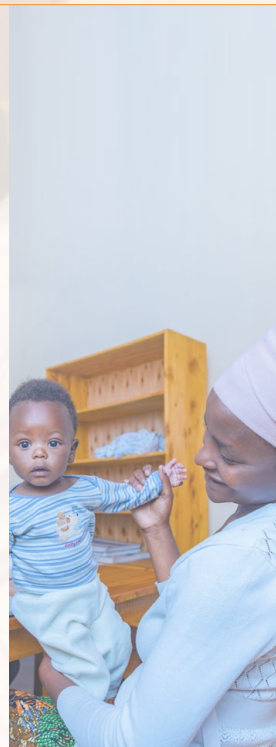




# IMPACT REPORT 2024

UNFPA RWANDA

*Delivering a world where every pregnancy  
is wanted, every childbirth is safe, and  
every young person's potential is fulfilled.*



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# I. Message from the Country Representative



**Dear Partners and Friends,**

**As I reflect on the past year, I am deeply inspired by the unwavering commitment of the Government of Rwanda and the strong sense of ownership in accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The swift and nouvelle actions that have been taken to address gaps and drive impactful change have again, reinforced my belief in Rwanda's ability to serve as a model of resilience and innovation, even beyond our continent.**

**It has been a privilege to work alongside the dedicated UNFPA Rwanda team whose passion and tireless efforts have propelled our mission forward. Through collaboration, innovation, and a deep commitment to leaving no one behind, we have made significant strides in advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender equality, mental health, and climate action. Most importantly, I believe we could not have achieved these results without the unflinching support of the government at all levels, including the beneficiaries of our services, especially the young people who have shown tremendous agility and positive attitude towards their own development and that of the country.**

This year, we witnessed the power of youth-led innovation and inclusive partnerships. From the groundbreaking Youth Connekt Africa Summit, where young innovators presented bold solutions to lingering societal challenges, to our contributions to ICPD30 milestones while placing young

people at the center of our engagement, and our collaboration with key stakeholders on the 5th Health Sector Strategic Plan and the National Health Research Agenda, our collective efforts have shaped policies and programs that create lasting impact. In support of the visionary 4 by 4 initiative of the government that is aimed at ensuring adequate and high quality healthcare for all in Rwanda, we have contributed to the improvement of midwifery education. UNFPA was also a key partner to the government in its quick response to public health challenges, including the MVD and Mpox outbreaks..

A key highlight of 2024 has been the integration of mental health within SRHR programs, ensuring that young people, especially adolescent girls, receive the holistic care they deserve. By leveraging digital innovations, we have enhanced maternal health services, expanded access to youth-friendly SRHR information, and implemented targeted interventions in refugee camps, ensuring that we reach the furthest behind first while ensuring that no one is left behind.

I would like to reiterate that our partnership with government institutions, the civil society including youth groups, and the private sector has been the driving force behind our progress. We have amplified the voices of boys and young men in promoting gender equality and reproductive health, while also tackling the growing challenge of technology-facilitated gender-based violence. As we close this chapter and prepare for the year ahead, I want to call on all our partners, stakeholders, and champions to build on what we have achieved in 2024 for greater heights in 2025 and beyond. Your unwavering support and collaboration have been instrumental in advancing UNFPA's mission in Rwanda and I sincerely thank you for this. Together, I believe we will continue to build a future where every woman and every young person can realize their full potential.

**Dr. Olugbemiga Adelakin**  
**Country Representative**  
**UNFPA Rwanda**

## II. Country Context

### 1 Rwanda's Progress and the Road Ahead



The principles of the ICPD are deeply embedded in Rwanda's Vision 2050, which emphasizes harnessing the demographic dividend through strategic investments in youth, gender equality, and reproductive health. Over the past decade, Rwanda has achieved notable progress in maternal and child health, with modern contraceptive usage and maternal mortality declining. Additionally, robust data systems, including the Population and Housing Census and the Data Revolution Policy, have reinforced evidence-based policymaking, ensuring that no one is left behind.

As part of its commitment to fostering inclusive policy dialogue, Rwanda's Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning together with UNFPA and AfriYAN co-organized the Intergenerational Youth-led Dialogue in August 2024, bringing together policymakers, young leaders, and civil society representatives to assess national progress on the ICPD agenda. This engagement underscored the importance of youth participation in governance and sustainable development, resulting in a set of youth-centered policy recommendations aimed at strengthening Rwanda's policy frameworks. The country's

efforts to integrate population dynamics into national planning have also been reaffirmed at global platforms, including the 57th Session of the Commission on Population and Development, where Rwanda emphasized the need for data-driven approaches to address emerging demographic challenges such as climate change, migration, and shifting fertility trends.

Rwanda's demographic landscape is evolving, with a median age rising from 17.4 years in 2002 to 20 years in 2022, signaling a

demographic transition. The country remains steadfast in its commitment to empowering its youthful population, which comprises nearly 60% of the total population, recognizing their role as key drivers of national development. Through continued investment in education, health, and economic empowerment, Rwanda is accelerating progress towards achieving the ICPD goals, ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, and fostering gender equality.







## 2 Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights





### Maternal mortality

The Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) reduced dramatically between the years **2000 and 2015**, from **1071** to **210** maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. However, the last DHS 2019-2020 reported MMR as **203** per 100,000, underscoring minimal reduction from **210** in 2015. Preventable maternal deaths occur mainly in facilities where skilled attended deliveries exceed **90%**, indicating poor quality of care.



### Family Planning

The total fertility rate (TFR) in Rwanda significantly declined from **6.1** in 2000 to **3.6** children per woman in 2022 (RPHC-5), with a higher TFR of 4.0, in refugee camps. Increased investments in FP commodities led to a **48%** increase in modern contraceptive prevalence rate (from **10%** to **58%**) among married women (15-49) between 2005 to 2020. Despite these gains, inequalities in access remain, e.g. higher unmet need for FP at **37%** for sexually active unmarried women compared to **14%** among currently married women. The percentage of adolescent girls aged 15-19 who have begun childbearing currently stands at **5.2%**.



### Gender Based Violence

From 2010 to date, there have been no reductions in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) trends. The prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) among ever-married women increased from **40%** in 2014 to **46%** in 2019. Overall, the percentage of women who have experienced physical violence since age 15 increased from **35%** in 2014 to **37%** in 2019, while for men, the percentage decreased from **39%** to **30%**. The high acceptance of IPV among the female population is alarming, with **65%** of women aged 15-49 and **39%** of men agreeing to wife-beating by husbands for a variety of reasons.



# III. 2024 Impact at a glance

## 1 Harnessing the Potential of Health Research, Policy and Innovation

### 1.1. Research and Policy Dialogue

#### a Youth Connect Africa Summit 2024

UNFPA's participation at the YouthConnect Africa Summit 2024 showcased its commitment to empowering young innovators and leaders. The summit featured UNFPA's HackLab 2024, which celebrated young African innovators who developed solutions to address two of the continent's pressing issues: climate

resilience and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

UNFPA's commitment to youth empowerment was further highlighted during the high-level plenary on mental health and SRHR at the summit, where the importance of integrating mental health and SRHR services was emphasized, urging governments, civil

society, and young people to collaborate in addressing these issues.

Throughout the summit, UNFPA, in partnership with the Rwanda Biomedical Centre and Health Development Initiative, provided essential SRHR services to participants, including free HIV testing, sanitary pads, and condoms. More than 165 young people accessed these services, ensuring that their health needs were met during the event.





b

## Contributing to National Health Research and Policy

In 2024, UNFPA, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders, played a crucial role in advancing Rwanda's health sector through strategic initiatives and collaborations. The agency contributed to the development of key health policy frameworks, including the National Health Research Agenda and the Research, Innovation, and Data Science Strategic Plan, ensuring a sustainable, data-driven approach to health.

UNFPA reinforced its commitment to evidence-based policymaking by supporting the 3rd Annual Health Research and Policy Conference, which served as a platform for healthcare stakeholders to translate research into actionable policies focused on maternal and adolescent health. Furthermore, UNFPA contributed to the development and dissemination of the National 5th Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSP5), emphasizing reproductive health, gender-based violence prevention, and universal health coverage.

UNFPA also supported the 10th Annual Research Conference for the Rwanda Society for Obstetricians and Gynecologists, reaffirming its dedication to maternal health. In addition, UNFPA contributed to the organisation of the Medical Students' Association of Rwanda (MEDSAR) Scientific Conference, advancing knowledge and dialogue in adolescent sexual and reproductive health rights.



## c Intergenerational Youth-Led Dialogue on ICPD30

As part of the commitment to fostering inclusive policy dialogue, UNFPA co-organized with AFRIYAN and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN), an Intergenerational Youth-led Dialogue in August 2024, bringing together young leaders, policymakers, and civil society representatives to discuss Rwanda's progress on the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) agenda. The dialogue served as a platform to unpack [key recommendations](#) from the Cotonou Youth Action Agenda, contextualizing them within Rwanda's development framework.





## 1.2. Youth and HealthTech Innovation

### Accelerating Innovation for SRHR and Mental Health

In addition to expanding healthcare access, UNFPA Rwanda continued to foster youth-led innovation through the Innovation Accelerator (iAccelerator), a mentorship-driven program launched in partnership with Imbuto Foundation, the Ministry of Youth & Arts, and other stakeholders. The sixth phase of the iAccelerator in 2024 provided young entrepreneurs with seed funding, training, and skills development to create solutions for SRHR, family planning, and mental health challenges.



The winners were supported with capacity-building and mentorship to refine their innovations, making them scalable, sustainable, and market-ready. The program enhances employability, confidence, and motivation, while also connecting young innovators with mentors, industry experts, and investors to accelerate their impact and growth.

UNFPA also supported the Hanga Pitch program, led by MINICT, through which nearly 20 youth-led innovation businesses received funding to tackle, among others, key challenges in maternal health, GBV prevention, and adolescent-friendly services while also generating income and creating jobs.







## **b** Young Innovators Revolutionizing Maternal Health with Telehealth Solutions

In another step toward enhancing maternal health, UNFPA Rwanda, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH), awarded three teams for developing telehealth digital tools aimed at enabling safe abortion services at the health centre level. This initiative, which took place during a hackathon held from July 31 to August 9, brought together young innovators, designers,

and developers to create a home-grown telehealth solution for secure communication between healthcare providers in health centres and district hospitals. The hackathon supported Rwanda's efforts to improve access to, and the quality of, maternal health services, while advancing the digitalization of the healthcare system. The first-place team, ETITE, was awarded \$8,000, while Ikaze Health and Ubuzima Netlinks received \$4,500 and \$2,000, respectively. Following its successful approval, the telehealth tool was officially

integrated into the Ministry of Health's digital infrastructure. To ensure smooth implementation, healthcare providers and researchers received hands-on training, equipping them with the necessary skills to use the platform effectively. As the tool is piloted in five districts in preparation of a nationwide roll out, the development team continues to provide technical support, ensuring seamless adoption and optimization.



## 2 Expanding access to integrated SRHR, HIV and GBV services and information

Through partnership with the Government, the Civil Society, and other UN agencies in 2024, UNFPA Rwanda made significant strides in expanding access to integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), HIV, and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) services and information.

### 2.1. Improving SRHR and GBV Support Systems in Refugee Camps

- a** UNFPA and Alight continued their collaboration to enhance access to integrated HIV, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention services in refugee camps. Community engagement and youth-friendly approaches were proven essential for sustainable SRHR and GBV interventions. Strengthening partnerships improves service delivery and survivor support, while addressing

stigma fosters open discussions on sexual and reproductive health. Providing incentives for peer educators and maintaining program flexibility ensure continued youth engagement and participation.

- More than **3,000** peer-led SRHR and GBV prevention sessions were delivered to over **35,000** participants (**19,888** males and **15,534** females) across refugee camps in Rwanda.
- Peer educators facilitated visits to Youth-Friendly

Spaces, contributing to increased awareness and engagement in SRHR and GBV prevention efforts. Capacity building and training initiatives also played a key role, with GBV activists and drama groups trained on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) and GBV prevention resulting in the **311** screenings of individuals and **5** referral of cases for further response services.





## 2.2. Engaging Boys and Young Men: A Transformative Approach to Gender Equality and SRHR

Engaging boys and young men is a transformative strategy for advancing gender equality and improving Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) outcomes. Social norms shape their attitudes and roles in SRHR, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention, and HIV prevention, making norm change essential for lasting progress.

UNFPA, in collaboration with AfriYAN Rwanda, launched a dynamic campaign in November 2024 to position boys and young men as allies in societal transformation. Central to the initiative was the AfriYAN Youth Empowerment Hub, which strengthened social media advocacy by equipping youth with content creation skills to amplify their voices on adolescent SRHR. The campaign leveraged X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube to drive conversations, reaching over 17,000 individuals and achieving a 14.8% engagement rate. Influencers and creative content—animations, infographics, and myth-busting narratives—promoted positive masculinity, gender equality, and SRHR awareness.

Beyond digital engagement, field visits captured perspectives from boys, young men, and girls on their roles in advancing SRHR, shaping compelling vox pop videos that resonated online. To deepen impact, 20 journalists received SRHR-focused storytelling training, while youth-led organizations gained expertise in engaging boys and men in advocacy and program planning.





## 2.3. Empowering Digital Safety: A Collective Effort Against Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence.

The 'MY DIGITAL SPACE SHOULD BE SAFE' Campaign conducted in partnership with The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) has demonstrated remarkable success in addressing the critical issue of technology-facilitated gender-based violence in Rwanda. With an estimated reach of 7 million people across various platforms and events, the campaign has effectively raised awareness about TFGBV while promoting responsible digital behavior and community engagement.

The campaign's multi-channel approach, combining traditional media, social media, community events, and

artistic expressions, proved highly effective in reaching diverse audience segments. The strong partnerships formed with media outlets, youth leaders, artists, and government institutions have created a solid foundation for future initiatives addressing digital safety and gender-based violence.

However, the increasing prevalence of technology-facilitated gender-based violence, coupled with rapid technological advancement, necessitates sustained effort and attention. The momentum gained from this campaign presents an opportune moment to launch more targeted follow-up initiatives.

These future campaigns should build upon our lessons learned while addressing emerging challenges in the digital space.

It is evident that the fight against TFGBV requires ongoing commitment, resources, and collaboration among all stakeholders. The success of this campaign demonstrates that when we unite our efforts, we can create meaningful impact in making digital spaces safer for all.





“

**Dr. Olugbemiga Adelakin**  
Country Representative  
UNFPA Rwanda

*It is within this context that UNFPA and MIGEPROF decided to use the 16 days of activism against GBV and the whole month of December, to raise awareness on this new form of GBV, educating the public about its manifestations, how to spot it and more importantly, how to report it.*

”



“

**Ms. Mireille BATAMULIZA**  
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of  
Gender and Family Promotion

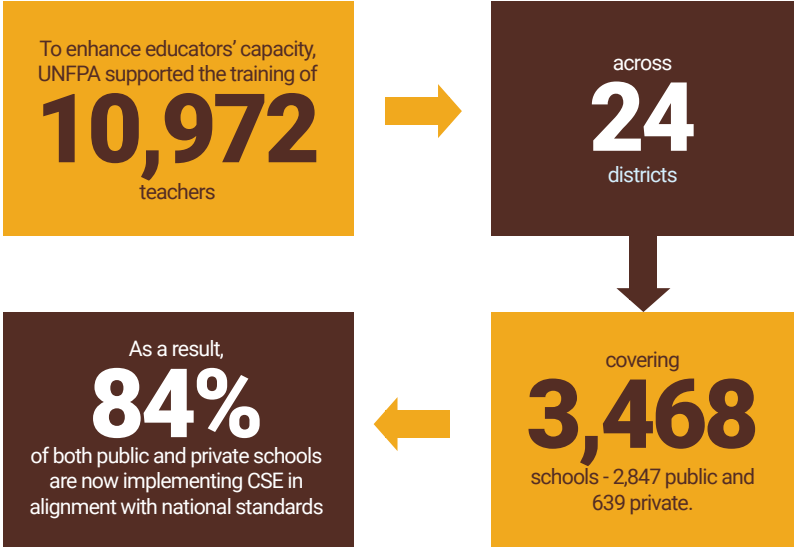
*“This campaign, **“My Digital Space Should Be Safe.** embodies Rwanda’s commitment to fostering safe, empowering, and respectful online spaces for both women, men and young people. It reflects our vision of ensuring that every individual, regardless of gender, can navigate digital platforms without fear. This aligns seamlessly with our broader aspiration of “All for GBV-Free Families.”*

”

2.4. Streamlining Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in Rwanda's Primary and Secondary Education

During the reporting year, Rwanda had a total of 4,112 primary and secondary schools, including 3,319 public and government-subsidized schools and 792 private schools. CSE has been fully integrated into the Competency-Based Curriculum, ensuring its implementation in all schools as per national standards.

In collaboration with the Rwanda Basic Education Board, UNFPA supported the development CSE reference manuals to be distributed in 3,468 schools. Additionally, UNFPA partnered with the Government of Rwanda to revise and simplify the CSE toolkit, facilitating easier implementation in classrooms.





### 3 Towards Zero Preventable Maternal Deaths and Zero Unmet Need for Family Planning

#### 3.1. Ensuring Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health through Life-saving Commodities

**In Rwanda, 72% of maternal deaths are preventable, with postpartum hemorrhage (PPH) accounting for 45% of direct causes—over half of which occur after cesarean sections. To accelerate the reduction of preventable maternal deaths, the Ministry of Health (MoH) integrated innovative PPH management tools into the national Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (EmONC) and obstetrics guidelines in 2020.**

In 2024, UNFPA made significant strides in improving maternal and reproductive healthcare by procuring and delivering life-saving commodities valued at over USD 4 million. These included oxytocics, heat-stable carbetocin, magnesium sulfate, non-pneumatic anti-shock garments, uterine balloon tamponades, bedside monitoring machines, and modern contraceptives. Additionally, UNFPA's support in family planning ensured that more than 750,000 couples were protected from unintended pregnancies through an expanded mix of contraceptive methods.

Beyond procurement, UNFPA has strengthened Rwanda's healthcare system by reinforcing the national supply chain. Through technical assistance and quantification exercises, UNFPA helped maintain a steady supply of critical reproductive health commodities, ensuring that health facilities across the country provide uninterrupted care to women and girls. Capacity-building has been another key area of support. In collaboration with the MoH, UNFPA has conducted regular training sessions and provided technical assistance to healthcare providers and supply chain managers, enhancing their ability to forecast, procure, and manage reproductive health supplies effectively. This strategic approach has contributed to the reduction of stockouts and improved service delivery in maternal and reproductive health nationwide.

### 3.2. Empowering Midwives: Driving Policy, Education, and Change for Maternal Health

In response to the Ministry of Health's call for support in its 4x4 strategy—aimed at quadrupling the health workforce within four years, with a specific focus on midwifery education—UNFPA has played a leading role. It pioneered midwifery scholarships and spearheaded the development of the standardized midwifery curriculum. A scientific study was conducted to assess faculty capacity-building needs, ensuring the effective implementation of the new competency-based curriculum. The curriculum development process was published in a commentary titled [Rwanda's Success in Advancing Midwifery Education: A Blueprint for Sustainable, Nationally Driven Curriculum](#).

Standardization. Inspired by this success, the Ministry of Health and its partners are now planning to review and standardize Rwanda's nursing curriculum in 2025, with UNFPA requested to support the process. This initiative underscores UNFPA's catalytic role in strengthening health systems through collaboration and innovation.

To further strengthen midwifery, UNFPA and the Ministry of Health successfully mobilized \$1.1 million from the Government of India through South-South cooperation. This funding will support a two-year project (January 2025–December 2026) focused on expanding midwifery education in Rwanda. Key activities include providing

additional scholarships, facilitating South-South learning exchanges, enhancing the Rwanda Association of Midwives, and rolling out the new standardized curriculum with targeted faculty training.

Beyond education and training, UNFPA has supported the Rwanda Association of Midwives and engaged in regional collaborations to advocate for policy reforms that enhance maternal health outcomes. The ICM Africa and Eastern Mediterranean Region Conference, hosted in Kigali in September 2024, served as a vital platform for midwives to engage in policy dialogue, share best practices, and strengthen regional networks.





### 3.3. Strengthening Lifesaving Care: Rwanda's First National Network of EmONC Facilities

Beyond advocacy, UNFPA Rwanda also prioritized expanding access to lifesaving maternal and newborn care. In May 2024, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, UNFPA led a landmark validation workshop for Rwanda's first national network of Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (EmONC) facilities. This initiative marked a critical step toward reducing maternal and neonatal mortality, ensuring that every woman and newborn in Rwanda has timely access to quality care.

The validation process involved 126 participants, including healthcare professionals, public health officials, and development partners to respond on the key findings from the 2021 Rapid EmONC Needs Assessment that revealed that only 24 (18%) over 130 designated health facilities were fully functioning EmONC facilities. As a starting phase, 155 designated EmONC facilities were validated under the National Network of EmONC Facilities, made by 98 Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (BEmONC) facilities providing essential maternal health services and 57 Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (CEmONC) facilities offering advanced interventions such as blood transfusions and cesarean sections. This milestone underscores UNFPA Rwanda's commitment to strengthening maternal healthcare and reducing preventable deaths.



### 3.4. Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response (MPCDSR) in Rwanda

In 2024, UNFPA offered both technical and financial support to the MoH to organize a bi-annual national MPCDSR Committee meetings and the peer learning workshops of hospital MPCDSR committee members to strengthen the maternal perinatal ,child death surveillance and response (MPCDSR) efforts, in addition to the investment in real life saving intervention of the onsite and off-site mentorship in safe surgical skills, focusing on the safe anesthesia practices to save more mothers.

UNFPA reinforced mentorship and supportive supervision at high-burden hospitals to reduce preventable maternal deaths, particularly at Mibilizi Hospital, a rural facility that previously ranked among the top five hospitals with the highest maternal mortality. To address gaps in anesthesia-related maternal deaths, UNFPA funded targeted training for maternity and surgical teams, including hands-on resuscitation and general anesthesia skills. A tertiary hospital anesthesiologist was supported to conduct two weeks of on-site training, followed by two weeks of off-site mentorship for non-physician anesthetists at the tertiary hospital settings. Complemented by the hiring of an obstetrician and infrastructure improvements by the Ministry of Health, these targeted interventions led to a remarkable 77% reduction in maternal deaths at Mibilizi Hospital within a year, demonstrating the effectiveness of continuous capacity-building and supervision in high-risk settings

A three-day national meeting, funded and technically supported by UNFPA, convened key stakeholders to address critical gaps in maternal and newborn health, including low death audit rates, inconsistent guideline implementation, and inadequate data utilization. Key recommendations included developing an annual MPCDSR report, procuring life-saving equipment, activating a digital health information system for death reporting, and enhancing research initiatives. Additionally, capacity-building workshops equipped 50 audit committee members with improved skills in maternal death audits and quality improvement strategies. These efforts are fostering a more data-driven and collaborative response to maternal and perinatal mortality.

Furthermore, UNFPA supported the development and revision of Rwanda's national MPCDSR policy and strategic guidelines to improve maternal, neonatal, and child health outcomes. In 2024, the Ministry of Health revised the guidelines based on lessons learned from past implementation, incorporating a door-to-death analysis approach to strengthen accountability and response mechanisms.

A major upcoming milestone is the digitalization of maternal, perinatal, and child death audit tools, which will enhance real-time documentation and timely reviews of preventable deaths at both national and sub-national levels. This initiative will further strengthen collaborative, data-driven efforts aimed at reducing maternal and child mortality, ensuring that every preventable death informs future interventions and policy decisions.



## 4 The UNFPA Strategic Investment Facility



## 4.1. Youth Empowerment Accelerator for Health (YEAH!)

The YEAH! project, funded by the UNFPA's Strategic Investment Facility (SIF) and running from November 2023 to December 2025, focuses on integrating adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) with economic empowerment to improve health outcomes and create livelihood opportunities for youth in Rwanda.

The project's key achievements in 2024 include:

### Youth Savings Groups:

YEAH! successfully expanded from **25** to **40** youth savings groups, each with 20-25 members. These groups received training in SRHR, business readiness, and savings mobilization. By the end of 2024, **over 4 million Rwandan francs** were loaned to **23** participants, promoting MSMEs and showing **100%** loan repayment consistency.

### Leveraging Funds:

Initially targeting **\$4.5 million** by 2025, YEAH! mobilized **\$8.06 million** by the end of 2024. This includes support from the Government of Luxembourg, which funded a 4-year initiative and integrated Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) into TVET programs, and the Government of Rwanda's National Youth Fund, offering affordable loans and SRHR literacy programs to young entrepreneurs.

### Youth-Led Social Enterprises:

Collaboration with the Government on the YEAH! project resulted in the creation of **40** youth groups in Nyanza and Rusizi districts and the awarding of TVET scholarships to **341** youth. Graduates received start-up kits to boost their entrepreneurial potential.

### Improved Quality of Life:

The project developed SRHR modules integrated into financial literacy programs, focusing on adolescent mothers. A Teenage Pregnancy costing tool was developed to demonstrate the economic and social costs of teenage pregnancies, influencing future preventative interventions.

### SRHR Innovations:

YEAH! has supported youth innovation through the i-Accelerator and Hanga Pitch programs, awarding funding to over **20** youth-led businesses addressing SRHR challenges. These businesses have collectively raised **\$335,000** and reached over **25,518** individuals. Additionally, a digital monitoring system is being developed to track the performance of SRHR innovations.

### Impact on Youth Enterprises:

The project continues to assess the impact of its interventions on youth enterprises, with a study underway to provide data-driven insights for scaling successful initiatives.



## 4.2. Empowering Health Posts to Advance Universal Health Coverage

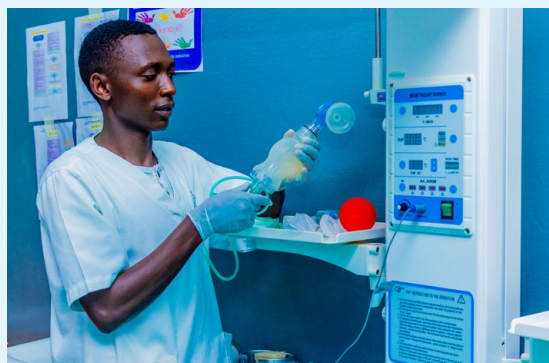
This SIF project focuses on achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in Rwanda by strengthening health posts and improving health outcomes for women, children, adolescents, and young people. Recognizing the government cannot achieve UHC alone, UNFPA partnered with the Ministry of Health and other UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, UNHCR, UNHABITAT & UNCDF), to pilot a sustainable and scalable model for health posts. The project aims to improve healthcare access, particularly for the 72.1% of the Rwandan population residing in rural areas, and enhance the financial sustainability of these health posts.

The project's key achievements in 2024 include:

- Over 8 million USD has been catalyzed through the program with an investment of USD 1.6 million representing \$5 catalyzed for every \$1 invested.
- Sustainability of the business model continues to be evident throughout implementation. To date, 65% of the supported HPs have broken even and are self-sustaining (excluding the 20 HPs onboarded in the last quarters of 2024).
- 350,000 Rwandans in hard-to-reach areas have better access to health services
- 300 decent jobs created of which >60% for women
- 50 Nurse Entrepreneurs equipped to own and manage

HPs with financial and business literacy.

- A UNFPA-UNCDF-I&M Bank agreement was established to facilitate access to working capital for health post operators at 15% interest per annum from I&M Bank with an 80% credit guarantee provided by UNCDF.
- Over 300,000 children have been treated
- About 4,743 live births have been safely delivered
- Over 19,000 women have become new users of Family Planning modern methods
- Over 491 jobs have been created with more than 60% of them being for women



## 5 Generation and Use of Quality Disaggregated Data

As an active member of the Steering Committee for the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics in Rwanda, UNFPA, in collaboration with the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) and key partners, has strengthened national data systems to drive evidence-based policies and programs. A key achievement includes enhancing the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system to record all nine vital events across 3,260 registration points—including health facilities, sector and cell offices, and embassies. Additionally, nationwide capacity-building efforts have reinforced CRVS implementation, ensuring reliable internet infrastructure to keep the system fully operational.

UNFPA played a key role in supporting Rwanda's **seventh Demographic Health Survey (DHS-7) 2024/2025**, actively participating in the technical working group and reviewing the survey questionnaire to ensure inclusive data collection. The organization played a key role in developing the new National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS), championing the integration of disaggregated data to better address the needs of vulnerable populations. To enhance efficiency and effectiveness in data collection, UNFPA supported NISR in developing a robust data quality control system. This system strengthened real-time monitoring, automated validation checks, and error detection, significantly improving the accuracy and reliability of key national surveys, including the Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (EICV7), the Labor Force Survey, and the ongoing RDHS-7.





## 6 Ensuring Continuity of integrated SRH Services during an Outbreak

Rwanda's swift and coordinated response to its first confirmed case of the Marburg Virus Disease (MVD) on September 27, 2024, underscores the country's adaptability in managing outbreaks. By October 8, a total of 58 cases had been confirmed, with significant efforts ensuring rapid containment. The country completed the critical 42-day monitoring period, reinforcing surveillance at points of entry amid outbreaks in neighboring countries.

Recognizing that past outbreaks, including COVID-19, have disrupted access to essential sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, UNFPA prioritized the continuity of lifesaving SRH and gender-based violence (GBV) services during the crisis.

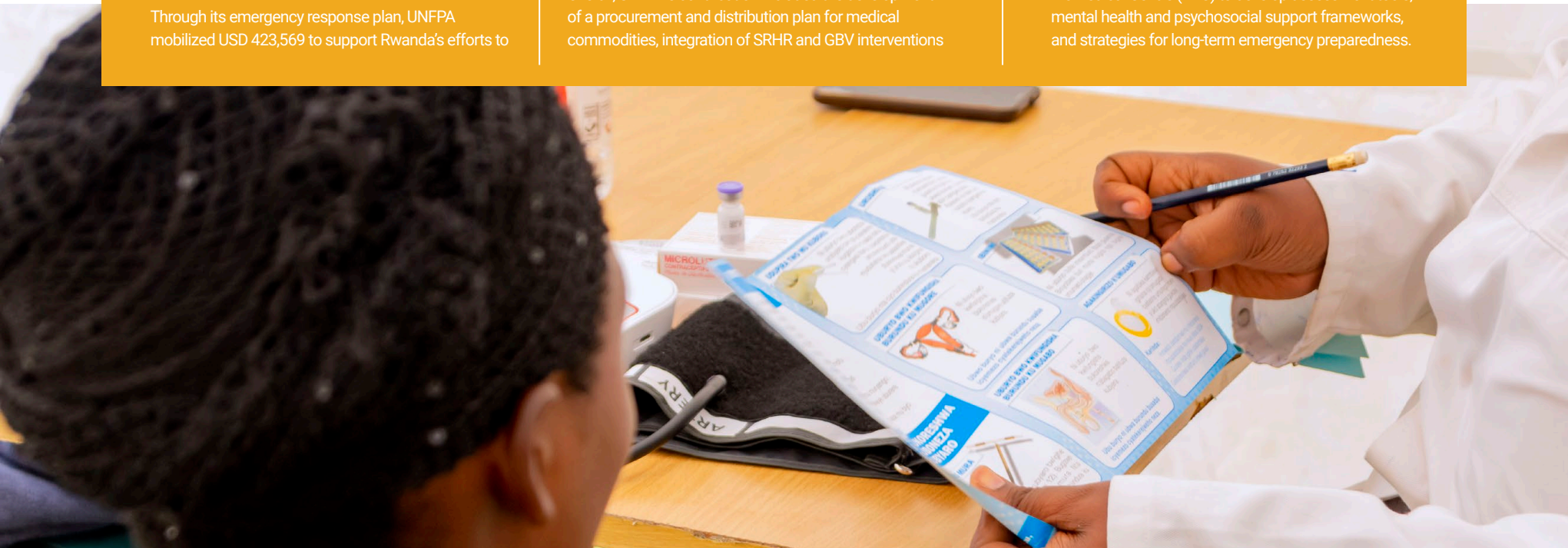
Through its emergency response plan, UNFPA mobilized USD 423,569 to support Rwanda's efforts to

respond to and recover from the outbreak. This funding facilitated the procurement of essential medical supplies, personal protective equipment (PPE), and SRHR service continuity.

Overall, UNFPA's contribution included the development of a procurement and distribution plan for medical commodities, integration of SRHR and GBV interventions

into the national response pillars, and comprehensive training for 101 healthcare providers on the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for SRH.

Additionally, UNFPA collaborated with Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC) to develop assessment tools, mental health and psychosocial support frameworks, and strategies for long-term emergency preparedness.



# IV. Stories of Change

## 1 Unlocking innovative health financing: Nurse-Entrepreneurs Transforming Rural Healthcare in Rwanda

### 1.1. Overcoming Financial Challenges



Ruth Mukanyandwi will never forget the first time she heard a patient recount the harrowing journey she took to reach a health center.

*"Traveling over two hours to the hospital, sometimes at night, enduring long waiting times due to overcrowding, but all the while praying for a safe delivery."*

This experience is shared by hundreds of women in rural and hard to reach areas in Rwanda, where medical facilities are spread out, making it difficult for many to access quality healthcare services.

To address this disparity, Health Posts (HPs) were introduced to bring essential healthcare closer to remote communities. Beyond providing essential healthcare in remote locations, they have also created job opportunities throughout the country.

With Rwanda's vision for improved healthcare access aligning with the global goal of Universal Health Coverage (UHC), these health posts play a vital role in ensuring geographical accessibility. However, many HPs face challenges related to financial management, access to medicines, and operational sustainability.





*I almost closed the health post, recalls Ruth, a midwife-entrepreneur in Kirehe District who was driven by the need to provide healthcare services in underserved communities. Despite her passion, financial challenges soon piled up. Delays in paying staff salaries led to resignations and without working capital, her dream was at risk of collapsing.*

One of the key challenges for health posts is securing adequate funding for purchasing medicine, medical equipment, and covering operational costs. Many health posts struggle with cash flow gaps due to delays in claims reimbursements for services rendered, particularly reimbursements from the Rwanda Social Security Board (RSSB).

*“During a difficult period, I received support from this project and I used it for staff salaries, pharmaceutical products, and medical equipment, saving the health post from closure,” Ruth recalls.*

Funded by UNFPA’s Strategic Investment Facility, the Innovative Health Sector Investment Model strengthens health posts to advance Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in Rwanda. Led by UNFPA in partnership with the Ministry of Health and other UN agencies, the initiative improves healthcare access—especially for the 72.1% of the population in rural areas—while ensuring the financial sustainability of health posts and better health outcomes for women, children, adolescents, and youth. The initiative supports midwife and nurse-entrepreneurs and ensures uninterrupted service delivery to the communities they serve.

**Daniel Habimana, a nurse at Ireme Health Post in Kamonyi, highlighted the impact of financial support: “Access to low-interest loans has opened new possibilities—allowing us to stock medicine, upgrade equipment, and improve our facilities.”**



## 1.2. Ensuring Sustainable Quality of Care



*"With its comprehensive approach, the SIF project continues to drive long-term improvements in Rwanda's healthcare system, proving that strengthening healthcare access goes hand in hand with economic empowerment and sustainability."*

**Dr. Olugbemiga Adelakin, UNFPA Rwanda Country Representative**

Financial support is vital, but long-term sustainability requires equipping health post operators with business and financial management skills. To address this, UNFPA has trained over 350 health post operators in Rwanda's Eastern and Southern Provinces on financial literacy, business management, and tailored financial solutions.

Stakeholders, including I&M Bank and the Ministry of Health, introduced operators to loan products such as invoice discounting loans backed by UNFPA under UNCDF's guarantee facility framework. The training also covered business forecasting, financial planning, and quality service delivery—key to building patient trust and ensuring sustainable revenue.

Many operators received hands-on guidance in financial record-keeping, budgeting, and using the Health Management Information System (HMIS), a critical tool for tracking health services and financial transactions.

Mukangenzi Beatrice from Health Post Gatagara highlighted the need for further training, stating, "The workshop was helpful, but too short. More training is needed, especially on data reporting."

To strengthen Rwanda's health post system, UNFPA collaborates with key actors, including the Rwanda Social Security Board (RSSB), to support nurse/midwife-entrepreneurs and improve the financial sustainability of their HPs. RSSB provides operators with guidance on securing contracts, renewing agreements, and navigating the Kwivuza claims management system.

With a good understanding of RSSB's claims management processes, the rejections are reduced and reimbursements are made faster, improving the liquidity challenges currently faced by HPs. UNFPA plans to engage Rwanda Medical Supply (RMS) to address procurement challenges for medicines and medical supplies.



### 1.3. Expanding Healthcare Access and Job Creation

The SIF project has significantly improved healthcare access, by supporting **51 health posts** that are currently operational—surpassing the initial target of **50 HPs** that were set to be functional under the support of SIF by 2025. In 2024 alone, these facilities treated over **99,000 under five children**, facilitated **2,233 safe deliveries**, vaccinated more than **12,000 children**, and provided **modern contraceptives to over 19,000 new users**.

Beyond expanding primary healthcare access across **14 districts**, the project has contributed to job creation in alignment with Rwanda's National Strategy for Transformation. A total of **491 jobs** have been created, against a target of **300 jobs by 2025**, including positions for nurses, midwives, laboratory technicians, and support staff, **with women comprising approximately 60%** of the workforce, reinforcing the project's commitment to gender equality in healthcare employment.

The dedication to improving service delivery is reflected in the training of **75 healthcare providers** in Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH), including specialized training in Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses and Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (BEmONC).





## 1.4. Ensuring Financial Stability and Future Prospects

Beyond healthcare delivery, the project's impact is evident in community engagement, with Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI) utilization that has reached 90% nationwide—a milestone achieved ahead of the schedule.

To further ensure financial stability, UNFPA, I&M Bank, and UNCDF introduced concessional loans with a **80%** credit guarantee, and a reduced interest of **15%**, which is at the lower end compared to the market rate of between 19 to **21%** for the health sector. Additionally, the integration of Military Medical Insurance (MMI) into 20 health posts has improved accessibility while generating additional and sustainable revenue for the facilities.

The project has also catalyzed over **\$8 million** in funding, with **\$1.7 million** catalyzed in 2024 alone, ensuring financial sustainability for health posts. With an investment of **~\$1.6 million** to date, this represents a five fold return of investment. By the end of 2024, **65%** of supported health posts had reached self-sufficiency, demonstrating the success of Rwanda's Public, Private, and Community Partnership (PPCP) model.

Between 2022 and 2024, health posts generated **\$822,925** in revenue, nearly half of it in 2024 alone—proving that investing in primary healthcare is both impactful and sustainable.





## 2 Elevating midwifery: A Transformative Journey to Reach Zero Preventable Maternal Deaths in Rwanda

Rwanda has undergone a remarkable journey in tackling maternal mortality rates (MMR) over the past decade. From an alarming 1071 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010, the country managed to accelerate reduction reaching 210 in 2015 but in recent years the decline has been slower with MMR standing at 203 per 100,000 live births in 2020. Showing a limited decline of only 7 data points over 5 years.

With Rwanda currently operating at a ratio of 1 skilled health professional per 1000 population, below the WHO recommended minimum of 4 per 1000; the Government of Rwanda introduced a comprehensive plan called the “4x4 Strategy” designed to strengthen the nation’s health system. This initiative aims to quadruple the healthcare workforce over four years while implementing significant enhancements to healthcare infrastructure and processes. Dr. Menelas Nkeshimana, the Head of the Department of Health Workforce Development at the Ministry of Health, highlights the urgency of the situation, emphasizing the need to address the current shortage of health professionals.

Examining the burden of work and quality of care particularly in maternal and child care, Dr. Nkeshimana underscores the stark reality of having around 2000 midwives registered for a population of 13 million.

*Specialist gynecologists and obstetricians, essential for maternal health, are also in short supply, with only 115 registered professionals. To achieve our vision of reducing maternal deaths below 50 per 100,000 live births by 2050, we face the challenge of not only increasing the workforce but also strategically distributing these professionals across the country” notes Dr. Menelas.*

At the current trajectory, MMR can only decrease to 156, underscoring the urgency of the mission. In response to this call to action, UNFPA in Rwanda has committed to supporting the 4x4 strategy, with a specific focus on midwifery, as a crucial step to combat maternal and child mortality rates.

In 2023, through partnership with the Ministry of Health, UNFPA Rwanda provided 50 students with midwifery scholarships. The aspiring midwives started their studies at the Ruli Higher Institute for Health in November 2023. Alleluia Betty is one of the students who benefitted from the scholarship. She expresses her joy and gratitude for obtaining a scholarship, recognizing it as a crucial opportunity to contribute to addressing challenges like maternal and child deaths. Her happiness stems from the prospect of actively participating in initiatives that seek to alleviate these critical issues.



***I wanted to pursue midwifery so that I can help save the lives of those mothers and babies who are in need. Some people discouraged me to choose this faculty due to perceived risks that come with it but I am ready to overcome the challenges by prioritizing my passion for the course and focusing my genuine interest in saving lives."***  
***Explains Alleluia.***  
***Student at Ruli Higher Institute of Health***

In the past years, UNFPA has supported midwives in Master's and PhD scholarships, as a way to strengthen the profession and build a faculty able to be the intellectual foundation of the first of its kind national Master's level program for midwifery.

This was done with the University of Rwanda in 2023 and the scholarship support for higher education still continues. Furthermore, UNFPA, in partnership with Laerdal Global Health, has contributed over 450 birthing simulators and simulation lab equipment allocated to universities and institutes with established midwifery programs.

Elevating the educational experience, the UNFPA and Laerdal Global Health has taken a step further by instituting a Simulation Facilitation Program called SimBegin. This program involves training faculty from 11 institutes.

Highlighting UNFPA's Rwanda commitment to support the Ministry of Health in its vision in the area of midwifery, UNFPA Rwanda Deputy Representative, Dr. Renata Tallarico emphasizes that the scholarship and equipment not only symbolizes tangible support but also represents a commitment to practical, hands-on learning that prepares students for the realities of their future profession.



***"We want to empower midwives, ensure quality of education, a standardized national curriculum and give any other support needed to ensure that no mother dies while giving birth."***  
***Emphasizes Dr. Tallarico, UNFPA Rwanda Deputy Representative***

As part of the support to the 4x4 strategy, the need to emphasize on the quality of education became evident. Thus, the Ministry of Health in collaboration with UNFPA embarked on a journey to develop a national standardized midwifery curriculum aligned to national and international standards.

Reflecting on the role of partnerships in achieving the 4x4 reform goals, Dr. Nkeshimana commended UNFPA's

contribution in facilitating the enrollment of more midwives in education.

***"During our engagement, coinciding with the 4x4 reform announcement in July 2023, conversations with UNFPA were seamless. It served as a wake-up call, with their expressed willingness to collaborate in enrolling more midwives in education. At that time, our baseline data revealed midwifery schools were operating at only 20% capacity, despite having the necessary infrastructure, validated curriculum, and faculty. The challenge was the lack of students to fill the remaining 80% of seats."***  
***Says Dr. Menelas, Health Workforce Development at Ministry of Health***

Through initiatives like the government's 4x4 Strategy and collaborations with educational institutions and stakeholders, significant strides have been made in bolstering midwifery education and enhancing the quality of care. UNFPA's partnership with the Government of Rwanda to elevate this field will continue to focus on strengthening competency-based midwifery training; developing strong regulatory mechanisms to ensure quality services; and advocating for increased investments in midwifery services.





# V. Partnership for the Goals

The work we do with our donors and partners is instrumental in addressing the unfinished agenda on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). We sincerely appreciate your collaboration and commitment to UNFPA Rwanda's mission in 2024. Thanks to our partners—the Government of Rwanda, UNFPA's Core Donors, Country Office donors, and implementing partners—significant progress has been made toward driving broader systems change.

By prioritizing scalable, upstream initiatives built on proven models, UNFPA and its partners are laying the foundation for impactful solutions that extend beyond short-term interventions and aim for long-term sustainability.

Through the UN Rwanda's **Delivering as One** spirit, the importance of multi-sectoral strategies and adapting to the evolving funding landscape remained central to achieving transformative change. This collaborative effort is crucial for addressing systemic challenges and creating comprehensive, sustainable solutions. With a unified approach, we can amplify our impact, creating a more integrated, resilient, and equitable development ecosystem that advances the SDGs and delivers lasting change for communities across Rwanda.

*"The work we do with our donors and partners goes a long way to completing the unfinished agenda on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights".*



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## Implementing Partners











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