despite this progress, Rwanda still faces some significant health challenges. USAID reports that one in 20 children dies by the age of five, 38 per cent of children suffer from chronic malnutrition, nine per cent are underweight and 38 per cent are anaemic. The fertility rate remains high at 4.2 children per woman, and maternal mortality is high at 210 deaths per 100,000 births.

The Ministry of Health has developed and implemented an outbreak preparedness and response plan to tackle new emerging public health issues like yellow fever and Rift Valley fever. Rwanda has made it a priority to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, aiming to reduce the spread of the virus and vaccinate 60 per cent of the population (nearly eight million people) before the end of 2022. Other health threats include cholera and the Ebola virus, due to outbreaks in neighbouring countries.

In Rwanda's National Strategy for Transformation 2017–2024, the priority area of Moving Towards a Modern Rwandan Household aims to achieve universal access to safe water supplies and sanitation services by 2024. This will be done by investing in the construction, extension and rehabilitation of rural and urban water supply systems. Access to sanitation and hygiene will also be scaled up to reach 100 per cent of the population by 2024. This will be achieved by developing solid and liquid waste management projects in households and public places. The Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey of 2016–2017 showed that 87 per cent of households had access to safe water, while access to improved sanitation services was estimated at 86 per cent. Sixty-five per cent of households had to make a 30-minute round trip to get improved drinking water, and 66.2 per cent had their own sanitation facilities.

As a consequence of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, Rwanda also faces a large burden of mental health disorders.

Main actions and areas of support

The Rwandan Red Cross focuses on community health and epidemic preparedness, and it has played a significant role in the country's COVID-19 response. Considering the Government's COVID-19 vaccination target, the Rwandan Red Cross has integrated COVID-19 actions into its health mobilization strategy, which is to be integrated across all projects and decentralized to regional branches, through local emergency response volunteer teams and community influencers throughout the country. The National Society has used UNICEF and other donors' funds to combat vaccine misinformation and mobilize communities to increase vaccine acceptance.

The National Society will use community-based environmental and health promotion tools, and the recently developed children, hygiene and sanitation training tools, in its health, hygiene and sanitation promotion. The aim is to replicate the tested risks, ability, norms, attitude and self-regulation (RANAS) approach to encouraging behaviour change in communities.

The psychosocial component is an important part of Rwandan Red Cross activities, particularly since the COVID-19 outbreak. The National Society expects to increase its reach by integrating psychosocial support into volunteer training, disseminating appropriate tools to guide volunteer actions, and extending the reach of hotline services.

The Rwandan Red Cross is part of the IFRC One WASH Initiative, which primarily targets areas that have been identified as cholera hotspots. The National Society, with support from the IFRC and the Belgian Red Cross, will continue to target the two districts of Rutsiro and Karongi in the Kivu Lake region. The work in this area includes a preparedness element – such as community-based surveillance, health and hygiene promotion – and investment in water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure, to mitigate and prevent further outbreaks of cholera in the short and longer term. The project has been scaled up in 2022 and, with available funding, will reach more people by March 2023.

The Rwandan Red Cross continues to strengthen its emergency medical services, including ambulances. It will bolster its partnership with the Ministry of Health for scaling up blood donation activities.

With support from the IFRC, the Austrian Red Cross, the Belgian Red Cross (Francophone), the Belgian Red Cross (Flanders), the Japanese Red Cross Society and the Spanish Red Cross, the Rwandan Red Cross is planning the following activities in 2023:

- Reinforcing the capacities of 1,000 community-based health workers and volunteers at the headquarters in branches in infection and disease control – including hygiene-related diseases, malnutrition, malaria, respiratory illnesses and non-communicable diseases
- Awareness raising and community education, particularly for adolescents and young people, through the extended use of digital tools on topics such as sexual and reproductive health, and gender-based violence
- Raising awareness in communities of how to maintain hygienic latrines and support vulnerable households with constructing clean latrines – to support overall hygiene and prevent disease
- Supporting vulnerable households to access hygiene kits to prevent hygiene-related diseases
- Constructing and rehabilitating rural water supply systems and supporting communities to access potable water
- Increasing water access through promotion and proper management of rainwater harvesting systems
- Monitoring progress in community behaviour changes in the area of water, sanitation and hygiene management, through household visits, mini surveys and focus group discussions
- Expanding the reach of ambulance services by increasing the number of vehicles, training emergency medical technicians and emergency care assistants, and developing partnerships with other hospitals
- Promoting blood donation through awareness campaigns, the development of tools and coordination
- Capacity building of staff, volunteers and partners on prevention of gender-based violence, and psychosocial support, for effective response and referral
- Strengthening the Rwandan Red Cross's national and branch disaster response teams, to tackle outbreaks of cholera, diarrhoeal diseases and other health emergencies
- Supporting and actively participating in key national technical working groups focusing on health, mental health, COVID-19, water, sanitation and hygiene
- Integrating other aspects of health promotion such as non-communicable diseases, mental health and eye disease in the National Society's overall health strategy
- Developing a longer-term health intervention and water, sanitation and hygiene strategy
- Advocating for the promotion and incorporation of first aid in the transport sector
- Developing a commercial first aid marketing strategy



© Juozas Cernius/IFRC

Migration and displacement

Rwanda is a host to more than 525,000 refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants from neighbouring countries. Most displaced people originate from the DRC (250,000), followed by Burundi (135,000) and Uganda (95,000). A smaller number come from Tanzania (about 45,000), and a few thousand from Kenya. There are five refugee camps for Congolese and Burundian refugees in Rwanda, and different reception centres.

Rwandan migration flows have greatly fluctuated over the last 25 years, and plateaued between 2015 and mid-2020. Migrants constitute approximately four per cent of the Rwandan population. Regional political instability makes Rwanda increasingly susceptible to mass population movements into the country, adding pressure to an already challenged society.

Rwanda is also a country of origin – approximately 4.7 per cent of the population have emigrated. The top five destination countries are the DRC (more than 250,000), Burundi and Uganda (about 70,000 each), and the Republic of the Congo (more than 25,000). Europe is also a destination, in particular Belgium, which hosts nearly half of the 35,000 Rwandans living in Europe.

Main actions and areas of support

The Rwandan Red Cross has been engaged in refugee response as part of its health and disaster emergency operations. Since 2019, National Society activities in two refugee camps in Eastern Province have reached more than 80,000 Congolese and Burundian refugees.

This has been through health promotion activities, non-food items distribution, first aid, social cohesion, peace culture building, sexual and reproductive health, shelter, and socioeconomic support. A new programme has reached another camp in Western Province where Congolese refugees have been settled for more than two decades, while Burundian refugees begin to return to their home country. Additionally, though cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the National Society has offered services, including telephone calls, for restoring family links to refugee communities in all five camps and Gashora transit centre.

The Rwandan Red Cross collaborates with UNHCR for camp activities and at reception centres, and coordinates with the Ministry of Emergency Management.

With the support of the IFRC, the Belgian Red Cross (Francophone) and Belgian Red Cross (Flanders), the National Society plans to undertake the following activities in 2023:

- Increasing the economic inclusion of refugees in host communities through inclusive and shared initiatives
- Empowering youth through vocational training opportunities and funding income initiatives
- Increasing initiatives promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence between refugee and host communities

- Developing strategies for contact tracing and restoring family links
- Strengthening the capacities of national and branch staff, volunteers and youth for developing migration response strategies
- Coordinating with other humanitarian organizations on refugee response and management
- Reinforcing humanitarian diplomacy by advocating for increased assistance to refugees (in line with the Rwanda Country Refugee Response Plan), while engaging in dialogue with the Government for increased grants and looking for new ways to collaborate (for example, on first aid and refugee assistance)

Values, power and inclusion

Rwandans share many cultural values including unity, patriotism, social cohesion, resilience and hard work. Kinyarwanda is the common language, spoken in all parts the country. Other official languages are English, French and Kiswahili. Rwanda's rich culture has been key to developing home-grown solutions to address the challenges and the consequences of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. These include solutions such as Umuganda (community work), Imihigo (performance contracts), Gacaca (traditional courts) and Abunzi (mediators).

The ethnic divide is no longer a major factor in identity, particularly among the younger generation – and this reinforces the national slogan, Ndi Umunyarwanda (I am Rwandan). Instead, differences, between the upper and middle classes on the one hand, and the mass poor on the other, have become more prominent. The state is secular, and religion and state are separate. The state tolerates diverse religious groups if they do not question or disturb its authority. Consequently, religious dogmas do not have an influence.

The state exercises strong control throughout the country and there is a high level of public safety. There are rarely incidents of violence. Rwanda does not have rebel groups based in its territory. However, there were attacks on civilian populations in and around the Nyungwe Forest in 2019, which were attributed to groups from outside the country, especially the DRC. Since then, there has been a heavy military presence there to curb attacks.

Rwanda is a relatively young country. Fifty per cent of the population is under 20 years old and the median age is 22.7. According to the Global Gender Gap Report

2020, Rwanda ranks among the top 10 countries globally to have narrowed the gender gap. The country is leading the HeForShe Campaign, securing more than 200,000 signatories. It has also made three commitments: to bridge the gender digital divide by 2020; to triple girls' enrolment in technical and vocational education and training; and to eradicate gender-based violence. The Government has joined nine other African countries in signing the UN statement condemning violence against LGBTQI+ people, and consequently there is no marked discrimination against LGBTQI+ communities in Rwanda.

In Rwanda, the National Council of Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) promotes advocacy and social mobilization on issues affecting people living with disabilities, to ensure their participation in national development. The NCPD will assist the Government in implementing programmes and policies that benefit people living with disabilities. According to the Fourth Rwanda Population and Housing Census in 2012, more than 446,000 people in Rwanda were living with disabilities, which is five per cent of the population over the age of five. However, the total number is likely to be higher, with estimates ranging from five to 15 per cent. Between 7 and 11 November 2022, the NCPD conducted a workshop with the aim of reviewing, revising and harmonizing the legal framework, protecting persons living with disabilities in Rwanda in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) standards.

Main actions and areas of support

The new strategic plan of the Rwandan Red Cross defines four cross cutting issues that include protection, gender, and inclusion of the most vulnerable groups. The National Society will continue to support orphans and other vulnerable children in target communities, with interventions based on the minimum package defined by the Ministry of Gender and Family Protection. The National Society will support other vulnerable groups too, especially elderly people, people living with disabilities, genocide survivors and historically marginalized people.

The National Society will continue to support community economic and development interventions aimed at improving the livelihoods of disadvantaged people. This forms part of ongoing social projects and commitments from branch committees, through their annual performance contracts. The Rwandan Red Cross will strive to promote dignity, access, participation and safety in all its programmes, including emergency operations and resilience programmes, while improving volunteers' skills to effectively respond to increasing humanitarian needs.

With the support of the IFRC, the Belgian Red Cross (Francophone), the Belgian Red Cross (Flanders), the Japanese Red Cross Society and Spanish Red Cross, the National Society plans to undertake the following activities in 2023:

- Establishing youth committees, with consideration of groups with social and specific needs
- Incorporating youth initiatives into programme development and initiatives that support socio-economic development. These include blood donation, climate change, environmental protection, reproductive health, prevention of gender-based violence, psychological first aid and psychosocial support
- Organizing youth camps, forums and competitions and awards in innovation, culture and sport
- Continuing to identify and support community-led solutions to ensure ownership and increased participation
- Ensuring that all operations consider dignity, access, participation and safety for all people affected, and have integrated community engagement and accountability in programme design and implementation
- Developing inclusive feedback mechanisms linked to clear referral systems, as part of standard operating procedures for protection against sexual exploitation
- Ensuring that community engagement and accountability reporting and feedback mechanisms are integrated into all programmes
- Integrating the protection, gender and inclusion indicators into standard planning, monitoring and evaluation tools, while ensuring compliance in reporting
- Mainstreaming community engagement and accountability in new and existing strategies, plans, guidelines, policies and toolkits
- Developing a community engagement and accountability strategy and policy
- Training staff, branch teams and team leader volunteers on minimum standards for protection, gender and inclusion
- Carrying out advocacy work with leadership, and in community engagement and accountability training sessions across the National Society, including national and branch offices

Enabling local actors

The Rwandan Red Cross's new strategic plan currently under development puts strong emphasis on its institutional capacity development. The National Society is planning to carry out the self-assessment part of the Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) process. The self-assessment element of the OCAC process is intended to capture the strengths and weaknesses of National Societies as a whole, in relation to a wide range of organizational capacities. The Rwandan Red Cross is also committed to the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) process and is at the action and accountability phase. The PER approach is a continuous and flexible process that enables National Societies to assess, measure and analyze the strengths and gaps of its preparedness and response mechanism and ultimately take the necessary steps to improve it.

The development of the new strategic plan and its focus on organizational development aligns with the IFRC Pan-African initiative on National Society Development. As part of the planning process, initial priorities have been identified. These relate to digital transformation, regulatory frameworks, human, material and financial

capacities, planning monitoring evaluation and reporting, accountability, partnership development and resource mobilization.

The IFRC and participating National Societies are committed to supporting the Rwandan Red Cross in its efforts towards institutional resilience.

Main actions and areas of support

Engaged

The IFRC network will support the National Society's work towards increased visibility and engagement, and digital transformation, by:

- Reinforcing capacity building of communications, including communication networks, digital media and websites
- Establishing a humanitarian centre, including museum and library equipment
- Strengthening the humanitarian diplomacy dialogue with the Government for increased grants and new areas to collaborate on (such as first aid)

- Updating the fundraising and resource mobilization strategy and reinforcing fundraising initiatives
- Mobilizing funding for support of the non-funded model village initiatives (30 model villages)
- Integrating IT solutions at management and operational level for better service delivery
- Building capacity for resource mobilization, income-generating activity and project development at headquarters and branch level
- Developing a master plan on Rwandan Red Cross properties, both short- and long-term

Accountable

To further strengthen the Rwandan Red Cross's efficiency and effectiveness, the IFRC network will invest in the following areas of its work:

- Reinforcing the National Society's financial management systems, by supporting the implementation of the new integrated Navision system for enterprise resource planning, and developing staff financial management skills through continuous training
- Supporting the National Society with completing the IFRC financial capacity and risk assessment, moving towards the funds transfer modality
- Conducting cash transfer orientation and training for National Society staff
- Strengthening Rwandan Red Cross risk management structures by appointing suitable human resources to the audit department, and ensuring that policies and documents are in place
- Updating a risk management framework, including an implementation plan to guide its rollout and operationalization
- Appointing a risk management focal point to develop risk management tools, policies and procedures, as well as the rollout of the IFRC's global risk management strategy in Rwanda, and the strengthening of risk management capacity

Trusted

The Rwandan Red Cross places a strong emphasis on youth engagement in its work. Youth representatives play active roles in National Society governance while advocating on the concerns of young people. Youth sections operate at all levels of the organization and the youth policy focuses on four key components:

- Health and environment protection
- Community service
- Dissemination of Red Cross Red Crescent principles and international humanitarian law
- Cooperation and partnership

With these components in mind, the IFRC network's support to the Rwandan Red Cross will focus on continuing to strengthen youth leadership through exchanges, learning visits, training and participation in national and international forums.

The National Society will organize workshops on child protection, safeguarding and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse for all staff and volunteers. The IFRC network will also support the strengthening of the National Society's administrative and managerial systems and procedures at headquarters and branch level. It will ensure the National Society participates in the OCAC and BOCA processes. Based on these assessments, it will support the rehabilitation of the National Society's branches across the country.

THE IFRC NETWORK

The IFRC

The IFRC supports the Rwandan Red Cross from its Country Cluster Delegation based in Kinshasa, DRC. Its support to the Rwandan Red Cross centres on strategic and operational coordination, National Society development and humanitarian diplomacy, including strengthening its auxiliary role. It also supports accountability as a cross-cutting theme.

In recent years, the IFRC supported the Rwandan Red Cross through several DREF [operations](#) in relation to

floods and windstorms, and in preparedness for the spread of the Ebola virus, following outbreaks in the neighbouring DRC. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IFRC has supported the National Society's COVID-19 response through its global Appeal. Support for the COVID-19 response continues through new partnerships.

The Rwandan Red Cross has also accessed the IFRC [Capacity Building Fund](#) in 2022.

Participating National Society Support - Bilateral

Name of Partner NS	Funding Requirements	Climate	Disasters and crises	Health and wellbeing	Migration	Values, power and inclusion	Engaged	Accountable	Trusted
Austrian Red Cross	CHF 0.51M	●	●	●		●			
Belgian Red Cross	CHF 2.85M	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Finnish Red Cross	CHF 0.04M								
Japanese Red Cross	CHF 0.16M	●	●	●		●			
Spanish Red Cross			●	●		●			

Total

3.56M

IFRC membership coordination

The IFRC coordination involves working with member National Societies to assess the humanitarian context, humanitarian situations and needs; agreeing common priorities; co-developing common strategies to address issues such as obtaining greater humanitarian access, acceptance and space; mobilizing funding and other resources; clarifying consistent public messaging; and monitoring progress. This also means ensuring that strategies and programmes in support of people in need incorporate clarity of humanitarian action, development assistance, and reinforcing the National Society's auxiliary role in Rwanda.

The Rwandan Red Cross is part of the four IFRC Pan-African initiatives focusing on Tree Planting and Care; Zero Hunger; Red Ready and National Society Development. These initiatives are reflected under the relevant sections of this plan. The National Society has been a member of the IFRC Eastern Africa Disaster Management platform since its revival in 2017. The platform brings together disaster management staff from East African National Societies and other participating National Societies. Its aim is to encourage information sharing among National Societies and provide opportunities for mutual learning through peer-to-peer initiatives. The Rwandan Red Cross is also a member and co-chair of the East Africa cash working group,

which brings together National Societies to share their experiences in implementing cash-based interventions. It also works to strengthen their cash preparedness capacities. The National Society looks forward to actively participating in the community of practice for cash-based responses in West African French-speaking countries.

The Rwandan Red Cross actively participates in the Red Cross-NET, and its programme staff participate in regional meetings, workshops and training sessions – all of which foster cross-border cooperation and the sharing of experiences through the IFRC.

Five participating National Societies have a presence in Rwanda, and well-established long-term partnerships with the National Society:

The Austrian Red Cross has supported the Rwandan Red Cross on emergency medical services in 2022; EcoCare in 2022–2024 (disaster risk reduction, community resilience, water, hygiene and sanitation); and the Skybird project in 2022, which promotes water, hygiene and sanitation.

The Belgian Red Cross (Flanders) supports the Rwandan Red Cross with a project on disaster preparedness (disaster risk reduction, emergency response and blood donation) in 2020–2022. It also supports other projects on humanitarian protection for refugees

and host communities, including emergency response, and a component of institutional capacity development in 2022–2023. The overall partnership agreement for 2022–2026 focuses on water, sanitation and hygiene, disaster risk reduction, first aid and blood donation.

The Belgian Red Cross (Francophone) has an overall partnership agreement with the Rwandan Red Cross for 2022–2026, which focuses on community resilience and institutional capacity development. Other support includes the AMOPAH project, which is focused on humanitarian protection in the area of refugee response and host communities, and institutional capacity development in 2022–2023.

The Japanese Red Cross Society supports the Rwandan Red Cross with the Gisagara model village

and community resilience. It also supports institutional capacity development in 2020–2024.

The Spanish Red Cross supports the Rwandan Red Cross with a project on sexual and reproductive health for young adolescents in 2022–2024, and projects on the socioeconomic development of rural communities and cooperatives – including livelihoods, food security, water, sanitation and hygiene in 2022–2023.

Other National Societies such as the **Danish Red Cross**, **Finnish Red Cross** and **Qatar Red Crescent Society** have explored partnerships with the Rwandan Red Cross on emergency medical services, psychosocial support programmes, climate change and early warning systems.

Movement coordination

The Rwandan Red Cross convenes a bi-monthly coordination meeting, where the National Society gives updates to the IFRC, participating National Societies and the ICRC on the prevailing humanitarian situation and its response actions. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the bi-monthly coordination meetings with in-country partners in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement have been key to closely monitoring the pandemic response and other relevant cooperation issues. This is carried out in line with the Strengthening Movement Coordination and

Cooperation (SMCC) principles, and the newly adopted [Seville Agreement 2.0](#).

The Rwandan Red Cross works closely with the ICRC delegation in Rwanda through their multi-year cooperation agreement and collaboration on various projects. In Rwanda, the ICRC works to promote international humanitarian law and its incorporation into legislation. It also works with the Rwandan Red Cross to reunite children with their families and restore family links. ICRC support to the Rwandan Red Cross focuses on communications, institutional strengthening, and adopting the safer access approach.

Coordination with other actors

The Rwandan Red Cross works with the Ministry in Charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA), which is responsible for the overall coordination of disaster response in the country, including population movement. The National Society's decentralized structures – at national, district, sector, cell and village level – enable it to coordinate with the Ministry and local authorities at all levels during disaster responses. The National Society collaborates with MINEMA on developing national disaster risk management strategies and policies. In refugee response operations, the Rwandan Red Cross also collaborates with UNHCR in camp activities and reception centres.

The National Society works in partnership with the Rwanda Meteorology Agency in spreading early hazard warning messages, in particular weather forecasts and ensuring that target communities undertake adequate risk reduction actions.

The Rwandan Red Cross collaborates with the Ministry of Health and Rwanda Biomedical Centre on mobilizing blood donation, community health, hygiene and sanitation and mental health. Since the COVID-19 outbreak began, a new partnership has been established with UNICEF Rwanda, to mobilize communities on their pandemic responses and track COVID-19 misinformation.

In line with its strategic priorities, the Rwandan Red Cross seeks to continue building relationships with other partners, including private sector companies, development partners, and regional and international organizations. This is to increase service delivery capacity, improve organizational efficiency and ensure financial sustainability.

Every year, the National Society convenes its annual partnership meeting which brings together all stakeholders, including non-Red Cross partners. It presents its response plan for the next year to all partners at the meeting, and the discussions and outcomes are used to refine the plan and ensure that all stakeholders' interests are well represented.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- [IFRC Global Plan and Country Plans](#)
- [Subscribe for updates](#)
- [Donor response](#) on IFRC website
- [Live Disaster Response Emergency Fund \(DREF\)](#) data
- Operational information: [IFRC GO platform](#)
- National Society data: [IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#)



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network, with **192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** and around **14 million volunteers**. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

Contact Information

Mercy Laker

Head of Delegation
IFRC Country Cluster Delegation
for DRC, Congo, Rwanda & Burundi,
based in Kinshasa

T +256 7729 20725
mercy.laker@ifrc.org

Louise Daintrey

Head of Strategic Engagement
& Partnerships
IFRC Regional Office for Africa,
Nairobi

T +254 110 843978
louise.daintrey@ifrc.org

Rwandan Red Cross

W www.rwandaredcross.org
