



Rwanda

Rwanda is a country of resilience and ambition, widely recognised for its rapid socio-economic progress, strong governance, and commitment to sustainable development. With GDP growth [averaging 7-8%](#) over two decades, the nation is among Africa's [fastest-growing economies](#) and is advancing towards [Vision 2050](#) targets for upper-middle- and high-income status. Agriculture remains the economic backbone, contributing [27% of GDP and employing over 69%](#) of the workforce. Growing sectors such as manufacturing, ICT, construction, and tourism diversify options for its people, particularly the youth—27% of whom are aged 16-30. The country ranks [first](#) globally for women's parliamentary representation and [third](#) in Africa for government transparency.

Despite these gains, structural challenges persist. Low agricultural productivity, land degradation, fragmented landholdings, and climate change threaten food security and rural livelihoods. Erratic rainfall and droughts damage crops and reduce arable land, while population growth increases pressure on natural resources. Addressing these risks requires regenerative and climate-smart agriculture that aligns with national development goals.

SNV, active in Rwanda since 1980, delivers integrated, locally led solutions in the agri-food, energy, and water sectors. Through its programmes, SNV supports inclusive growth, resilience, and environmental sustainability, as Rwanda advances its national development strategy and the SDGs.



More than 500K people gained access to improved sanitation (2016-2020)



60% growth in horticulture exports (2018-2022)



Over 27K youth trained and connected to employment opportunities (2016-2020)



More than 10K farmers practising regenerative agriculture, 40% of them achieving a five-fold increase in potato yields (2020-2024)

Responding to the climate crisis

Rwanda is highly vulnerable to climate shocks, including erratic rainfall, floods, and prolonged droughts that imperil food security and rural livelihoods. In May 2023, [severe floods](#) in the Western and Northern Provinces killed over 130 people, displacing 18,000, and destroying 6,000 homes. Extended dry spells in the East and South have caused major crop losses and water shortages. Since the 1970s, [temperatures](#) have risen by 1.4°C and climate disasters have [cost](#) about 1.75% of GDP each year since 2013.

Despite these challenges, Rwanda is a continental leader in climate action, guided by its updated Nationally Determined Contributions and Green Growth and Climate Resilience Strategy, which target a 38% emissions reduction by 2030 and a carbon-neutral economy by 2050. SNV supports these ambitions by promoting sustainable agriculture, improved land-use practices, and clean cooking technologies.

REALMS | Western Rwanda | 2019-24 | €6M

The Regenerative Agriculture for Livelihoods and Markets (REALMS) project promoted sustainable farming in response to land degradation and climate change. Working with farmers, small and medium-sized enterprises, universities, and local authorities, it accelerated the uptake of regenerative practices, improved soil health, and strengthened community resilience. The project addressed significant gaps in Rwanda's food systems, where yields remain 30-40% below potential and 1.4 million hectares face moderate to severe degradation.

By its close, the programme had supported more than 10,000 smallholder farmers to adopt agroforestry, organic composting, crop rotation, and other climate-resilient approaches, leading to improved yields, diversified incomes, and restored lands. The lessons learned from REALMS shaped the design of successor initiatives such as the Power for Food Partnership.

Partners: IKEA Foundation and SNV

ReCIC | Nationwide | 2020-25 | €2.5M

The Reducing Climate Impact of Cooking (ReCIC) project strengthened Rwanda's clean cooking sector through market-based solutions. SNV partnered with cookstove manufacturers to upgrade designs to meet emission standards while keeping them affordable for households. Clean cooking remains a major challenge in Rwanda, where [93% of households](#) use firewood or charcoal, causing deforestation, indoor air pollution, and over [3,000 premature deaths](#) annually. Inefficient cooking also emits an estimated [2.4 million tonnes of CO₂](#) each year. Using a public-private partnership model,



ReCIC tackled systemic barriers such as limited finance, weak distribution, and low consumer awareness. By helping companies expand last-mile distribution and driving demand through behaviour change campaigns, ReCIC successfully reduced emissions, eased pressure on forests, and strengthened a sustainable clean cooking market.

Partners: GIZ, SNV, and private companies

EWMR | Sebeya Catchment | 2019-22 | €851K

The Landscape Restoration and Integrated Water Resources Management in Sebeya and other Catchments (EWMR) project strengthened livelihoods and promoted climate-resilient land use in erosion-prone areas. In the Sebeya Catchment, EWMR terracing and restoration efforts reduced disaster vulnerability, with zero landslide-related deaths since its implementation. It applied integrated watershed management approaches to redress Rwanda's steep terrain and intensive cultivation practices, which severely degraded the land.

Between 2019 and 2022, EWMR combined ecosystem restoration with livelihood diversification, constructing over 400 hectares of terraces, rehabilitating hillsides, and promoting climate-smart agriculture. The project enabled more than 12,000 farmers to achieve higher productivity and new income opportunities, while reducing erosion. EWMR advanced national climate goals and offered a replicable model for restoring high-risk landscapes.

Partners: Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Rwanda Water Resources Board, SNV, International Union for Conservation of Nature, and RWARRI

Accelerating inclusive development

Even with Rwanda's remarkable parliamentary representation of women, inequalities persist across gender, age, and region. Studies by the [National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda](#) and the [Rwanda Governance Board](#) show that women remain underrepresented in local-level decision-making bodies. Rural youth are also disproportionately affected by unemployment and limited market opportunities. In response, Rwanda has adopted progressive policies, including the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) mainstreaming framework and the National Youth Policy, launched in 2021. SNV embeds GESI principles in its programmes and advocates government policies that are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of groups who have been marginalised.

YEA-R | Eastern, Northern, Western, Southern Provinces | 2024-29 | €20M

Youth Entrepreneurship in Agriculture-Rwanda (YEA-R) is a five-year programme designed to create 40,000 dignified and fulfilling work opportunities for young people in the agri-food sector by 2029. It aims to foster inclusive and sustainable economic growth, with a focus on young women and youth with disabilities, groups that often face the greatest barriers to participation.

Concentrating on the horticulture and poultry value chains, the programme equips youth, particularly young women, with practical agribusiness skills, access to finance, and stronger market linkages. In addition to these efforts, it imparts entrepreneurial skills to them and amplifies their voices in decision-making spaces. YEA-R combines local expertise and global experience to transform agriculture into a pathway for opportunity and empowerment.

Partners: Mastercard Foundation, SNV, HoReCo, Imbaraga, UWEZO, Kvinna till Kvinna, Our Sisters Opportunity, Resonate, and Afro Ark

FtMA | Nationwide | 2025 | €720K

The Farm to Market Alliance (FtMA) project contributed to strengthening Rwanda's agricultural sector by professionalising more than 400 farmer cooperatives across the country. In a country with fragmented landholdings, the government works through cooperatives to achieve food security.

SNV supported these organisations to improve governance, agriculture practices, and service delivery, enabling them to access markets and financial services. Its efforts led to higher yields and incomes for thousands of farming households. In addition, the project's capacity-strengthening initiatives enabled civil society organisations to mobilise for more inclusive changes in food and nutrition policies. By linking farmer productivity with advocacy for community-level food and nutrition services, FtMA facilitated the translation of gains in agriculture into better diets and healthier futures for families.

Partners: World Food Programme, SNV, Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources, and KOABD Cooperative

"When you join the Farm to Market Alliance (FtMA) you learn how to farm, how to save, how to start small businesses. Even someone with 50,000 RWF can invest and earn.

Before, we harvested about 1.5 tons of maize per hectare. Today, we harvest up to 4.5 tons on the same land."

Verda,
President of the Twiteze Imbere
Kiyonza Cooperative in
Nyaruguru (Rwanda)



Strengthening governance and institutions

Strong and accountable institutions are vital for sustainable development, yet Rwanda's local bodies have often struggled with limited capacity, inadequate funding, and the absence of inclusive frameworks. To address this, the government updated its decentralisation law in 2020, with the support of government ministries, local authorities, and civil society. This approach to legal reform has contributed to strengthening citizen engagement and service delivery at district and sector levels. Coupled with Rwanda's investment in performance-based planning and monitoring, it has opened new opportunities for multi-stakeholder collaboration.

SNV works alongside government institutions, civil society, and private sector partners to improve data-driven decision-making, foster policy dialogue, and enhance service delivery and rights access. Through this joint systems approach, SNV and its partners ensure that decentralisation leads to more inclusive, evidence-based, and sustainable development outcomes across Rwanda.

Isuku Iwacu | Eight districts | 2016-20 | €10.7M

In the eight districts where Isuku Iwacu operated, nearly 45% of [latrines](#) were previously unimproved and one in four was shared among multiple households. Limited access to sanitation and hygiene services led to waterborne diseases and disproportionately affected vulnerable communities.

Responding on multiple levels, the partnership launched extensive campaigns to enable communities to demand sanitation services and strengthened local supply chains to make toilets and hygiene products more affordable.



Simultaneously, it enhanced local government capacity to uphold national sanitation standards and monitor progress. As a result, 500,000 people gained access to toilets, and 137 villages were declared open defecation free. Furthermore, the initiative raised governance standards in decentralised settings, empowering local authorities and residents to sustain cleaner and more accountable sanitation services.

Partners: USAID, World Vision, Ministry of Infrastructure, and SNV

SNV is a global development partner deeply rooted in the African and Asian countries where we operate. With 60 years of experience and a team of approximately 1,600 people, we strengthen capacities and catalyse partnerships that transform agri-food, energy and water systems. Working on the core themes of gender equality and social inclusion, climate adaptation and mitigation, and strong institutions and effective governance, we tailor our approaches to different contexts to achieve large-scale impact and create sustainable and more equitable lives for all.

Contact SNV in Rwanda

Eleanor Hartzell | Country Director | rwanda@snv.org

Visit the SNV website for an overview of our projects in Rwanda.

snv.org/country/rwanda



Impact
that matters