



CIVIL SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT REPORT ON RWANDA PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING SDGs 6,7,9,11 & 17



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement
AFD	Agence Française de Development
AfDB	African Development Bank
BDF	Business Development Fund
BNR	Banque Nationale du Rwanda/ National Bank of Rwanda
CHOGM	Commonwealth Head of Government Meeting
CoK	City of Kigali
COVID-19	Corona virus disease-19
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DUWSS	Department of Urban Water and Sanitation Services
EARP	Energy Access Roll out Program
EIB	European Investment Bank
ERF	Economic Recovery Fund
ERP	Economic Recovery Plan
FONERWA	Rwanda's National Climate Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLIHD	Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development
GIS	Geographic Information System
GSF	Global Solutions Forum
HHs	Households
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILC	International Labour Conference
IMF	International Monitoring Fund
INFF	Integrated National Financing Framework
IWA	International Water Association
JADF	Join Action Development Forum
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
LODA	Local Administrative Entities Development Agency
LPG	
MDPs	Multiple Development Partners
MINECOFIN	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MININFRA	Ministry of Infrastructure
MIS	Management Information System
MoH	Ministry of Health
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NISR	National Institute of Statistics Rwanda

NRW	Non-Revenue Water
NST	<i>National Strategy for Transformation</i>
NUP	National Urbanization Policy
NVR	National Voluntary Review
PVs	Solar Photovoltaics
PwDs	People with Disabilities
RDB	Rwanda Development Board
REG	Rwanda Energy Group
RIC	Rwanda Innovation Challenges
RIC-R&D	Rwanda Industry Centre for Research and Development
RIIS	Research Institute for Innovation and Sustainability
RISA	The Research Innovations Systems Africa
RSA	Rwanda Space Agency
RSF	Resilience and Sustainability Facility
RUEAP	Rwanda Universal Energy Access Program
RURA	Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority
RWF	Rwanda Flan
RWN	Rwanda Women's Network
SCADA	Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition
SDF	Spatial Development Framework
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SGO	Save Generations Organizations
SUSWAS	Sustainable Water Services in Rwanda
TVET	Technical & Vocational Education Training
UNABU	Umuryango Nyarwanda w'Abagore Bafite Ubumuga –Rwandan Organization of Women with Disabilities
UNCT	United Nations Coordination Team
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United State Dollar
VAT	Value Added Tax
WASAC	Water and Sanitation Corporation
WB	World Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every four years the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) organized the National Voluntary Review (NVR). The 2023 NVR theme is *“Accelerating the recovery from the Covid-19 and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda of the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development of all levels”*. Rwanda is one of the 40 countries that volunteered to present their VNR to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2023. Like it did in 2019, Rwanda conducted its 2023 VNR through a participatory process involving different actors including UN agencies, bilateral donors, International and National Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as well as Private Sector (MINECOFIN, May 2023). The UN views the Civil Society reports about States’ Voluntary National Review (VNR) as vital to ensuring an independent, robust and accurate assessment of progress within countries, and provide a direct means to promote Government’s accountability to its citizens. Global Solutions Forum (GSF) collaborated with Rwanda Women’s Network (RWN), to document perceptions of Civil Society Organization (CSO)¹ on key achievements, challenges, lessons learnt and recommendations for Rwanda’s efforts towards achieving SDGs under the 2023 VNR:

- **SDG 6: Safe Water:** The review drew attention on key drivers of water scarcity, accessibility and pollution with attention to finance, technology, equitable water rights, community engagement and inclusion of women and people with disabilities (PwDs).
- **SDG 7: Clean Energy.** The review focused on " affordable and Clean Energy.
- **SDG 9: Industrialization, Innovation, & Infrastructure:** The review considered inclusive, sustainable and accountable industrialization that aims at creating employment opportunities and improve the state of essential services in a more inclusive manner.
- **SDG 11: Sustainable cities and Communities:** The review analyzed the urban, social and environmental determinants of well-being, including safe, adequate, affordable, and sustainable food, housing, water and energy services; health services; and transportation.
- **SDG 17: Partnerships for all SDGs:** The review looked at country’s measures to increase its national revenues to fund SDGs, its commitment to achieving truly inclusive partnerships

¹ CSOs included Action Aid Rwanda, DOT Rwanda, Empower Rwanda, GLIHD, Governance for Africa (GOA), NUDOR, Paper Crown, Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe, Réseau des Femmes Oeuvrant pour le Développement Rural, Rwanda Climate Change and Development Network (RCCDN), Rwanda Civil Society Platform, Rwanda Climate Change and Development Network, Rwanda Women’s Network (RWN), Save Generations Organizations (SGO), SEVOTA, Transparency International Rwanda, UNABU, Water Aid, Oxfam, Young Women Christian Association

with development partners including Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and cross-sectoral collaboration to eliminate any barriers to development.

Key Achievements

Overall, CSOs are very satisfied about Rwanda's tremendous achievements across all the 17 SDGs and support efforts being conjugated to keep up the momentum though a lot is still needed to achieve universal access to essential services such as food, education, health, water, energy and decent housing. According to the 2022 UN Annual Report on SDGs: Rwanda Profile, Rwanda had achieved 59.4% of the SDGs as of 2020, compared to 47.1% in 2000. The country's resilience and determination to do business not-as-usual following the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic shocks of the war in Ukraine are highly appreciated. Rwanda adopted the 1st and 2nd recovery funds and operated some financial and tax reforms (MINECOFIN, February, 2023). For specific achievements towards SDGs under the 2023 VNR, CSOs observed SDG6,7,9 and 11 are so intertwined that it is very hard to discuss them separately as one contributes to the other and the lack of the other affects the achievement of all others. One cannot talk about sustainable cities and communities (SDG11) without talking about access to clean water, sanitation, hygiene (SDG6), access to clean energy (SDG 7) or industry, innovation and infrastructures (SDG 9).

With regards to **SDG6**, the recent Fifth Rwanda Population and Housing Census, 2022 (NISR,2022), reports 86% of the Rwandan population have access to improved drinking water (up from 79% in 2015 and 12% had access to safely managed water drinking services (SDG6) up from 7% in 2015. In total, 82% of the private households use water from improved drinking water sources, with urban households having much better access (95.8%) than rural households (76.8%). The main source of drinking water in urban area is water piped into households, plot or neighbor yard (50%) and public taps (26%) while in rural area, the main sources of drinking water are protected wells or springs (36%) and the public taps (31%). The Universal access to affordable, reliable and clean energy (**SDG7**) by Rwandan men and women is a key element in Rwanda's Vision 2050 through which Rwanda aims to reach an upper middle-income level by 2035 and a high-income level. As of December 2022, an estimated 77% Rwandans had electricity versus the country's target of universal access (100%) by 2024 (MININFRA, 2023). About 60% of the National power supply comes from Renewable Energy Resources, mainly Hydro Power resources; the remaining 40% is generated from Heavy/Light Fuel Oils and Peat/Coal.

Rwanda's achievements towards **SDG 9**, are expressed through different policies that support the development of startups, including favorable tax incentives, streamlined regulatory processes, and access to funding resources and various initiatives. The Country is already investing a lot in *Innovation Ecosystem* that is facilitated by the roll out of internet across the country with 62.86% of households using internet (NISR, 2022). Rwanda is positioning itself as a hub for technological advancements, innovation and entrepreneurial growth through “*Made in Rwanda Brand*”, innovation fund and *Kigali Innovation City*, the Research Institute for Innovation and Sustainability (RIIS), Fintech, the Rwanda Space Agency (RSA), The Research Innovations Systems Africa (RISA) and other innovations. The Rwanda National Council for Science and Technology (NCST) initiated the Rwanda Innovation Challenges for Academia–Industry Research and Development Collaboration Grant (RIC-R&D) grant scheme with the aim of promoting knowledge transfer partnerships among industry/private sector and academia. Through boot camps-TVET, youth-led businesses have been supported, with 67% being led by women and jobs having been created, 46% have been taken up by women (Youth Connekt, 2022). Rwanda has also invested a lot in a Strong Network of Trade infrastructure across the country including: scaling up of airline (RwandAir) capacity and destinations, setting up modern logistics platforms, cross border markets, one stop border points, development of regional, national and feeder roads, among others (MININFRA, June 2023).

Towards sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), Rwanda has collaborated with the UN-Habitat Rwanda to develop the **Smart City Rwanda Masterplan** which provides a framework to guide Rwandan cities and towns in their efforts to harness ICT to provide a higher quality of life to their citizens, businesses and visitors (UN Habitat Rwanda, June 2023). In May 2020, Rwanda submitted its Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) which prioritizes 24 adaptation interventions in 8 key sectors namely: water, agriculture, land and forestry, human settlement, health, transport, mining and cross-sectional like warning system & disaster response, capacity for NDC implementation management and access to finance (MINECOFIN, 2023). The country reviewed the Kigali and Districts Master Plans to effectively support the achievements of adaptation and mitigations targets in the cities and develop a database of the NDC Implementation framework with more than 100 urban projects in multiple sectors, like Building and Infrastructure, Transport, Waste and Water management.

Further, UN-Habitat supported the GoR to promote urban climate-resilience recovery projects with the aim to upgrade central and market streets in the secondary and satellite cities to become green, vibrant, and prosperous streets and boost the economic recovery. Rwanda targets 35% of sustainable urbanization by 2024 (coinciding with the end of NST1). In its vision 2050, the country has taken a holistic approach to integrate green buildings and design, efficient and renewable energy, recycling and inclusive living strategies to ensure sustainable cities and communities. The *National Land Use Master Plan* revised in 2020 and the National Urbanization Policy (NUP), provide guidelines to all City Master Plans to ensure that they are citizen-centered and aligned to National Development Goals (MINIFRA, 2023). The creation of the Kigali International Finance Centre, the Rwanda Innovation Fund, and Rwanda's National Climate Fund (FONERWA) are all good examples of Rwanda's commitment to achieving its vision of a carbon-neutral economy by 2050. Rwanda plans to implement circular economy innovations, recycling, waste to energy and efficient, labor-intensive separation processes to effectively manage municipal solid waste. The country has also established a Spatial Development Framework (SDF) and the Rwanda Affordable Housing Fund and Policy to enable investments in socio-economic infrastructure through public-private-partnership model. Rwanda has also digitized land use to inform Master Planning and implementation as well as increasing efficiencies in providing basic amenities and exploring options for smart, digital, ICT-based options for essential services.

Rwanda's progress towards achieving **SDG17**, is manifested through the country's value and investments in sound legal and policy frameworks that offer an enabling environment for strong partnerships with different Non-State Actors including UN Agencies, different development partners, NGOs and private investors. Rwanda Development Board attracts high end investors, conferences and tourists and different initiatives such as the *Made in Rwanda Brand*, *home-grown solutions* and *self-reliance initiatives* (AGACIRO Fund). The recent financial & tax reforms (MINECOFIN, February 2023) are all the impetus to boost the national capacity to generate necessary funds for the national budgets. For the financial year 2023/2024, Rwandans will fund the national budget at a rate of 80% versus 20% of external support. The reduction of transactional costs and attraction of more external investments in the country is seen by CSOs as the right move to enable the country reduce external dependence.

Key Challenges

On top of key challenges, CSOs highlighted the increase of Rwandan population from 10.5 million in 2012 to 13.2 million in 2022 (an increase of 2.7million) over a decade and with an annual population growth rate of 2.3% (NISR, 2022²). The UN Habitat Rwanda reports that Rwanda has the highest population density in Africa, in which approximately 16.52% of the population lives in urban areas, almost half of it is concentrated in Kigali, the capital city, with about 1.1 million inhabitants (UN Habitat Rwanda, December 2023). Fast economic and demographic growth puts pressure on the limited land resources, ultimately rendering citizens to live in urban areas. Subsequently, the situation puts much pressures on food security, education, health, water, energy, sanitation, housing, encroachment on environment.

Specific to SGD6, Rwanda still faces big losses, low quality and unequal supply of water in both rural and urban areas. It also faces high dependence on external funding on the sector and limited inclusion of women and PwDs in water resources management. For SDG7, Rwandans face high costs and unequal distribution of energy for both individual and corporate users and lack of long-term investments in renewable energy resources; which prevent Rwanda from achieving its targets in industry, innovation and infrastructures (**SDG 9**). Despite Rwanda's strides in industrialization, innovation and infrastructure development (SDG9) to boost employment, the country continues to face high rates of unemployment (24.3%) and lack of skilled human capital (NISR, 2022).

For sustainable cities and communities (**SDG11**), Rwanda faces the biggest challenge to march population growth (more demands) with essential services (for instance education, health, water, energy, housing) and land usage demands such as food and commercial oriented agriculture, housing, infrastructures development and industrialization demands. Further CSOs highlighted insufficient inclusion and pro-poor initiatives across key sectors of housing, transportation, limited citizen's participation in urban planning & monitoring processes and insufficient support packages/programs for informal sector. CSOs expressed their big concerns about the mushrooming of unplanned and scattered informal settlements in the suburbs of the City of Kigali (CoK) and other satellite towns, even in areas reserved for agriculture.

² The report of the 5th Population and Housing Census was released in February 27; 2023

The situation will make the country unable to expropriate all these scattered settlements to meet planned green and environment friendly cities and communities. CSO also highlighted the lack of interconnected or centralized sewage systems in the City of Kigali and other satellite cities may lead to grave environment damages in areas of waste dumping sites.

With regards to Rwanda's challenges to achieve SDG17, CSOs fear the effects of COVID-19 and war in Ukraine will have long-term lasting effects on Rwandans' capacity to fund the national budget despite recent review of tax regimes and financial transaction-associated costs (MINECOFIN, February 2023). The situation may push Rwanda to continue borrowing from external investors and financial structures; which increases its external debts, thus reducing its dependence and investment capacities. Further, CSOs think there are still big funding gaps on key critically essentials services such as water, energy and housing. There are perceptions among CSOs that the country has invested more in European, Asian and American partnerships than it has done for the cross-border trade as well as for the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA); hence the urgency to strike the balance.

Key Recommendations

For SDG 6

- Rwanda should put more attention on water quality affordability and services and ensure equitable investments in water supply and services in both urban and rural areas through several strategies. These include i) a thorough assessment of water needs and challenges specific to each rural area to be able to identify gaps and priorities for investment, ii) engage local communities and stakeholders in identifying their water needs, preferences, and potential solutions and ensure their active participation in the decision-making process, iii) allocate resources specifically dedicated to addressing water-related issues in rural areas, iv) prioritization of underserved areas to ensure investments are allocated for those areas with the greatest need and limited existing infrastructure; and v) invest a lot in capacity building of WASAC teams and water committees on resource management, maintenance of infrastructure, and sustainable practices.
- To attract more investments in the water industry, the GoR should encourage private sector participation by creating a favorable regulatory framework that allows for competition and fair

market entry of multiple water services providers. This can involve providing incentives for private companies to invest in water infrastructure and services.

- Taxes on water should be exempted for private investors in order to bridge the gap between government and private investments in water sector. Implementing tax exemptions for water access providers can be a tool to promote affordability and accessibility to water services.
- Improve the community involvement (local communities and stakeholders) in the decision-making process and ensure their active participation in identifying their water needs, preferences, and potential solutions. More inclusion of women and most vulnerable categories such as people with disabilities in the management of water should be considered.

For SDG 7:

- More attention should be put on affordability and uninterrupted electricity. Investment in renewable energy and off-grid electricity can offer great opportunities.
- Although the GoR has exempted taxes on Gas import, for effective implementation of supportive policies and regulations that encourage the use of gas for cooking (while discouraging or phasing out the use of charcoal,) there is a need of **a clear transitional roadmap** from charcoal use to gas use. This may involve providing more incentives, subsidies, or tax benefits for gas appliances and infrastructures. Like the GoR has constructed the storage facilities for fuels, it is highly important to also invest in gas storage facilities in different districts to increase the gas use at affordable costs.
- The GoR should also develop more gendered strategies for access to clean energy

For SDG 9

- The GoR should balance between industry & infrastructure and agriculture demands to make land use more rational.
- GoR of Rwanda should invest more in rural-based innovation infrastructures to ensure the innovation ecosystem is not only concentrated in the City of Kigali.

For SDG 11

- Bearing in mind the topographic nature of the country coupled with the significant demographic shifts towards urban areas, Rwanda needs to develop its own, unique urban model while balancing both rural and urban development

- Through social inclusion and affordable housing, Rwanda should pay more attention on pro-poor urban planning and green economy policies especially in the City of Kigali and satellite cities by accommodating informal sector and setting up its graduation steps.
- CSOs think there is more to be done towards supporting informal sector to transition and eventually graduate into formal sector; subsequently contributing to internal revenues

For SDG17

- Rwanda should strike the balance between European, Asian and American partnerships and the cross-border trade as well as for the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) implementation.
- Rwanda should also support *Investors and CSOs platform* on development aid & investments.

1. INTRODUCTION

The UN views the Civil society reports about States' VNR as vital to ensuring an independent, robust and accurate assessment of progress within countries, and provide a direct means to promote Government's accountability to its citizens. Rwanda is one of the 40 countries that volunteered to present their voluntary national reviews (VNR) to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2023. This year's theme is "Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels".

As part of the Sustainable Development Goals (2030 Agenda) commitments, Rwanda is one of the 40 countries that volunteered to present their voluntary national reviews (VNR) to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2023. This year's theme is "Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels". Rwanda has committed to review the implementation progress against **Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6), Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7), Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11); and Partnerships to achieve the Goal (SDG 17)**. Rwanda has made it a good practice to involve different development actors including civil society organizations (CSOs) in the review and reporting on SDGs achievements; thereby showcasing of the value of civil society engagement in SDG implementation and monitoring. It is within this context, Rwanda Women's Network (RWN) as the current convener of Rwanda CSO SDG5 Forum, through inclusive consultative process,

convened a one-day workshop on 19th April 2023, with the objective of CSOs to understand their contribution to the whole process for VNR. With the funding of SDGs Global Solutions Forum, RWN also conducted in June 2023, individual interviews with different CSOs, the in-depth review of the achievements, challenges and lessons learnt towards the implementation of the global Agenda 2030; and in July of the same year, RWN facilitated a dissemination and validation session to approve this spotlight report to complement Government's voluntary review. The workshop was also used to assess CSOs' satisfaction about Rwanda's progress towards achievement of all 17 SDGs. However, the report draws more attention on the five SDGs under review namely the SDG 6: clean water, sanitation and hygiene, SDG 7: affordable and clean energy, SDG 9: industry, innovation and infrastructure, SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities, and SDG 17 partnerships for the Goals.

2. THE ASSESSMENT BACKGROUND

2.1. Organizational Background

Rwanda Women's Network (RWN) is a national humanitarian non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to promoting and strengthening strategies that empower women in Rwanda since coming to being in 1997 and has extensive experience in fostering women's participation and grassroots responses to community challenges. RWN's mission is to work towards the improvement of the socio-economic welfare of women in Rwanda through enhancing their efforts to meet their basic needs. Its vision being that of having a healthy, wealthy and empowered Rwandan society.

In this perspective, Rwanda Women's Network championed the creation of the ***Rwanda CSO SDG5 Forum in 2017*** which is a collective of 28 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working on diverse human rights issues in Rwanda under the cross-cutting theme of gender and women's empowerment. The forum's role is to contribute to the mainstreaming of women's empowerment and gender equality in the implementation of the 2030 Global agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2030 agenda aims towards the realization of sustainable development globally: economic prosperity, social welfare, political development and environmental sustainability. The forum provides a platform for CSOs to enhance their engagement with Government, various development partners and grassroots communities in order to successfully deliver on the ambitious targets of the SDGs and ensure that no one is left behind. The forum was established in recognition of the need

to:

- a) Increase peer learning and sharing on SDGs, women and gender issues in line with the national agenda.
- b) Strengthen CSO advocacy efforts through collectively identifying pertinent advocacy issues.
- c) Create an actionable agenda in tracking Rwanda's progress in the domestication of the SDGs and in particular SDG 5.

In 2019, RWN, spearheaded, through Rwanda CSO SDG5 Forum, the 2019 VNR which contributed to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and International Labour Conference (ILC) Debrief and Forward-Looking Session in 2019 bringing together CSOs that participated at the HLPF in New York and the ILC in Geneva.

The platforms offered an opportunity to understand how the recommendations to Rwanda's VNR presentation and the resolutions on the ILO convention on GBV at the workplace will be taken up believe it is of essence to conduct consultations with civil society organizations working on various SDGs thereby coming up with a comprehensive CSO spotlight report that monitors the implementation of the Agenda 2030.

2.2. Rwanda's Overview of Commitments to achieve SDGs

Overall, Rwanda has integrated the *SDGs* into its national development agenda through its vision 2020 that ended after the 2019 NVR report was submitted, the *National Strategy for Transformation* (NST1, 2017-2024) and related strategies at different levels and the new *Vision 2050*. In 2019, Rwanda volunteered to the evaluation of its progress, towards achieving SDGs 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 & 17 along the following five thematic areas:

1. **Human Capital Development:** In line with the *SDG 4* focusing on quality of education and learning, the *Education Strategic Plan* is hinged on: (i) scaling up pre-primary enrolment (ii) improving learning outcomes (iii) improving relevance of curricula (v) promoting science, technology and innovation and (vi) access for all including those with special needs.

Progress on nutrition has been made especially regarding wasting and underweight, however stunting remains a challenge despite falling from 51% (2005) to 38% (2015). The Government has put in place a multi-sectoral programme and strategy, the *National Early Childhood Development Programme* to eradicate malnutrition.

2. **Inclusive Economic Growth:** Economic growth has reduced both income and multidimensional poverty. With a share of 43.5% of the population in the labor force, youth is regarded as a key driver of growth, requiring the economy to accelerate job creation. NST1 is targeting to create 1.5 million decent and productive jobs by 2024 supported by the *National Employment Programme*.
3. **Environment and Climate Change:** Rwanda targets to become a green, climate resilient and low carbon economy by 2050. A green fund (FONERWA) is in place since 2012 to mobilise resources. The *National Disaster Management Policy* has been revised in line with the Sendai Framework, a shift towards more integrated and anticipatory disaster risk management system in Rwanda.
4. **Good Governance and Access to Justice:** Citizen participation and home-grown solutions such as *Imihigo* (performance contracts) and *Umuganda* (communities come together to perform activities of public interest) have been key to Rwanda's development. Innovations like the *Rwanda Governance Scorecard* and the *Citizen Report Card* have further enhanced citizens' participation and demand for accountability. Rwanda has also operationalized a decentralized civil registration system and reformed its judicial system to further enhance access to quality justice.
5. **Strengthening the Means of Implementation, Global Partnership and Data for SDGs:** More efforts are put into domestic resource mobilization, prudent debt management and macroeconomic stability. Attracting private investments in key development sectors through Public Private Partnerships will be key to achieve SDGs. The *National Strategy for the Development of Statistics* and the *Data Revolution* have been adopted to strengthen statistical capacity in monitoring SDGs. Rwanda is also hosting the *SDGs Center for Africa*.

Additional to the five elements of the NVR 2019, Rwanda also reported on the key aspect of **Leaving No One Behind**. It was noted that women, youth and people with disabilities are represented at all levels of decision making with highest women representation in Parliament (61.3%) and equal number of women and men in Cabinet. It was also observed that the Extreme poor Rwandans are supported through social protection programmes. Rwanda was also piloting the comprehensive refugees' response framework for their socio-economic inclusion.

Among key lessons learnt during as generated during the 2019 VNR were:

1. Visionary leadership, effective governance, and accountability are critical ingredients for achievement of SDGs.



2. Home-Grown Solutions rooted in the Rwandan culture are resource-efficient and play a major role in enhancing ownership and accelerating development outcomes.

3. A full integration of SDGs in the national planning and monitoring framework is critical for effective

implementation.

Finally, Rwanda had identified key areas where it needed support: 1) significant external resources are needed to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs and to scale up successful interventions; and 2) support to the national statistical capacity both technically and financially to cover all applicable SDG indicators (currently producing 60% of the required indicators).

3. KEY FINDINGS OF THE RWANDA VNR 2023 FROM CSO PERSPECTIVE

3.1. Introduction

Under this section the presentation focuses on key achievements, challenges and recommendations which are presented under each SDG that was reviewed. As explained under the introduction section, the CSOs perceptions about Rwanda's progress towards achieving SDGs under the 2023 VNR, are a result of participatory consultation process that started in April 2023 through a workshop bringing together government institutions and NGOs members of the Rwanda CSOs SDG 5 forum under the leadership of Rwanda Women's Network. The photo inserted was taken by RWN during the sharing and validation workshop held on 13th July 2023. Intensive in-depth analysis of various reports from governmental institutions (WASAC, REG, MINIFRA, NISR, MINECOFIN) and from Non-Governmental Organizations such as Unicef, UN Coordination Team, UNDP, World Vision, Water Aid and individual interviews with some CSOs intervening directly or indirectly in SDG6, 7, 9 & 11 were complemented by inputs provided by participants to the sharing and validation workshop that was held in Kigali on 13 July 2023.

3.2. Specific Key Findings for SDG 6: Clean Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

3.2.1 Key Achievements

In 2016, the Government of Rwanda adopted specific policies of water supply, water resources and sanitation respectively to be able to focus on sanitation and water resources components. Most of the interventions to improved source of drinking water access consider access as the water point within 200 meters in urban areas and 500 meters in rural areas with time not exceeding 30 minutes for round trip. Access to basic sanitation is considered when the access to improved sanitation facilities is not shared with other households. In addition, the water quantity per capita considered is 40 Litter per day per capita in rural area and 80 litter per day capita in urban areas. With the above definition in mind, according to the recent Fifth Rwanda Population and Housing Census, 2022 (NISR,2022), 86% of the Rwandan population had access to improved drinking water (up from 79% in 2015 and 12% had access to safely managed water drinking services up from 7% in 2015). In total, 82% of the private households use water from improved drinking water sources, with urban households having much better access (95.8%) than rural households (76.8%). The main source of drinking water in urban area is water piped into households, plot or neighbour yard (50%) and public taps (26%) while in rural area, the main sources of drinking water are protected wells or springs (36%) and the public taps (31%).

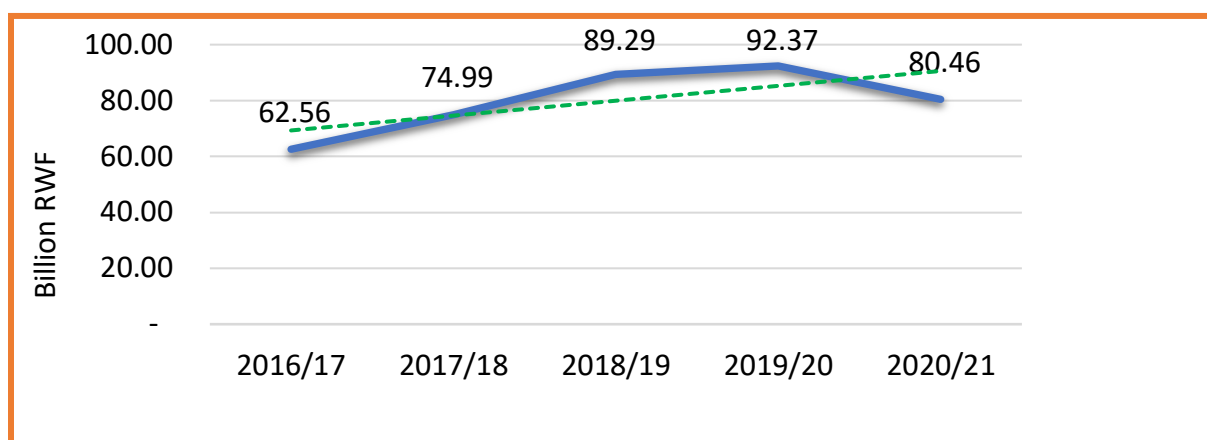
Overall, 82.7% of male headed family access water with 96.1% in urban and 76.9 in rural areas. For female headed families the access is at 81.4% where 95.1 is in urban area and 76.4% in rural areas. Rwanda targets universal access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services (100%) by 2024 and Sustainable Water Supply toward 2050. This means, access to basic Service and access to improved drinking water sources within 200 m in the city area and within 500 m in rural areas which critically linked to improved nutrition, good health, gender equality, economic growth, and environmental management.

Towards these targets, Rwanda has made efforts to find a lasting solution to water management and use by establishing a special Water and Sanitation Corporation (WASAC³) under the supervision of MININFRA. WASAC has been implementing various projects to increase quality and quantity of water supply by constructing new, rehabilitating, upgrading and expanding

³ WASAC is an organization formed in 2014 under the supervision of MININFRA by creating an independent entity of the water supply and sanitary departments of the Energy, Water and Sanitation.

existing water treatment plants in City of Kigali and its peri-urban areas as well as in satellite towns. WASAC also has a mandate to reduce water loss or Non-Revenue Water (NRW), from 40% to 5% by 2030, through demand-driven pressure management and proactive detection of leakages and pipe bursts in the distribution network. With the funding of JICA, WASAC piloted a project in the city of Kigali to reduce the NRW from around 40% in 2016 to 25% by 2025 (JICA, 2022). WASAC has installed Emergency/temporary water supply tanks (10m3) in areas where water supply is insufficient in the WASAC's water distribution network, and to transport water by private water tankers in different remotest areas.

3.2.2. Key Challenges for Rwanda to Achieve SDG 6



Source: MINIFRA March 2023

Rwanda to achieving universal access to safe water, are mainly limited funding, unequal access to safe drinking water for both rural and urban areas, low inclusion of women and people disabilities. UNICEF estimates that only 57% of the Rwandan population has access to safe drinking water within 30 minutes of their homes (UNICEF, 2022) which means there is still a significant percentage (43%) of Rwandan population in need of **safe drinking water** within 30 minutes. Long walking distances for women and children to collect water, often keeps children out of school and women out of economic activities. In the context of Rwanda, girls and women are often perceived to take on the majority of household tasks, therefore the ones to suffer the most (Action Aid Unpaid Care Report, 2020) from limited access to water. On the **access to basic sanitation**⁴, it estimated that 64% of the population in Rwanda have access to sanitation services (UNICEF, 2022), which

⁴Basic sanitation means that every household has its own toilet and does not share with another household. These toilets should also keep human waste out of contact with people

is another challenge. The same UNICEF report, states that there is also a huge disparity depending on the wealth of the family whereby 94 % of the wealthiest households have their own toilet, compared to 74% of the poorest households. Only 35 percent of households use an appropriate water treatment method.

As for **Hygiene**, it estimated that 5% of households in Rwanda have a place for family members to wash their hands with soap. Handwashing with soap at critical moments is essential for good health, especially for children's health. The COVID-19 pandemic is believed to have increased and improved handwashing practice among all categories of Rwandans. However, due to costs of water bills, many of the handwashing stations that were put in public places, have stopped working. CSOs' experience sharing reveals that urban areas continue to have significant higher levels of basic water services than rural areas (70% versus 54%) which may be understandable when considered in the context of urbanization progress, especially in the capital, Kigali City. But even in urban areas, water supply services have not caught up with the rapid population growth in urban population which is expected to be 5.8% by 2025. In addition, due to shortage of water resources and enormous water leakages from water supply facilities (often caused by very old pipes), recurrent water supply restrictions and water supply stoppages have been enforced in some zones making it difficult for all Rwandans to have equal access.

Water pollution is the area that is not very well exploited in the WASH sector, but the data the previous report commissioned by Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation report in 2021, on Gender, Women's Rights, Environment and Climate Change revealed that KIs at REMA informed about increasing water pollution from agro-inputs, including ammonia, nitrate, phosphate and pesticide residues (through leaching and erosion). If not addressed, they will affect groundwater and the ability of ecosystems to naturally purify water. Since end users of water are human beings and animals, effects on their health can be dire. There are reports about high sediment loads; toxic and acidifying materials, heavy metals from mining; and untreated domestic sources that cause microbiological pollution which threaten human and ecosystem health.

Bearing in mind that in Rwanda about 63% of working females are in agriculture related occupations compared to only 43% among working males (NISR 2018, The EICV5 Thematic Report-Gender 2018), women are the most exposed to water pollution consequences. Women are

the most affected by the low access to water, sanitation and hygiene and concerned with domestic drinking water especially in rural areas, cleanness of household's latrines and household hygiene activities. The role of women and people with disabilities in the management and use of water resources is believed to be low yet when there is lack of water it is mainly the woman who suffers the most. Different assessments on unpaid care work in Rwanda (Action Aid, UN Women) have shown that women and girls especially in the suburbs and rural areas continue to be burdened with the mandatory duty of securing water at long distances sometimes going above 1km (rural areas). In some cases, it normal to see females of 10 years or below taking up the responsibility to fetch water.

For the construction activities, male is still dominating in construction of WASH facilities including water pipelines, water reservoirs, water fittings and construction of household latrines and institutional sanitation facilities. Many efforts for community participation are done by government of Rwanda through Umuganda to promote greening and cleanness cities, promotion of hygiene through parents evening sessions (Akagoroba k'Ababyeyi) etc. Local knowledge in water management is still very low as most of the capacities are at central level with little staff at district level.

Finally, high dependence on external financing of the sector continue to remain big challenges. Although, the national budget allocation for the WASH sector has displayed an increasing trend over the past three years, it still heavily relies on external funding. The domestically financed budget for the WASH sector in 2022/23 reached FRW 78.3 billion, up from FRW 55.7 billion in the 2021/22 revised budget. This reflects a nominal budget increase of 46.6%. However, the scrutiny of this funding shows that WASH Sector is confronted with an annual funding gap amounting to **FRW 320 billion** (as unveiled by the Sustainable WASH Financing Strategy 2018-2024). The review had impression there is inequity in the allocation of available budget in WASH whereby more than 93% of the sector's expenditure is invested in only water supply services. The institutional arrangements are unclear whereby WASH responsibility lies in multiple entities (Sanitation & Hygiene in Health and water in Infrastructure, water resources in Environment).

3.2.3. Recommendations for Rwanda to achieve the SDG6 targets

- Rwanda should focus more on access to water and sanitation services rather than coverage. More attention should also put on water quality affordability and services and ensure equitable investments in water supply and services in both urban and rural areas through several strategies.
- For WASH sector financing (limited only on taxes, tariffs and transfers), Rwanda needs to consider IT-based systems and the unusual funds from private sector ready to invest in new WASH Services model & approaches to narrow the gap and ensure universal WASH services access. Innovation mechanisms should allow Rwanda move to gradual reduction of non-revenue water (both technical and non-technical) of WASAC and private operators.
- For more accessibility, affordability and sustainability of water, the Government of Rwanda should exempt taxes on private sectors investing in water supply, like the government did on Fuel and Gas. Rwanda should also work on water zoning structure or chain for water supply. It is equally important to set up adequate tariffs for rural and urban consumers for both affordability and financial viability.
- It is important for Rwanda to invest a lot in water losses monitoring by replacing old water pipelines, introducing a digitalized water leakages tracking system and strengthen the community engagement in water planning and reporting processes.
- To attract more investments in the water industry, the GoR should encourage private sector participation by creating a favorable regulatory framework that allows for competition and fair market entry of multiple water services providers. This can involve providing incentives for private companies to invest in water infrastructure and services. Similarly, Taxes on water should be exempted for private investors in order to bridge the gap between government and private investments in water sector.
- WASAC, Districts and private operators must be capacitated on technical, financial and operations of water management at decentralized entities.
- It is important for Rwanda to invest a lot in water losses monitoring by replacing old water pipelines, introducing a digitalized water leakages tracking system and strengthen the community engagement in water planning and reporting processes.
- Improve the community involvement (local communities and stakeholders) in the decision-making process and ensure their active participation in identifying their water needs, preferences, and potential solutions. More inclusion of women and most vulnerable

categories such as people with disabilities in the management of water should be considered.

3.3. Specific Key Findings for SDG 7: Clean & Affordable Energy

3.3.1. Key Achievements

Universal access to affordable, reliable and clean energy by men and women is a key element in the Vision 2050 strategy document through which Rwanda aims to reach an upper middle-income level by 2035 and a high-income level by 2050. Currently, overall energy consumption is low, and is dominated by households at 82% with transport (8%), industries (6%) and other sectors (4%) responsible for the remainder (MININFRA, 2018).

As of December 2022, an estimated 77% Rwandans had electricity and the country aims to achieve universal access (100%) by 2024. About 60% of the National power supply comes from Mainly Renewable Energy Resources, mainly Hydro Power resources. The remaining 40% is generated from Heavy/Light Fuel Oils and Peat/Coal. According to the 5th Population and Housing Census done in Rwanda in August 2022, (NISR, 2022) indicate the cumulative connectivity rate is 61.0% of Rwandan households including 47% connected to the national grid and 14% accessing it through off-grid systems (mainly solar).

Rwanda Energy Group (REG, June 2022), as of June 2022, the cumulative connectivity rate is 72% of Rwandan households including 50% connected to the national grid and 22% accessing through off-grid systems (mainly solar). This means, households far away from the planned national grid coverage have been encouraged to use alternatively cheaper connections such as Mini-grids and Solar Photovoltaics (PVs) to reduce the cost of access to electricity whilst relieving constraints on historical government subsidies.

3.3.2. Key Challenges for SDG7

The Rwanda's topography is among big challenges to supplying electricity to Rwandans. It slows the on-grid connections which require time to connect electricity to people in scattered areas across the country, the costs of electricity and gas and budget constraints. The national universal electricity access (100%) of all households by 2024 of which 70% households will be connected to the grid while 30% will be using off-grid solutions, looks unachievable within the remain period to 2024 by achievable by 2030. To be achieved, it will require REG to increase the number of new connections by 500,000 every year, both on-grid and off grid technologies deployed in

electrification (REG Report, June 2022). The costs for electricity are still high whereby the fee for household grid connection ranges from USD 56 (for those within 37meters of the existing infrastructure) to USD 450 while the costs of LPG retail market price in the area around the capital Kigali is between RWF 1000 (USD 1.14) and RWF 1400 (USD 1.61) per kg. There are large differences in fuels used for cooking between urban and rural areas, with 95% of rural households using firewood as their primary fuel, while the majority of urban households (63%) cook mainly with charcoal. The ban on charcoal announced by the Ministry of Environment in 2020 is expected to lead to increased use of LPG.

Although the government has exempted LPG from tax, the price is still an inhibiting factor for many consumers. Nevertheless, the uptake is slowly increasing with more LPG stores opening up in more dispersed communities. Following the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, prices of LPG have more than doubled despite Government incentives. From a gender perspective, The Rwanda Ministry of Infrastructure Gender Mainstreaming Strategy (2017-2022) provides guidelines for mainstreaming gender in the national energy planning process (MININFRA 2017). However, Rwandan women continue to spend substantially more time than men acquiring fuels for cooking. Nationally, this burden for women averages 73 minutes per day compared to 36 minutes for men. The time burden in rural areas is twice that in urban areas, but gender differences are similar. Further, women spend twice as long as men on preparation activities to use the collected wood as fuel, such as chopping it into smaller pieces. 13% of female-headed households use charcoal for cooking compared to 18.8% of male-headed households.

Finally, though Rwanda has increased its budget allocation for the energy sector from the previous 122.5Bn allocated in the FY 2021/22 to FRW 231.7B in the FY 2022/23 (an increase of 89%), the county continues to face budget constraints to meet its clean energy targets. The GoR under a ‘Sector Wide Approach, has also formed a pool of funds from multiple development partners (MDPs) such as World bank, African Development Bank (AfDB), Agence Française de Development (AFD), The OPEC Fund for International Development and the Saudi Fund for Development, JICA, The European Investment Bank (EIB), India Export-Import Bank and others has designed Energy Access Roll out Program (EARP) and most recently Rwanda Universal Energy Access Program (RUEAP) that implement Energy access projects. Still a funding gap of **667,540,801 USD** is required to connect the remaining Households (1,902,699 Households) to achieve universal access by 2024; the funding gap

of 633,160,502 USD for on-grid connections and 34,380,300 USD for off grid are still missing (REG, 2022).

3.4. Specific Key Findings for SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

3.4.1. Key Achievements

Rwanda's achievements towards SDG 9 are expressed through different policies that support the development of startups, including favorable tax incentives, streamlined regulatory processes, and access to funding and resources and various initiatives including '*Made in Rwanda*', the innovation ecosystem and youth connect just to highlight a few.

The former has enabled strong participation of the private sector in unlocking new industries during the COVID-19 outbreak (e.g. hygiene products, health & pharmaceutical products, etc.), and thinking of the first ever vaccine manufacturing plant now being constructed in Rwanda. The Rwanda National Council for Science and Technology (NCST) initiated the Rwanda Innovation Challenges for Academia–Industry Research and Development Collaboration Grant (RIC-R&D) grant scheme that provides funding opportunities to promote knowledge transfer and partnerships among industry/private sector and academia. The grant scheme has provided innovative solutions in key priority areas such as job creation, urbanization, industrialization, export promotion, environment protection, improved agricultural productivity, ensuring a healthy population, natural resource exploitation, promoting research and development (R&D), stimulating innovation, as well as developing competitive and capable Rwandans (NCST, 2022). The **Innovation Ecosystem** is facilitated by roll out of internet across the country with 62.86% of households using internet (NISR, 2022) positioning Rwanda as a hub for technological advancements and entrepreneurial growth. By fostering a supportive ecosystem, Rwanda has nurtured a culture of innovation, attracting innovators and investors from around the world.

Innovation hubs across the country, innovation fund and *Kigali Innovation City*, the Research Institute for Innovation and Sustainability (RIIS) and the Rwanda Space Agency (RSA), The Research Innovations Systems Africa (RISA), Rwanda Innovation Challenges (RIC) and Fintech; are all designed to create a conducive innovation ecosystem environment that supports a thriving tech and innovation industry. Additionally, innovative solutions in sectors

such as education (e-learning), health (medical manufacturing in Rwanda), green cities, finance (making Kigali financial hub, Fintech), smart agriculture, renewable energy and tourism ecosystem development (RDB, 2023), have addressed critical challenges and improved the lives of Rwandan citizens. The Youth Connect has already had a significant impact in supporting youth-led businesses and cooperatives, creating employment opportunities, and providing mentorship to young people. Through boot camps-TVET, youth-led businesses have been supported, with 67% being led by women and jobs having been created, 46% have been taken up by women (Youth Connekt, 2022). Rwanda has also invested a lot in a **Strong Network of Trade infrastructure** across the country including scaling up of airline (RwandAir) capacity and destinations, setting up modern logistics platforms, cross border markets, one stop border points, development of regional, national and feeder roads, among others. As for the long-term peace and stability of the country, Rwanda is investing a lot in the use of security cameras and other automated detection systems.

3.4.2. Key Challenges for Rwanda to Achieve SGD 9

Paradoxically, Rwanda still faces increase of unemployment rate from 18.1% in August 2022(Q3) to 24.3% in November 2022 (Q4), which is equivalent to an increase of 6.2%. (LFS, November 2022). It remains relatively higher among females (28.3%) as compared to males (20.9%) and is also relatively higher (29.7%) among youth population aged 16 years to 30 years. According to the Rwanda Labour Force Survey (LFS) in November 2022(Q4), the employment rates decreased from 61% in November 2021 to 58.6% in November 2022 (Rwanda LFS, November 2022); and more than 50% of the working age population (16 years and above) were not employed. Moreover, in November 2022(Q4), the share of subsistence agriculture in population outside labour force increased to 35.3% (an increase of 1.8%) from 33.5% in November 2021(Q4). The employment-to-population ratio decreased to 44.4% in November 2022(Q4) as compared to 46.5% registered one year back in November 2021 (Q4).

Lack of qualified and skilled human capital and limited collaboration or partnership between private sector, academia and researchers to leverage the transformative potential of Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) for experimental development are to blame. The situation makes it difficult for Rwanda to create prototypes and innovations, create new services and products, support industrial growth, create jobs and impact labour market. In the industry sector,

the important decline of employment was observed in construction (-115,050 workers) and manufacturing (-67,733 workers) while mining and quarrying gained an increase of +13,739 workers. In services sector, the important gain of employment was observed in education (+58,353), Accommodation and food service activities (+21,081) and Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (+12,950).

3.4.3. Key Recommendations for SDG 9

- The GoR should balance between industry & infrastructure and agriculture demands to make land use more rational.
- GoR of Rwanda should invest more in rural-based innovation infrastructures to ensure the innovation ecosystem is not only concentrated in the City of Kigali.

3.5. Specific Key Findings for SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and communities

3.5.1. Key Rwanda's Achievements towards SDG11

This review looked at the urban, social and environmental determinants of well-being, including safe health services, adequate, affordable, and sustainable food, housing, water and energy and transportation services as well as climate change adaption and mitigation measures. Rwanda targets 35% of sustainable urbanization by 2024 (coinciding with the end of NST1) and has taken a holistic approach to integrate green buildings and design, efficient and renewable energy, recycling and inclusive living strategies to ensure sustainable cities and communities. It emphasizes the need to provide climate resilient urban services such as: transport and housing. The *National Land Use Master Plan* revised in 2020 provides a long term roadmap aligned to the Vision 2050 for the development of a hierarchy of sustainable cities, towns and urban areas and the Green City Kigali is seen as a blueprint for other cities, for the region and for the continent.

To promote affordable housing needs and sustainable communities, the county has already developed the Smart City Rwanda Master Plan, and the urban sector's strategic plans and all envision the emergence of 'smart cities' across the country. Rwanda's intends for its smart cities to use data-led management and planning, efficient community-based infrastructure and services, and localized and shared innovation to support the creation of compact, connected, socially inclusive and resilient cities. The National Urbanization Policy (NUP), provides guidelines to review of all City Master Plans to ensure that they are citizen-centered and aligned to National Development Goals (MINIFRA, 2023). Rwanda has established a Spatial Development

Framework (SDF), the Rwanda Affordable Housing Fund and policy to enable investments in socio-economic infrastructure through public-private-partnership model.

The country has also digitized land use to inform Master Planning and implementation as well as increasing efficiencies in providing basic amenities and exploring options for smart, digital, ICT based options for wastewater treatment, sustainable solid waste management, Smart water supply networks; smart water metering; optimization of the integrated WASH Management Information System (MIS); an urban underground connected ‘Internet of Things (IoT) network for wastewater monitoring; and technology-based filtering of harvested rainwater.

To contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions globally, Rwanda has taken necessary actions to fulfill its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) through the implementation of the Green Growth and Climate Resilience Strategy to mainstream climate action in planning and budgeting and the costing of sectoral targets (education, health, social protection, WASH sectors). The creation of the Kigali International Finance Centre, the Rwanda Innovation Fund, and Rwanda’s National Climate Fund (FONERWA) are all good examples of Rwanda’s commitment to achieving its vision of a carbon-neutral economy by 2050, and to become one of the best places in the world for green investment. Rwanda plans to implement circular economy innovations, recycling, waste to energy and efficient, labour-intensive separation processes to effectively manage municipal solid waste. Pilot projects in the City of Kigali have already demonstrated a marked improvement in resource-efficiency, and reduction of environmental impacts. The government aims to scale up such pilot initiatives, which would entail a range of interventions in water, electricity and solid waste management to ensure the efficient delivery of critical urban services. In May 2020, Rwanda submitted its updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) which prioritizes 24 adaptation interventions in 8 key sectors namely: water, agriculture, land and forestry, human settlement, health, transport, mining and cross-sectional like warning system & disaster response, capacity for NDC implementation management and access to finance.

3.5.2. Key Challenges to Achieving SDG 11

Challenges to achieve SDG 11 are mainly associated with the increase of Rwanda population from 10.5 million in 2012 to 13.2 million in 2022 (an increase of 2.7million) over a decade and with an annual population growth rate of 2.3% (NISR, 2022⁵). The situation means more repercussions on water, energy, sanitation, land use, housing, food security and environment; subsequently pausing big challenges to achieving the set SDGs targets. The Population living in urban areas increased from 18.4% in 2016/17 to 27.90% and Rwanda is one of the most rapidly urbanizing countries in the world. CSOs are emphasize the need to provide climate resilient urban services such as affordable safe water, energy, health services, transport and housing as specified below.

- **Challenges associated with land use:** Despite the *National Land Use Master Plan* revised in 2020 provides a long-term roadmap aligned to the Vision 2050 for the development of a hierarchy of sustainable cities, towns and urban areas, it estimated that for instance 63% of the population in the City of Kigali (African Development Bank, 2019) lives in informal settlements that are subject to high natural risks induced by climate change. “Kigali as the prime economic hub of Rwanda will have to accommodate a much larger population with well-planned and safe neighborhoods. The National Urban Informal Settlements Upgrading Strategy, and the City-Wide Unplanned and Underserviced Settlements Upgrading Strategy for Kigali, the Urbanization Sector Strategic Plan for 2018-2024 target the reduction of 10% of the urban population living in unplanned settlements by 2024. In the peri-urban and rural areas, CSOs reported the unplanned mushroom of houses even in those areas reserved for the agriculture; and expressed fears about food insecurity, increasing prices of food commodities.
- **Challenges associated with Water & Energy:** The water losses or The Non-Revenue water (NRW), unequal water distribution, and limited funds to rehabilitate, expand or invest in new water treatment plans and pipelines are key challenges to achieving universal access to clean water in Rwanda by 2024. The Rwanda’s target to reduce NRW from 40% to 5% by 2030, still requires a lot of work in reconfiguring water networks and technological innovations such as water remote sensing, satellite technology and proactive monitoring and control.

⁵ The report of the 5th Population and Housing Census was released in February 27; 2023

In the area of **Energy**, Rwanda faces high energy costs, the unreliability of the national electric grid, and irresponsible consumption of energy, which requires equipping consumers with tools that encourage them to consume energy more responsibly and more efficiently.

- **Challenges associated with Housing and Urbanisation:** A lot of efforts have been put forth to equip citizens with information on land zoning, master plans and guidance on how to obtain construction permits in Rwanda. Despite these efforts, some people continue to bypass regulations and rather develop informal settlements that do not meet the required urbanization standards. This creates a mushroom effect of slums around cities, which are not only disrupting the city's sustainability plan, but also putting occupants at predictable risks. As of August 2022, 80% of construction permit applications submitted to Rwanda Housing Authority (and district one stop centers) do not either meet minimum requirements, or are not following urbanization standards required for the applied permit, which results in rejection.

CSOs believe, citizen participation in urban planning and monitoring processes is very limited therefore. While investment in early detection and warning innovative systems of informal settlements such use drones and satellite imagery to proactively detect and warn city managers of any informal settlement much earlier before full development, and provide advisory to the land owner can provide a solution, education and active engagement with citizens is pivotal to accelerating sustainable urbanization. CSOs believe, also the long bureaucratic processes for expropriation and for obtaining construction permits contribute to mushrooming of informal settlements; hence the urgency to timely compensate citizens for expropriated properties and minimize infrastructure project delays.

- **Challenges associated with Transport:** Despite Rwanda's aims to reduce the waiting time in the City of Kigali from 30 minutes to 15 minutes during peak hours by 2024, CSOs observation is that the target is not achievable with the current state of urban traffic flow and system. CSOs appreciate the fact that Rwanda is developing new road networks, however, they believe many roads are not enough but rather rethinking the public transportation system whereby the Government has to be the main investor in order to increase public transport capacity, subsequently reduce the use of individual cars for all commuters.

Thinking about big investments in subways and intelligent traffic routing mechanisms would also ease the congestion as the distribution of the traffic flow across all available roads would be known.

- **Challenges associated with Environment and climate change:** As Rwanda faces rapid urbanization, there are also complex effects including changes in land use, encroachment on vegetation and the surrounding area which changed the urban environment and affects the circulation of the urban hydrological and ecological systems in general. With the rapid urbanization rate, there is also a surge in water and energy demands due to increased number of human activities in cities, infrastructures and cars and. It is estimated that needs Rwanda an investment of around 11 billion dollars to measure and pinpoint different CO2 concentration levels above city atmospheres, and to track progress towards net-zero by 2050 (World Bank, April 2023).
- **Challenges associated with essential services for urban dwellers:** Rwanda has recently faced edged agricultural commodity markets, elevated energy costs and food prices, hitting the hardest the most vulnerable people. These crises have also impacted Rwanda's economy and its people with overall inflationary pressures remaining high. According to the Rwanda National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR, May 2023), Rwanda's Consumer Price Index (CPI), main gauge of inflation increased by 17.8 percent year on year in April 2023 down from 19.3 percent in March 2023. In April 2023, Food and non-alcoholic beverages increased by 36.8% on annual basis and increased by 2.2 percent on monthly basis (NISR, May 2023). While the effects of the pandemic and war in Ukraine are to be blamed, many CSOs believe lack of rational use of land to meet both food security and housing demands has exacerbated the situation. They call upon more investment in water and energy to make them affordable and safe but also draw more attention on inclusion of women and most vulnerable categories such as people with disabilities in the management of water, gendered strategies for access to clean energy. Further, CSOs believe pro-poor urban planning and green economy policies especially in the CoK and satellite cities are needed by accommodating informal sector and setting up its graduation steps.

Key Recommendations for SDG11

- Bearing in mind the topographic nature of the country coupled with the significant demographic shifts towards urban areas, Rwanda needs to develop its own, unique urban model while balancing both rural and urban development.
- Through social inclusion and affordable housing, Rwanda should pay more attention on pro-poor urban planning and green economy policies especially in the City of Kigali and satellite cities by accommodating informal sector and setting up its graduation steps.
- CSOs think there is more to be done towards supporting informal sector to transition and eventually graduate into formal sector; subsequently contributing to internal revenues.

3.6. Specific Key Findings for SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

3.6.1. Key Achievements for SDG17

The goal 17 is about strengthening the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. This implies Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through international support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection. Rwanda highly values and maintains strong regional, continental and global partnerships (SDG17) to be able to implement all SDGs. Rwanda Development Board (RDB) plays a vital role in attracting investments by branding the “Made in Rwanda” program and developing investment conducive environment. Recent financial & tax reforms (February 2023) and Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) that Rwanda has already adopted are impetus to increased national capacity to fund the national budget, reduction of transactional costs and attraction of more external investments in the country.

CSOs acknowledge Rwanda’s legal and policy frameworks that offer an enabling environment for different Non-State Actors including private investors, UN Agencies and other development partners and NGOs to invest and operate in Rwanda. Just to mention a few, Rwanda has enjoyed and continue to enjoy strong partnerships with different Development Partners (DPs) including UN Agencies, World Bank, International Monitoring Fund (IMF), European Union (EU), Commonwealth Head of Government Meeting (CHOGM), USA, China, France, Japan, Sweden, Belgium, African Development Bank, Netherlands, KOICA, Global UN Funds (SDG-Fund and PBF), Joint Programme (JP), NGOs, Philanthropists, Private Investors and many other DPs.

The United Nations Coordination Team (UNCT)⁶ has facilitated Rwanda to development of the country's Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF). The country has already conducted the diagnosis of the funding landscape including a dedicated Green Investment Facility being set up to mobilize significant investments in green growth and sustainable energy transformation, as well as a dedicated Blended Finance Facility, capacity building in Public Financial Management (PFM), and the development of innovative financing strategies.

Rwanda has been the first African country to secure access to US\$ 319 million from the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF), which was created this year with the aim of helping low-income and vulnerable middle-income IMF members address longer-term structural challenges such as climate change with longer-term, low-cost financing (IMF, 2023). Further, the UN's collaboration with the Government of Rwanda and the private sector to leverage the AfCFTA trade opportunities is instrumental for Rwanda's economic growth.

3.6.2. Key Challenges for Rwanda to Achieve SDG17

Rwanda continue to face inflationary pressures caused by rise in food prices as well as high commodity prices and tight global financing conditions which have weakened Rwanda's external position (World Bank, April 2023). CSOs that were involved in the Rwanda 2023 VAR, fear that that economic shocks from the external environment such as COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine may have long lasting negative effects on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and informal sector; make it very difficult for Rwanda to increase its national capacities to fund the national budget at 80%. The situation, may push informal and small business to close doors. The situation may increase Rwanda's external debt and dependency to fund its national budget. As for the funding of climate change actions, CSOs raised big concerns about "Developing Global South including Rwanda that may fall into the trap of "Developed Global North" by accepting empty promises" towards the funding of climate change commitments at the expense of their small economies, smallholder farmers in the Southern Globe becoming the most victims.

⁶ The UNCT in Rwanda is made up of all the heads of UN agencies, funds, and programs that are operating in the country, with a total of 22 agencies and 14 physically present.

3.6.3. Key Recommendations for Achieving SDG17

- For Rwanda to meet its 2035 goal of becoming an upper middle-income country, WB estimates that the country will need to raise its exports from 20% today to 46% by 2035, requiring an economic growth of 12% per year; which is very difficult in the current situation. For Rwanda to generate that growth, it needs to increase with neighbors such as Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and take advantage of potential trade opportunities of the AfCTA. Rwanda needs more work on standardization of various export products in order to secure certification for an internationally quality standard, such as International Organisation for standardization (ISO) Certificate, which is critical in facilitating firms' participation in international trade.
 - The county also needs to advance its ambition of becoming a logistical hub through continued investment in infrastructure. (Calvin Zebaze Djiofack, a World Bank Senior Economist; April2023). CSOs recommend Rwanda to invest more in cross-border trade and the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA), more than it does with European, Asian and American countries.
 - CSOs recommend deliberate national measures and strategies to develop and support the “transitional economy” to enable informal businesses graduate into informal businesses.
 - CSOs recommend Rwanda to stand firms on its interests first and ensure significant transformation of global funding architecture of the climate change agenda is first adopted either by creating a separate climate change funding mechanism.
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