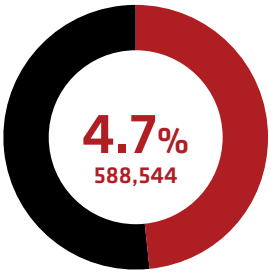
Diaspora engagement mapping
RWANDA

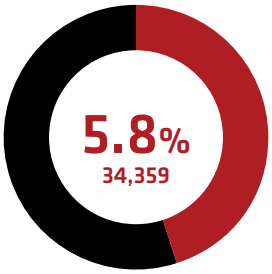
Facts & figures

Emigration

% of emigrants in total population → % of which in the EU



♂ 48.6%
♀ 51.4%



♂ 45.2%
♀ 54.8%

Remittances as a share of GDP: 2.7%
Remittances inflow (USD million): 276

Top countries of destination[1]

Democratic Republic of the Congo	254,225
Burundi	71,294
Uganda	70,635
Republic of the Congo	25,891
Belgium	14,930

Political rights

Dual citizenship[2] ☑

Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad[3] ☑

Voting from abroad:[4]
At embassies/ consulates ☑

Terminology: Rwanda uses the terms diaspora, 'Rwandans [living] abroad ', or 'Rwandan community abroad' to refer to all Rwandans who left their country (whether involuntarily or voluntarily) and are willing to contribute to the development of Rwanda.[5]

1 From UNDESA Migration Stock Statistics for 2019. These likely represent significant underestimates for the size of the Rwandan diaspora in Europe. According to a forthcoming IOM study of Rwandan diaspora professionals in Europe (BE, DE, NL, UK), there are approximately 30,000 Rwandan diaspora in Belgium, and approximately 12,500 in the UK).
2 Dual citizenship and diaspora voting rights managed by embassies acting as mini diaspora desks. See OHCHCR
3 The right to vote for those living abroad extends to both presidential and legislative elections, see International IDEA
4 Ibid.
5 Rwanda diaspora policy (2009)

Rwanda Diaspora Policy 2009

The Rwandan diaspora policy is the guiding framework for the Government of Rwanda to enable the Rwandan diaspora to contribute and be integrated into national development.[6] It sets out three guiding pillars, each with their own specific objectives, namely; 'Cohesion of the Rwandan diaspora'; 'Rwandans in the diaspora are equipped with accurate information about their nation'; and 'the Rwandan Diaspora playing a significant role in the socio-economic development of Rwanda.'

The second pillar of this policy emphasised the need for sharing accurate information to the diaspora and by implication combatting misinformation. The third pillar sets out the strategic objectives for the government's diaspora engagement in terms of mobilising different forms of diaspora capital for Rwanda's development.

Overview of the policy and legislative framework

2000 — **Vision 2020** defines Rwanda's long-term development goals. It was first issued in 2000 and revised in 2012. The strategy seeks to transform the country into a knowledge-based, service-oriented economy with middle-income country status by 2020. The role of the diaspora is included explicitly in the strategy, which also includes a target for reducing dependency on remittances to 3% or less of Rwanda's GDP.

2015 — **National Migration Policy and Strategies** were developed by the Directorate General of Immigration and Emigration in consultation with the diaspora as part of the Rwanda's strategy for economic development. They aim to "create a secure, enabling environment for increased trade, investments, tourism and skills development" and define Rwandan nationality and citizenship, as well as allowing Rwandan citizens to hold dual nationalities.

2017 — **Rwandan National Investment Strategy** seeks to establish capacity-building initiatives for entrepreneurship through support for business development services. It also aims to attract Rwandan entrepreneurs, as well as other foreign investors and seeks to establish an attractive and favourable environment for doing business, including legal and financial reforms, tax incentives, and administrative procedures that are easy for the private sector to complete.

Trends

Rwanda's diaspora engagement related policies and frameworks have developed from its troubled past; they aspire to maintain peace and reconciliation as well as to harness different forms of diaspora capital. The focus is on promoting cohesion, as can be seen it its diaspora and migration policies. Similarly, Rwanda's Vision 2020 strategy explains how the post-genocide state has ensured dual citizenship and encouraged diaspora participation in Rwanda.[7]

Remittance flows to Rwanda made up less than 3% of the country's GDP in 2017, which is in line with other countries in the Central African region.[8] Traditionally, the Rwandan diaspora remit via traditional money transfer operators, but increasingly they use mobile money apps

6 IOM Rwanda Diaspora Mapping, 2018

7 The Government itself notes that the Rwandan community abroad are represented by the Prime Minister, the Minister of Trade and four directors in government. See DMA/AU/GIZ (2019) Diaspora Engagement Self-Assessment Report

8 https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data
Interestingly, Rwanda has a stated policy objectve of reducing the share of remittances to less than 3% of GDP, so as to avoid over reliance on remittances flows.

or direct bank-to-bank transfers as well as informal remittances.[9] A recent survey of Rwandan diaspora professionals in the UK found that a third of respondents had invested in some form of business in the country.[10] Rwandan diaspora investors have access to some incentives, such as the ability to open national bank accounts from abroad, and Rwanda has specific investment guidelines for Rwandan Communities Abroad (RCAs).[11]

Skills shortages remain a recurrent challenge in Rwanda, and the government is seeking to recruit Rwandan diaspora professionals in certain Technical, Vocational, Education and Training (TVET) sectors such construction, ICT, renewable energy, mining and hospitality to address skills shortages in these areas.[12] The government previously worked with IOM under the Migration for development in Africa (MIDA) programme in 2002, which sought to address skills shortages in the health sector, and with UNDP from 2004-2007 on the Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) programme, which provided short-term volunteering opportunities as part of the UN Volunteers Programme.

Achievements

Rwanda's approach to diaspora engagement has been two-fold. On the one hand, the government works with chapters of Rwandan Community Associations based in diaspora countries of settlement; these have a significant support base in the diaspora and are able to mobilise people and resources quite effectively for initiatives in Rwanda. On the other hand, the Government of Rwanda has also sought to reach out to those who are politically neutral and invite them to participate in Rwanda's development and reconstruction.

Since the 2000 the government has had dedicated structures to facilitate diaspora engagement. In 2001 a desk in charge of the diaspora was created in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MINAFFET) to help the Rwandan diaspora to acquire services they need from their motherland. In 2008, the Diaspora Desk was formalised into the Diaspora General Directorate (DGD).

Rwanda acknowledges the important role the diaspora can play in the areas of financial, virtual and physical transfers, image building, good governance, trade and investments.[13] The government of Rwanda established the Rwanda Diaspora Mutual Fund in 2011. The Mutual Fund acts as a pool of capital from Rwandans in the diaspora for collective investments in Rwanda. It also set up a national trust fund, the Agaciro Development Fund, which had an asset value of about USD43m in 2016, targeting diaspora and other investors.[14]

9 See forthcoming IOM Rwanda/ AFFORD study: 'A Study on Rwandans in the UK: Skills Base and Engagement with Rwanda'. One example of mobile money apps used by Rwandans in the diaspora is Muhecash, which was founded by a Rwandan diaspora entrepreneur.

10 IOM Rwanda/ AFFORD (forthcoming Study), op.cit. In most cases, this was restricted to small-scale family businesses, for example retail or catering, but some had invested money in IT (internet cafes), import-export, or the stock market. Land and property were again the most common types of investment for most respondents, with land being used for agricultural purposes (33% of respondents) or building on (40% of respondents). Most property investments were for use by family members or as a second home / retirement home for investors

11 AU (2019) Diaspora Engagement Self-assessment report. Further incentives are offered to RCAs who invest and become residents.

12 IOM Rwanda/ AFFORD (forthcoming) op.cit.

13 https://minaffet.prod.risa.rw/rwanda-community-abroad

14 The government closed this fund to contributions in April 2020, citing sufficient growth in capital and investment to make the fund self-sustaining as the key reason. See KT Press article.

Obstacles

- **Legacy of the genocide:** The traumatic legacy of the 1994 genocide has created deep divisions among Rwandan diaspora groups. While Rwandans have been engaged in a reconciliation process since more than two decades, the diaspora has been excluded from this process. This is a concern for Rwandan peacebuilders, confirming that the journey towards sustainable reconciliation should involve diaspora groups.[15]

- **Lack of trust:** There is significant mistrust of the government by some Rwandans in the diaspora, and aspects of its bureaucracy act as a barrier to more effective diaspora engagement. This lack of trust in government institutions extends to financial schemes such as the Agaciro sovereign wealth fund and mutual fund, which struggled to achieve scale.[16]

- **Lack of suitable employment opportunities for skilled diaspora professionals:** The government of Rwanda is keen to recruit skilled diaspora professionals to address skills shortages, but issues of low remuneration and high living costs in Kigali act as a barrier for diaspora professionals to relocate to Rwanda permanently.[17]

- **Bureaucratic processes:** Rwandan diaspora often complain about heavy bureaucratic processes for obtaining the required documentation in the country. This is particularly the case at local level, with problems of customer care, instances of corruption, and a lack of information on opportunities.[18]

SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

DIALOGUE

Umushyikirano (National Dialogue Council 2003) - on

Umushyikirano is a traditional term in Kinyarwanda for a meeting where participants exchange ideas, share experiences, and question each other. The *Umushyikirano* is chaired by the President of the Republic, and brings together Rwandans from all walks of life, including diaspora representatives, offering the opportunity to ask questions directly to their leaders. Those unable to attend in person can participate via telephone, SMS, Twitter, and Facebook as well as follow the debate live on television and radio.[19]

COMMUNITY BUILDING & DIALOGUE

Rwanda Day 2010 - on

Rwanda Day is a series of annual gatherings where the Rwandan community abroad has an opportunity to discuss its role in shaping the country's future. Rwanda Day brings together Rwandans living abroad, friends of Rwanda, the President of Rwanda, and other senior leaders from the public and private sectors. Discussions held during Rwanda Day focus on the country's development goals, business environment and opportunities available for those wanting to be part of the country's development. The first Rwanda Day was held in 2010 in Brussels, and it has since been held in Chicago, Paris, Boston, London, Toronto, Atlanta, Dallas, Amsterdam, San Francisco, and Ghent, with over 30,000 attending the events.[20]

15 See Reliefweb article

16 See http://www.rfcd.net/projects/15; IOM Rwanda/AFFORD (forthcoming) 'A Study on Rwandans in the UK: Skills Base and Engagement with Rwanda', and Faal, G. (2019) , 'Strategic, Business and Operational Framework for an African Diaspora Finance Corporation: African Union Legacy Project on Diaspora Investment, Innovative Finance and Social Enterprise in Africa', GK Partners/ African Union Commission - abridged version

17 IOM Rwanda/AFFORD (forthcoming) 'A Study on Rwandans in the UK: Skills Base and Engagement with Rwanda'

18 Rubyutsa, J, M, (2012), 'The Role of Remittance in Development: The Case of Rwandan Diaspora', Rwanda Journal Vol. 26 (2012): Series B.

19 See also Betts, A., & Jones, W. (2016). Rwanda. In *Mobilising the Diaspora: How Refugees Challenge Authoritarianism* (pp. 113-213). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

20 https://minaffet.prod.risa.rw/rwanda-community-abroad

RemitPlus Diaspora Bond 2019

BONDS

Diaspora organisation AFFORD-UK is currently working with the Rwanda Development Board, the National Bank of Rwanda, and the Mayor of Kigali's Office to develop blended financing models involving diaspora and other investment capital for construction of affordable housing in Kigali. The RemitPlus bond aims initially to raise $10m from the Rwandan diaspora and other investors to build 400 homes in Kigali. It is hoped the initiative will set a precedent for further bonds for housing in Rwanda and establish new trends in diaspora investment for development in Africa.[21]

BBOX e-pay service 2019

TECHNOLOGY & REMITTANCES

Shell and the former UK Department for International Development (DfID) have recently supported BBOXX to launch BBOXX ePay, a payment platform that allows Rwandans to 'send energy home' from anywhere in the world. Friends and family can use the service to select from a variety of BBOXX solar-powered appliances, including TVs, radios, shavers, torches, LED lights and phone chargers, and pre-pay for the energy from one to 10 years.

Rwanda Diaspora Youth Partnership Programme (RDYPF) 2019

YOUTH & EXCHANGE

RDYPF is a joint programme by the University of Winchester and AEGIS, an NGO working on genocide prevention. It is a participatory collaborative research project that aims to evaluate and build knowledge exchange networks between young Rwandans aged 18-25 in the UK and Rwanda, in order to assess how those networks might be used to address key development challenges on young people's own terms.

21 https://www.afford-uk.org/rwanda-bond-could-change-terrain-of-diaspora-investment/

Annex:
List of Actors

Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU-CIDO) 2001

AU-CIDO is responsible for implementing the AU's engagement with non-state actors through the involvement of the diaspora and civil society. Rwanda nominates a diaspora focal point to represent the country at AU-CIDO Continental Meetings.

East African Community (EAC) 1967

The East African Community (EAC) is a regional intergovernmental organisation of 6 Partner States that works to promote greater regional integration. One of its integration pillars is the Common Market, introduced in 2010, which includes free movement of people, goods, and services, and right of residence for EAC nationals.

- **National institutions**
  - At ministerial level

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MINAFFET) 1961

MINAFFET is responsible for Rwanda's foreign affairs and is the lead ministry for diaspora engagement in Rwanda. It engages the diaspora through its missions abroad and is responsible for organising *Kwibuka* commemorations around the world.

  - At sub-ministerial level

Rwanda Community Abroad (RCA) Unit

RCA Unit is a department at MINAFFET that deals on a daily basis with Rwandans living abroad. The department is also in charge of providing different services in line with legalization of different documents to Rwandans, both inside and outside Rwanda. Currently, there are up to 68 RCA-affiliated Associations in different global regions: Africa (32), Europe (22), Asia (8), America (4), and Oceania (2).[22]

Rwanda Diaspora Global Network (RDGN) 2010

RDGN has been in place for the last 10 years as an umbrella association of Rwandan Communities Abroad and other Rwandan Diaspora Associations across the globe. It provides a platform for the Rwandan diaspora family to positively dialogue, network and exchange ideas through many activities such as promotion of Rwandan culture, active participation in the national social-economic development programs. It launched the 'No Rwandan Left Behind' initiative in 2016 to support vulnerable people in their country of origin through providing 100 cows to poor Rwandans, 100 small livestock and payment of community health insurance to 10,000 people . [f]

22 https://minaffet.prod.risa.rw/rwanda-community-abroad

Diaspora organisations in Europe

Appui Rwanda 2003 France

- Development activities
- Integration activities

The association Appui Rwanda was set up to provide a centre to help Rwandans in distress, and to keep the memory of the 1994 Tutsi genocide alive. In addition to raising awareness of the genocide in Europe, it also supports organic aviculture projects in Rwanda, and provides school sponsorships for children and women with AIDS.

Association Amariza d'Alsace 2012 France

- Development activities
- Integration activities

The aim of the association is to bring together mothers of Rwandan origin and other people with the same objectives of cultural development, intergenerational transmission and support of humanitarian solidarity actions.

Association des Veuves du Génocide Agahozo (AVEGA AGAHOZO) 1995 Rwanda/Europe

- Development activities
- Integration activities

At its founding in 1995 by a group of 50 widows trying to cope with life after the 1994 Rwandan genocide, AVEGA Agahozo was created to promote the general welfare of genocide survivors, to build solidarity among members of the organization, to work with other organizations having the same objectives, to fight for justice and to participate in the rebuilding of Rwanda.

Diaspora Rwanda BE 2018 Belgium

- Development activities
- Integration activities

A youth organization based in Belgium to celebrate Rwandan culture and to encourage diaspora involvement in their home country. [ ]

Diaspora Rwandaise de Belgique (DRB) Belgium

- Integration activities

DRB is a non-profit organization whose mission is to bring together all Rwandans in Belgium in a friendly atmosphere. [ ]

DRB Bugari 2011 Belgium

Integration activities

DRB-Rugari" is a non-profit association that works to raise awareness of the genocide and organises various cultural and other activities in Belgium with members of the Rwandan community. [ ]

IBUKA Europe 1994 Belgium / Germany / Italy / Netherlands / Switzerland

Integration activities

The association "Ibuka - Memory and Justice" was founded in Belgium on 16 August 1994. In April 2010, this association was recognized by the Francophone community as a "reference centre for the transmission of memory". On 28 May 1995, an association bearing the same name was created in Switzerland with the same objective. It now has chapters in several European countries, and works to educate communities and raise awareness of the genocide as well as support the Rwandan community. [ ]

Rwandische Diaspora in Deutschland (RDD e.v.) 2002 Germany

Development activities
Integration activities

Rwandische Diaspora in Deutschland e.V. (i.e. 'Rwandan Diaspora in Germany') is a non-profit, independent and interdenominational registered community. It is the German section of the association "Rwandan Diaspora Global Network". It works to promote and teach the Rwandan language and culture in the diaspora through education and volunteering programmes, as well as offering financial support and organisational advice for women's cooperatives as well as promoting the transfer of knowledge to Rwanda.

Rwandan Youth Information Community Organisation (RYiCO) 2004 UK

Development activities
Integration activities

RYiCO is a registered charity in the UK that delivers projects in the UK and Rwanda, where they support victims of domestic violence and provide access to vocational skills for women. RYiCO partners with and helps fund Centre Marembo and the African Sewing Club in Rwanda, and runs educational activities in the UK. These activities are focused on helping the public to have a better social and cultural understanding of Rwanda, how the genocide came about, and the social issues that have been left in its wake.

West Midlands Rwandan Community Association (WM RCA) 2005 UK

Development activities
Integration activities

WM RCA is a charitable organisation that works to improve the physical and economic conditions of life of the Rwandese community in the West Midlands region, and to promote Rwandan culture through literature, music, art and dance. It also provides Kinyarwanda, French, and Swahili interpretation services and supports development projects in Rwanda.

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