

# MAGAZINE

Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO (CNRU)

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Rwanda  
National Commission

# SECRETARY-GENERAL OF CNRU HEARTFELT TRIBUTE TO ALL THEIR SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS



**Albert MUTESA**

Secretary General of Rwanda National  
Commission of UNESCO

On behalf of the **Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO (CNRU)**, Secretary General of Rwanda National Commission of UNESCO, **Albert MUTESA** extended his heartfelt gratitude to all who have contributed to the development of our Institution. Their unwavering dedication and collaborative spirit have been instrumental in shaping our roadmap for the future. First and foremost, he extends his deepest appreciation to the

Government of Rwanda for its invaluable support. All concerned parties are profoundly grateful for the legal and financial backing provided through the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC). Their commitment to the mission of CNRU underscores the importance of work in advancing education, science, culture, communication and sustainable development.

And sincere thanks to UNESCO and all esteemed stakeholders for their steadfast support throughout this endeavor. Their guidance, expertise, and contributions have enriched the strategic planning process and strengthened the resolve to achieve all shared goals. Together, all have laid the foundation for meaningful collaboration and collective action toward a brighter future. As all embark on the implementation phase of the Strategic Plan, He is confident that all collective efforts will bear fruit in advancing Rwanda's national priorities and contributing to UNESCO's global agenda. All continued support and partnership will be crucial as we work towards realizing our vision.

The CNRU Strategic Plan 2024/2025–2029/2030 outlines a roadmap aligning with Rwanda's national priorities and UNESCO's mission. It focuses on advancing

education, science, culture, communication, and partnerships, backed by a FRW 3.97 billion budget. The plan includes a SWOT analysis, results-based framework, sustainable financing, ICT-driven human resource development, and a strong monitoring system to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

The Participation Program supports UNESCO's mission by funding and assisting projects from Member States and NGOs, strengthening collaboration and promoting inclusive goals. For 2024–2025, it offers grants for activities such as equipment purchase, research publications, and training events, with CNRU receiving over 150 project submissions.

## The CNRU functions as a critical policy advisory and coordination hub between Rwanda and UNESCO.

For example, Rwanda's Rwanda Cultural Heritage Academy (RCHA) established in 2020 via Presidential Decree plays a dual role: it safeguards the nation's archives and cultural institutions and serves on the CNRU's board, bridging heritage preservation with UNESCO engagement. Notably, Dr Marie-Christine Gasingirwa serves as the Vice Chairperson of Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO General Assembly.



**Dr Marie-Christine GASINGIRWA**

VICE CHAIRPERSON OF RWANDA  
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO

Highlighting the Commission's elevated position within Rwanda's academic and governance structures. As Rwanda continues its remarkable journey of transformation, the Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO (CNRU) is proud to unveil its Strategic Plan for 2024/2025-2029/2030.

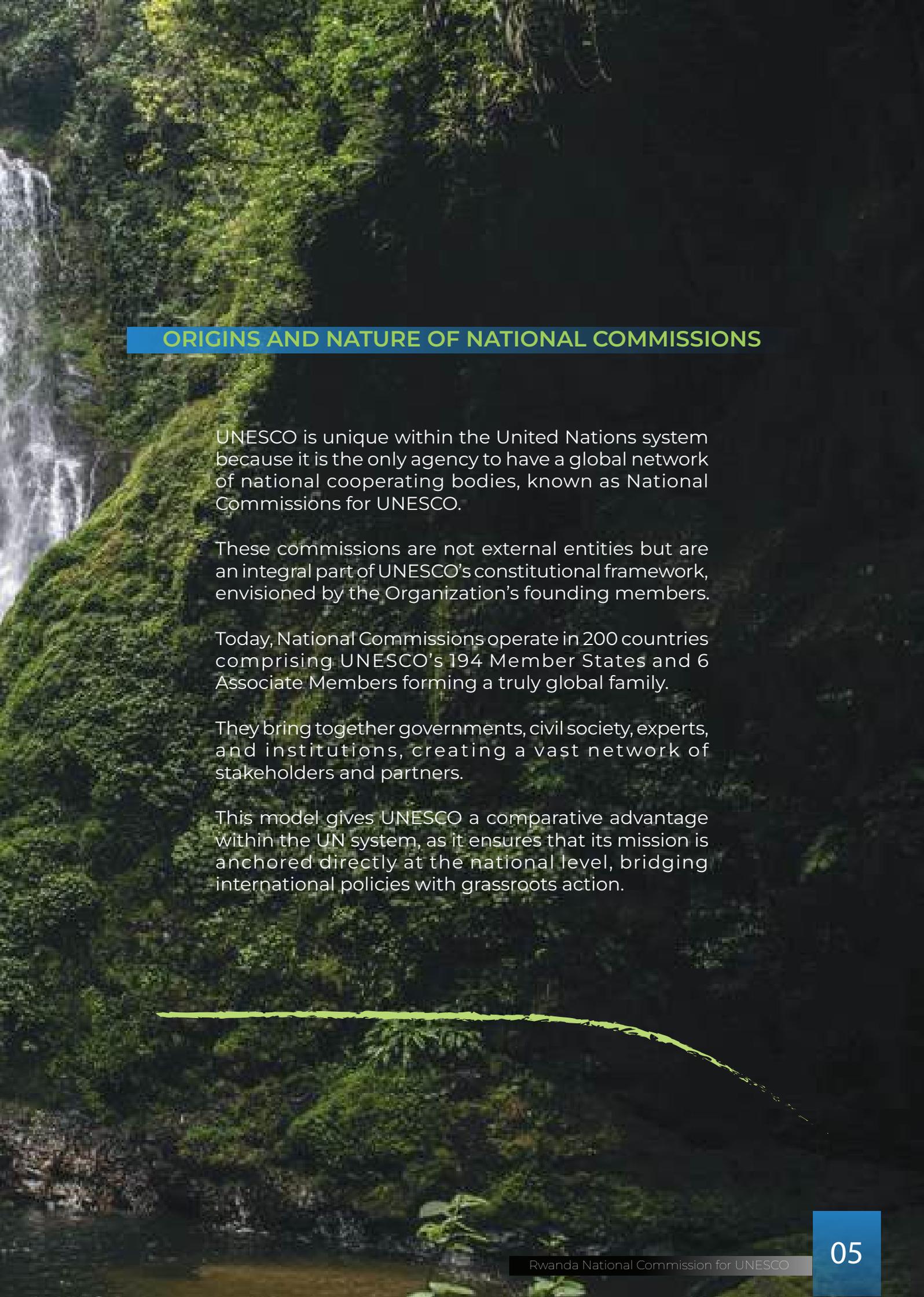
This plan builds upon CNRU's successful contributions to the implementation of Rwanda's National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) and reflects our unwavering commitment to supporting NST2. This strategic planning period presents a unique opportunity.

Rwanda aspires to achieve its Vision 2050, a future marked by sustainable development, knowledge-based prosperity, and a vibrant society. At the same time, the world is tackling interconnected challenges addressed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

This CNRU's Strategic Plan aligns with these national, regional, and global aspirations. We will leverage the vast resources and expertise of UNESCO, focusing on education, science, culture, and communication. The pillars that underpin sustainable development and a just future.

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## ORIGINS AND NATURE OF NATIONAL COMMISSIONS

UNESCO is unique within the United Nations system because it is the only agency to have a global network of national cooperating bodies, known as National Commissions for UNESCO.

These commissions are not external entities but are an integral part of UNESCO's constitutional framework, envisioned by the Organization's founding members.

Today, National Commissions operate in 200 countries comprising UNESCO's 194 Member States and 6 Associate Members forming a truly global family.

They bring together governments, civil society, experts, and institutions, creating a vast network of stakeholders and partners.

This model gives UNESCO a comparative advantage within the UN system, as it ensures that its mission is anchored directly at the national level, bridging international policies with grassroots action.



# WHY UNESCO ADOPTED THE CONCEPT OF NATIONAL COMMISSIONS

The origins of the National Commissions date back to 1924, when the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IIIC) was founded under the League of Nations in Paris.

Around 30 countries established such commissions, composed largely of educators, scientists, and representatives of non-governmental organizations.

Their role was to foster international cooperation in education, science, and culture.

This experience laid the foundation for UNESCO's own design. When the Constitution of UNESCO was being drafted by the Conference of Allied

Ministers of Education (CAME) and adopted in London in November 1945, provisions for National Commissions were explicitly included.

UNESCO was created with a mandate to promote peace and mutual understanding through intellectual cooperation, grounded in moral solidarity among peoples.

To achieve this, it was deemed essential to involve not only governments, but also teachers, scholars, writers, scientists, and artists, whose active contributions were seen as indispensable.

Without their engagement, progress toward mutual understanding and the

eradication of mistrust, ignorance, and prejudice the roots of conflict would have been impossible.

From its inception, UNESCO adopted a forward-looking approach: it gave governments considerable flexibility in organizing their National Commissions, while ensuring that these bodies would bring together both official representatives and civil society actors.

The idea was to create a space where they could work hand in hand, both at the national level and within UNESCO's governing bodies such as the Executive Board and the General Conference.

This innovative structure meant that, for the first time in an intergovernmental organization, non-governmental organizations and experts could directly influence international decision-making alongside governments an approach that remains one of UNESCO's distinctive strengths to this day.



### Establishment and Legal Framework

*The Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO was initially established through Presidential Order No. 120/10 of 9 June 1975, which officially created the national body responsible for representing Rwanda within UNESCO. The Commission was designed to act as the government's coordinating and liaison mechanism with UNESCO across key areas including education, science, culture, communication, and related sectors.*

*The Commission was fundamentally restructured by Presidential Order No. 12 of 2003. Published on 27 March 2003 and later reaffirmed in the Official Gazette n° 49 of 5 December 2011, this order cemented Rwanda's commitment to the UNESCO Charter on National Commissions and defined the Commission's mandate and operational framework.*

## CONTRIBUTIONS AND KEY ACTIVITIES

### Over the years, the CNRU has been instrumental in a range of UNESCO-driven initiatives across Rwanda:

- **Memory of the World Programme (2021):** The CNRU facilitated a workshop that led to creation of a National Memory of the World Committee tasked with identifying, preserving, and promoting Rwanda's documentary heritage. The effort included librarians, archivists, researchers, and cultural institutions, and resulted in key recommendations for national guidelines, a heritage register, and capacity-building. The committee is chaired by Nyirabahizi Beata and marked Rwanda as the fourth East African nation to establish such a body [India Education Diary](#).
- **World Heritage Initiatives:** In June 2021, the CNRU organized a national technical consultation, with UNESCO's support, to prepare a roadmap for nominating Nyungwe National Park as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The steps taken included sensitization sessions, technical planning, and site visits to elevate Rwanda's heritage presence on the global stage [UNESCO World Heritage Centre+1](#). By September 2023, Nyungwe was officially inscribed as Rwanda's first natural World Heritage Site [rdb.rw](#).
- **Cultural Diversity Reporting:** Rwanda ratified the 2005 UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity in 2012. The CNRU mobilized a multi-stakeholder team to prepare the first periodic report (submitted in 2017), and another team in 2020 to finalize the second periodic report using inclusive, participatory methods.

# THE LONG STANDING JOURNEY AND PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN RWANDA AND UNESCO

## UNESCO boss talks biodiversity, and Kwita Izina



Director General of UNESCO Audrey Azoulay visits Gishwati-Mukura National Park and Biosphere Reserve

### DG Azoulay

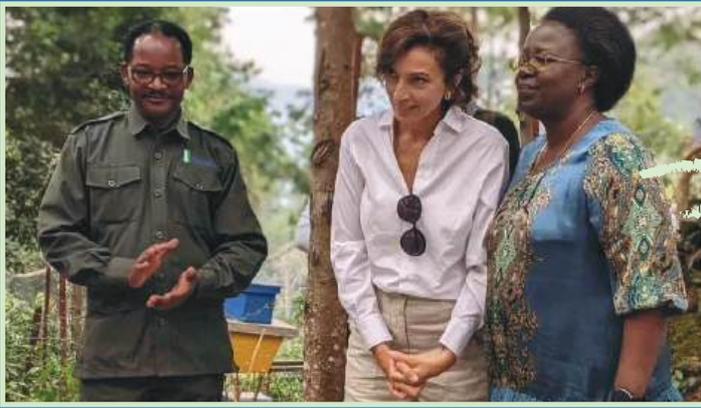
“

*I am delighted to be in Rwanda for this visit focusing on an important pillar of UNESCO's mandate: protecting biodiversity, by finding a balance between humans and the environment.*

*Rwanda is home to two UNESCO biosphere reserves, which are exemplary in this field.*

*The volcanoes UNESCO biosphere reserve, which is the first created in the country and one of the first created in Africa has helped save mountain gorillas from extinction and is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year.*

UNESCO's Director General, **Audrey Azoulay**, had a three-day visit to Rwanda where she explored the good of Gishwati-Mukura Biosphere Reserve as part of Global Biosphere Reserve Network.



and Anacleto BUDAHERA Chief Warden RDB-GMNP



Rwandese Minister in charge of environment, Dr. J. Mujawamariya, UNESCO's Director General Audrey Azoulay women beekeepers in Gishwati-Mukura Biosphere Reserve

**Audrey Azoulay**, on that same Thursday visited the Women for Bees project located in Rutsiro district, a project funded by Guerlain through UNESCO. This project benefits 33 women grouped in three cooperatives that are practicing modern apiculture in 3 respective sites of Mukura Gishwati Biosphere Reserve.

One day before, The Director General of **UNESCO**, **Ms Audrey Azoulay** paid respects to the victims of Genocide against the Tutsi and toured memorial exhibits that detail the causes, reality and consequences of the Genocide as well as the incredible stories on Rwanda's journey to rebuilding at Kigali Genocide memorial.



DG Azoulay named baby Gorilla **"IKIRANGO"**

The Director General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay, was in Rwanda to participate in Gorilla naming and pay tribute to the county's efforts to protect mountain gorillas. She highlighted that Volcano National Park as a UNESCO site achieved its status by adhering to three fundamental pillars: Science, biodiversity, and sustainable income generation for local communities.



Since 1993, Rwanda has embraced the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve model, establishing a cycle in which revenue from tourism is reinvested in the local community to support national parks and improve community livelihood by improving local infrastructure including the construction of hospitals, and schools



The Following Year 2024 DG visited Rwanda with the purpose of unveils World Heritage plaques of four genocide memorial sites: (Nyamata, Murambi, Gisozi, and Bisesero) And NYUNGWE National Park, to His Excellence President **Paul KAGAME**



# THE UNESCO DIRECTOR GENERAL OFFICIAL VISIT IN RWANDA

UNESCO's **Director-General, Audrey Azoulay**, visited Rwanda to honor the victims of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

She toured memorial sites, including Kigali and Murambi, and emphasized UNESCO's mission to preserve memory, teach younger generations about the genocide, and promote peace and reconciliation.

During her visit, she unveiled World Heritage plaques for four genocide memorials **Nyamata, Murambi, Gisozi, and Bisesero** alongside President Paul Kagame. She had time to have a talk and listen to the message of the survivors from the southern part of the country.

Her engagements highlighted UNESCO's collaboration with Rwanda in education, survivor support, and unity-building efforts to prevent future atrocities.

Among UNESCO's initiatives in the country was the "Access to Digital and Inclusive Literacy Environment" project, successfully implemented under the 2022–2023 Participation Program.

The visit also celebrated a milestone for Rwanda's natural heritage: Nyungwe National Park was officially inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, becoming the country's first natural site to receive this recognition.

Rwanda's journey of remembrance, resilience, and cultural preservation took another historic step with the designation of the Kigali Genocide Memorial as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

This recognition came during the visit of UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay, who paid tribute to the victims of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi and reaffirmed UNESCO's commitment to safeguarding memory as a foundation for lasting peace.

At the **Kigali Genocide Memorial**, where the remains of over 250,000 victims rest, **Ms. Azoulay** toured the exhibits that chronicle the causes,

horrors, and consequences of the genocide, as well as Rwanda's remarkable path toward reconciliation and rebuilding. She emphasized that "to build lasting peace we must remember and be messengers of memory", underscoring UNESCO's mission to ensure that the genocide is taught to future generations as a safeguard against denial and recurrence.

The inscription of the Kigali Genocide Memorial onto the World Heritage List, alongside Nyamata, Murambi, and Bisesero memorials, elevates these sacred sites into symbols not only of Rwanda's memory but also of humanity's collective responsibility to resist hatred, intolerance, and genocide everywhere.



**Audrey AZOULAY**

Director-General of UNESCO

# Youth Engagement:

In tandem with the memorial's designation, Rwanda and UNESCO have launched an initiative to empower young people as custodians of memory.

Twenty young mediators are being trained to educate their peers about the history and lessons of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

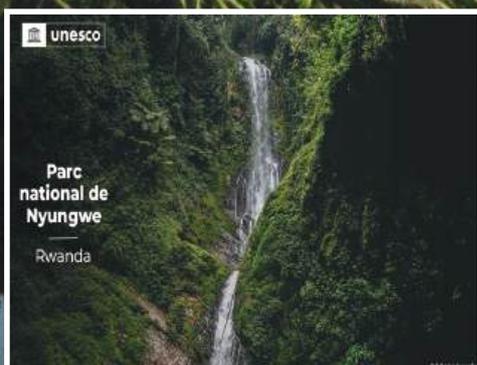
These mediators will act as bridges between memory and youth, using dialogue, storytelling, and peer-to-peer learning to combat genocide denial, distortion, and the spread of hate speech.

This initiative reflects Rwanda's vision of ensuring that remembrance is not limited to commemoration but becomes a living practice embedded in the hearts and minds of its younger generations.

By placing youth at the forefront, the program secures continuity of memory while fostering a culture of peace and critical awareness.



# World Heritage Site



**Nyungwe National Park** was officially designated as a natural World Heritage Site by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in September 2023. It is the first site in Rwanda to be featured on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Rwanda has long been celebrated for its resilience, unity, and rich cultural traditions. Beyond its breathtaking landscapes and historical landmarks, the nation is also home to a vast wealth of intangible cultural heritage living traditions that are carried in the memories, practices, and creativity of its people. From traditional dances and oral poetry to rituals, craftsmanship, and festive events, these cultural expressions form an essential part of Rwanda's identity. In recognition of their importance, Rwanda has embarked on a groundbreaking initiative in partnership with UNESCO.



***Kuvuza ingoma one of Intangible Culture World Heritage***

## Gusimbuka urukiramende



Launched in December 2023, the 18-month project covers all 30 districts, with 700 surveys conducted under national and provincial coordination. Over 120 elements of Rwanda's intangible cultural heritage have been documented, with validation pending from the Ministry of Unity and Civil Engagement before the project closes in September 2025.

Two heritage files were submitted to UNESCO: Intore (already inscribed) and Imigongo (on the waiting list). Beyond the statistics and official frameworks, this initiative reflects a deeper cultural renaissance in Rwanda one that places communities at the heart of heritage safeguarding. By mapping, documenting, and validating intangible heritage elements across all districts, Rwanda is not only preserving traditions for future generations but also empowering local custodians who have carried these practices for centuries.

Intore dance, known for its strength and discipline, and Imigongo art, renowned for its unique geometric patterns made from cow dung, are more than artistic expressions; they are embodiments of resilience, identity, and innovation. By safeguarding them, Rwanda ensures that its youth grow up with a strong sense of belonging and pride while opening opportunities for cultural tourism, creative industries, and intergenerational dialogue. Furthermore, this effort connects Rwanda to the global stage, positioning it as a country that not only values its past but also leverages it for sustainable development, education, and unity.

The UNESCO-backed programs therefore represent more than preservation they embody a vision of culture as a dynamic force for national cohesion, economic progress, and international cooperation.



# THE WORLD POETRY DAY

The World Poetry Day 2025 was celebrated at the Chair of Poets in Kiruri (INTEBE YABASIZI), Huye District on 21 March 2025.

An online poetry competition culminated in a live event with poets and the Kiruri community, organized with the Ministry of Youth and Arts and the Rwanda Art Council. Top performers received the Nyirarumaga Trophy. The event coincided with a two-day cultural celebration in Nyanza, where awards were given for excellence in cultural initiatives, tourism, arts, crafts, and governance.

The Performing Arts Federation participated, concluding the celebration on March 22, 2025.



## THE FOCUS ON AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE AND MENTAL HEALTH

The Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO and the Rwanda Culture and Heritage Academy organized a cultural mobilization event in Kigali, focusing on traditional medicine and mental health. Participants, including cultural actors, NGOs, media, and private partners, toured heritage sites such as the Kandt House Museum, the Center for Health based on Rwandan Culture, and

institutions in Kamonyi District. The visits highlighted Rwanda's traditional approaches to mental health, medicinal plants, and stone art preservation. As well as a visit to two institutions in Kamonyi District: a private garden for traditional plants providing medicine and Centre Kimezamiryango.



# LAUNCH OF THE EU-UNESCO PROJECT TO STRENGTHEN RWANDA'S CREATIVE INDUSTRIES



*In* June 2025, the Ministry of Youth and Arts (MoYA), in collaboration with the Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO (CNRU), launched the EU-UNESCO project titled “Advancing Evidence-Based Policies and Actions to Enhance the Contribution of Creative Sectors to Sustainable Development.”

Funded with \$78,000 over 18 months, the project aims to strengthen Rwanda's cultural and creative industries (CCIs) through capacity-building workshops for government officials and civil society stakeholders.

These workshops will focus on **participatory policy design, implementation strategies, and raising awareness** on the role of CCIs in sustainable development.

A key objective is to **empower Rwandan stakeholders** to effectively execute the project's newly developed strategy, including **reinforcing the Arts Council** and boosting the growth of Rwanda's creative economy.

This initiative aligns with broader efforts to harness culture and arts as drivers of economic and social progress.



## RWANDA JOINS WORLD AND AFRICA CONTINENTAL MOVEMENT TO CELEBRATE WORLD

# KISWAHILI LANGUAGE DAY



Rwanda hosted the 4th World Kiswahili Language Day, highlighting Africa's commitment to linguistic identity, regional integration, and the promotion of Kiswahili as a tool for unity, education, and sustainable development.



Kwa mujibu wa UNESCO, Kiswahili kina wazungumzaji takribani milioni 230 duniani kote. Ndio lugha ya Afrika iliyoenea zaidi katika eneo la Afrika Kusini mwa Jangwa la Sahara. Maadhimisho ya nne lugha ya kiswahili yenye Kauli Mbiu: Kiswahili, Elimu Jumuishi na Maendeleo Endelevu yanatokana na uamuzi wa Kikao cha 41 cha Shirika la Umoja wa Kimataifa la Elimu, Sayansi na Utamaduni (UNESCO) uliofanyika tarehe 5 Novemba 2021.

# FIVE JOURNALISTS AWARDED IN 'AI REPORTING CHALLENGE' IN RWANDA



Journalists, content creators joined 'Challenge for Reporting on AI' organized by German Development Agency (GIZ), UNESCO National Commission and UNESCO Eastern Africa Regional Office.

Rwandan journalists participated in the country's first-ever Journalist Challenge for Reporting on Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Targeting local media and content creators, the initiative was organized by the German Development Agency (GIZ) in partnership with Ministry of Information Communication Technology and Innovation (MINICT) and the UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa.

[www.unesco.org/](https://www.unesco.org/)

The AI Journalist Challenge was organized to nurture and encourage high-quality coverage of AI and its related implications on society in Rwanda. The Challenge followed from a joint UNESCO-GIZ four-day workshop held earlier this year from 6-9 February 2024, where 14 local journalists were trained and upskilled on the foundations, ethics and best practices of AI and tech reporting.

Since Rwanda's adoption of its National AI Policy in 2022 as one of the first African countries to do so, the country has embarked on an ambitious journey to leverage AI as one of the country's key enablers of sustainable development and establish Rwanda as an AI forerunner in the region.

This requires first upskilling Rwandans and raising their awareness of the National AI Policy, the benefits and risks of AI, as well as its impacts on people's lives.

Journalists and the media have always played a vital role in educating and informing citizens.

They create the foundations for a strong knowledge society in Rwanda that is informed and engaged with the government's implementation of the country's AI plans, which ultimately aims to improve the lives of all Rwandans. It is for this reason that the government and its development partners are actively engaging and promoting quality AI journalism.



# Africa Day of Information and Development Journalism

# AWARD



*Madam Philomene awarded journalist*



*SG awarded The AI Journalist Challenge 2024*

Every year, NatCom joins the Rwanda Journalists Association and the Rwanda Governance Board in celebrating the Africa Day of Information through the Development Journalism Award Ceremony. This year's ceremony, graced by the Secretary General of Rwanda NatCom Mr Albert MUTESA, recognized exceptional contributions in development-centered reporting, reaffirming the Commission's commitment to quality journalism and informed public discourse.

# MEMORY OF THE WORLD NATIONAL COMMITTEE



Early in 2025, NatCom's role in safeguarding cultural heritage was underscored when the Rwanda Memory of the World (MoW) National Committee convened a training session at CNRU Headquarters. The session familiarized new members with UNESCO's Memory of the World Program, clarified their

roles, and outlined the 2025 action plan. Participants reviewed Rwanda's documentary heritage for potential inscription in UNESCO's International Register, ensuring that the nation's memory and identity are preserved for future generations.

# MODERNIZATION OF LIBRARIES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Empowering Librarians for the Digital Age:

### Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO and INES Ruhengeri Host Transformative Workshop for teachers.

In May 2025, in partnership with INES Ruhengeri and supported by UNESCO's Participatory Program, NatCom organized a workshop to modernize library services in public day schools.

Thirty librarians from all districts received training in digital systems, inclusive services, and innovative library management.

The program sought to transform libraries into vibrant learning hubs, particularly in rural communities, aligning with Rwanda's ambition of building a knowledge-based economy where no learner is left behind.



During Workshop the School teachers got time to discuss and share experience in working groups INES Ruhengeri & Rwanda Culture Heritage Academy representatives delivered Certificates to the Workshop participants including Students from Digital Library Department-INES



Beyond infrastructure, NatCom focused on revitalizing youth engagement in UNESCO networks. Following setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, field visits were conducted to assess ASPnet schools and UNESCO Clubs. Recognizing challenges such as turnover of trained students and coordinators, NatCom worked with school communities to design improvement plans.

Students were encouraged to carry out research within clubs and share findings across schools, reinforcing peer-to-peer learning and strengthening the role of UNESCO Clubs as engines of civic knowledge.



**Mr KALISA** Director of Education, Youth & UNESCO Clubs during AspNET School Visit

# REMEMBERING THE 1994 GENOCIDE AGAINST THE TUTSI IN RWANDA THROUGH EDUCATION AND DIALOGUE

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, along with the Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO, Aegis Trust, and other organizations, held a discussion on "Remembering the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda through Education and Dialogue."

The event aimed to honor the victims, promote unity, and outline strategies for a

peaceful future. The dialogue focused to honor the victims, foster harmony, and lay forth plans for a peaceful future, highlighting initiatives like the Kigali Genocide Memorial and Never Again Rwanda's intergenerational dialogue program. The event underscored the importance of education and communication in promoting comprehension, empathy, and reconciliation



**Albert MUTESA**, the Secretary General of the Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO, emphasized the importance of dialogue and education in addressing the historical context of the Genocide. He praised UNESCO's cooperation in designating four memorials as World Heritage Sites and emphasized the need for future generations to understand the genocide's causes.

**S.G ALBERT MUTESA**

The Executive Director of Memory and Genocide Prevention, Veneranda Ingabire, emphasized the value of genocide memorials for teaching, healing, and remembering. She asked UNESCO to address human rights challenges and create inclusive society through its programs, which should encourage critical thinking and knowledge. Topics like commemorating, teaching, and communicating about the genocide against the Tutsi were discussed.



**Parfait BUSABIZWA**, *Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Youth and Arts, bring attention to the importance of commemorating the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. He emphasizes the role of dialogue in pursuing justice and challenging impunity. Busabizwa also highlight the role of education in educating the younger generation about the Genocide and instilling a responsibility to contribute to a better nation. He calls for continued efforts to prevent such tragedies from happening again.*

### **Parfait BUSABIZWA**

*Moya permanent secretary*



GROUP PHOTO

The event highlighted the significance of education in fostering empathy, understanding historical context, and reconciliation. It highlighted the Kigali Genocide Memorial and Never Again Rwanda's intergenerational discussion program. UNESCO's assistance in resolving human

rights issues and recognizing genocide memorials as World Heritage Sites was emphasized. The event emphasized the need for a peaceful future.

# PROMOTING A CULTURE OF READING AMONG CHILDREN



L: Philippe NKWAKUZI, Country Manager at NABU, R: Albert MUTESA, Secretary General CNRU

The Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO (CNRU) is actively fostering a reading culture among children across all education levels Pre-Nursery, Nursery, Primary, and Secondary.

In alignment with UNESCO's mandate and NABU's mission to accelerate global literacy through free, bilingual books, CNRU has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with NABU to strengthen this initiative.

This partnership aims to enhance access to quality reading materials, encouraging lifelong learning and literacy development.

By instilling a love for reading early, the program supports cognitive growth, language skills, and academic success, contributing to Rwanda's broader educational goals.

Parallel to this, NatCom actively nurtured literacy and a love of reading. Through a new MoU with NABU, the Commission expanded children's access to bilingual, free digital books.

This partnership sought to instill early literacy habits, support cognitive and linguistic development, and advance Rwanda's national education goals by fostering lifelong learning.

## NATIONAL CONSULTATION WORKSHOP ON GLOBAL EDUCATION MEETING 2024



At the policy level, in August 2024, NatCom and UNESCO convened a national consultation workshop in Kigali with the Ministry of Education, REB, UR-CE, and UNICEF.

The gathering aligned Rwanda's education strategies with the Global Education Meeting (GEM) 2024 agenda.

Stakeholders reviewed national policies, mapped them against global benchmarks, and identified pathways to improve inclusivity, equity, and quality in learning.

Later in November 2024, Rwanda's Minister of Education represented the country at the GEM in Brazil, where the Fortaleza Declaration was adopted.

Rwanda highlighted its advances in achieving SDG 4 (Quality Education), while reinforcing global partnerships and its role in shaping education as a driver of sustainable development.

## RWANDA HAS PARTICIPATED AND REPRESENTED IN BRAZIL BY EDUCATION MINISTER/2024



### Mr Joseph NSENGIMANA MINISTER OF EDUCATION

In November 2024, Rwanda's Minister of Education represented the country at the GEM in Brazil, where the Fortaleza Declaration an action-oriented roadmap for education was adopted. Rwanda shared its successes in advancing SDG 4, highlighting strategies for inclusive, equitable education and fostering global partnerships.

The meeting reviewed global progress on SDG 4, emphasizing education as a driver of sustainable development and social equality.

Discussions focused on scaling up investments, improving efficiency, and accelerating transformative actions, guided by the UN Pact for the Future.

Rwanda's engagement reinforced its commitment to global education goals while exploring new collaboration opportunities.

# UNPACKING STEM CAREERS: Her Voice in Science



Commitment to gender equality in education and science has been another key pillar of Rwanda NatCom's activities. On February 11, 2025, Rwanda joined global celebrations of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science (IDWGS). The event, hosted at Serena Hotel Kigali by RAWISE, gathered students, educators, scientists, and policymakers under the theme "Unpacking STEM Careers: Her Voice in Science." Approximately forty girls from nine schools presented STEM innovations, inspiring a national conversation on breaking gender barriers in scientific fields.

Panel discussions, led by accomplished women scientists including Rwanda's first female physicist, Dr. Chantal Cyulinyana explored challenges women face in STEM, the importance of mentorship and networking, and the resilience needed to thrive in scientific careers. The event not only celebrated Rwanda's remarkable progress in women's empowerment (with women holding over 61% of parliamentary seats) but also acknowledged persistent gaps. Students themselves called for stronger mentorship structures, more visibility for female role models, inclusive STEM programs, and the creation of a Pan-African STEM network for women and girls to transcend geographical barriers

through digital collaboration.

Across these diverse initiatives, the Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO has demonstrated a sustained commitment to preserving cultural memory, modernizing education, revitalizing youth networks, promoting literacy, advancing gender equality, and reinforcing Rwanda's place within global policy frameworks. Collectively, these efforts affirm Rwanda's vision of a society rooted in knowledge, inclusivity, and sustainable development, while ensuring that no learner, voice, or community is left behind.

The International Day of Women and Girls in Science 2025 was not only a celebration but a powerful testament to the creativity, resilience, and potential of Rwanda's young women in STEM. Central to the discussions was a message of solidarity and encouragement: the panelists urged the girls to believe in themselves, support one another, and boldly seek opportunities, encapsulated in the resounding reminder *"Find people who believe in you and believe in each other. Support is everything."*

The highlight of the day was the exhibition of student-led STEM projects, which embodied innovative solutions to real-world challenges using accessible, low-cost

technologies. Projects addressed issues from environmental conservation to health and agriculture, showcasing the students' ingenuity and sense of responsibility toward their communities. Among the most groundbreaking ideas was a coral reef repopulation greenhouse, a bold contribution to marine conservation from a landlocked country. Other projects included waste reduction through recycling, maggot farming for sustainable animal feed, locally sourced soap and oils for community entrepreneurship, water purification for safe drinking, and reusable sanitary pads that advanced menstrual equity. The exhibition even featured an ambitious robotics project



for deep-sea exploration, underscoring the breadth of the girls' vision.

Following the exhibition, experts provided constructive feedback, urging the students to strengthen data validation, refine business models, and frame their innovations within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They emphasized the global relevance of these projects, and a University of Rwanda professor even suggested seeking funding

to support their expansion, highlighting the promise these young innovators hold for Rwanda's academic and entrepreneurial future.

The event closed with renewed optimism for women in STEM, proving that mentorship, collaboration, and intergenerational dialogue can fuel progress.

The students' curiosity and courage were a testament to Rwanda's growing momentum toward dismantling stereotypes and paving the way for equal participation in science. The vision for the future was clear: with stronger networks, visibility of female role models, and sustained investment, women's empowerment in STEM is not only possible but inevitable.

These initiatives whether promoting girls in STEM, embedding global citizenship in education, advancing responsible AI, championing sustainable conservation, or driving digital transformation reflect Rwanda's holistic vision of progress. They embody a society where innovation, equity, and sustainability converge, positioning Rwanda as a leader in shaping a future where knowledge, inclusion, and resilience guide national and global development alike.





# ARE YOU A GLOBAL CITIZEN?



This drive for transformation extends beyond science into Rwanda's wider education and innovation agenda. On 9 December 2024, Rwanda launched the National Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Program in Musanze. This initiative seeks to nurture informed, responsible citizens who respect diversity, promote peace, and act for sustainability.

Starting with ten pioneering schools, GCED and ESD are set to spread nationwide through teacher training, the establishment of school clubs, and integration into curricula, aligning with Rwanda's Vision 2050 and the National Strategy for Transformation.

Rwanda marked a transformative milestone in its education journey with the launch of the National Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Program in Musanze.

This initiative is not just a program—it's a vision for nurturing responsible, informed, and active citizens who are prepared to tackle 21st-century challenges.

# BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A GLOBAL CITIZEN



A Global Citizen appreciates our shared humanity, respects diversity, promotes peace, and takes responsibility for creating a sustainable future. Through Global Citizenship Education, we aim to equip learners with the knowledge, values, and skills to understand the interconnectedness of our world and act collaboratively to address global challenges.

As highlighted by a representative of the Rwanda Education Board (REB) during the launch:

## **It empowers Rwandan youth to:**

- Think critically about complex, interconnected global issues.
- Collaborate across communities to promote peace and inclusivity.
- Champion sustainability in their local environments for global impact.

The event was an inspiring call to action. With engaging discussions, collaborative planning, and shared commitments, participants left motivated to fulfill their roles in this educational transformation.

From here, the program begins with

Through GCED, we aim to empower students to see themselves as part of a global community, appreciating diversity, promoting peace, and working collaboratively to address shared challenges.

Likewise, ESD ensures that our learners are equipped to make informed decisions and take actions that safeguard the environment, foster sustainability, and protect future generations.

10 schools in secondary cities as pioneers. These schools will set the stage for nationwide expansion, supported by teacher training workshops, the creation of GCED clubs, and a commitment to embed sustainability and global citizenship in every classroom.

This program contributes to Rwanda's National Strategy for Transformation and aligns with Vision 2050, which positions education as the foundation for innovation, sustainable development, and peace.

Together, we can build a future where every Rwandan learner becomes a change maker, contributing to a peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable world.

# LEAD-ESD WORKSHOP IN RWANDA BUILDS MOMENTUM FOR INTEGRATING SUSTAINABILITY INTO TEACHER TRAINING AND CLASSROOM

On 2 October 2025, Rwanda hosted the National Policy Dialogue on Leadership for Education for Sustainable Development (LEAD-ESD), a regional programme coordinated by UNESCO and UNICEF and implemented by Kenyatta University. The event brought together teachers' representatives, policymakers, and partners to review progress and strengthen national capacity to integrate Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into schools and teacher training.



*Group photo of All National Education Stakeholders in ESD*

The dialogue is part of a wider initiative covering Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, and Uganda, countries that face urgent challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and youth unemployment. By working through teacher education institutions, the programme seeks to ensure that sustainability becomes a core part of learning, from classrooms to communities.



## Dr. Patience Awopegba

*Programme Specialist at the UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa and coordinator of LEAD-ESD.*

Reminded participants of the urgency of the task:

“

*We are facing a global crisis. Education for sustainable development is the catalyst that can accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. From early learning to universities, education must instill values and skills that shape more sustainable choices. There is no Planet B, and every action we take now matters.”*

The workshop also highlighted Rwanda's leadership in translating global commitments into local realities.



## Mr GATABAZI Pascal

*Chief Technical Advisor to Ministry of Education*

Stressed that sustainability must be embedded directly into teacher training and curricula:

“

*World leaders set frameworks for climate action, but unless they reach classrooms, they remain abstract. In Rwanda, we make sure policies are translated into lessons. Children grow up knowing how to protect the environment and understand what sustainable development requires.”*

Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) are central to this transformation. They not only train future teachers but also serve as laboratories for innovative “Change Projects” that make ESD practical and locally relevant.



## Dominique MVUNABANDI

*Director of Sciences, Technology & Innovations*

*at the Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO, and ESD*

### Expert explained:

“

*Each TTC develops a project tailored to its community—whether tree planting, waste management, greening the school environment,... These initiatives complement Rwanda’s competence-based curriculum and ensure that students and teachers alike apply sustainability in real life.”*

Teachers who have begun implementing projects shared their experiences.



## **IRARORA Gildas**

*A teacher at TTC Zaza*

**Described how his school is combining learning with environmental action:**

*“We started a tree-planting project on four hectares provided by the school. Each student is responsible for a tree. This way they don’t just study sustainability they practice it, and they see results that will benefit future generations.”*

## **Claudine MUSABIMANA**

*At TTC Nyamata*

**Linking environmental stewardship with daily school life:**

*“Keeping Our School Green and Clean”*

*“We are combining tree nurseries with improved waste management. Education is not just in books. By planting trees and promoting cleanliness, students see the direct impact of what they learn.”*

# AI READINESS IN RWANDA



*Group Photo of Artificial Intelligence national stakeholders*

Innovation also took center stage on 28 January 2025, when Rwanda NatCom hosted a consultation workshop on the National Artificial Intelligence Readiness Assessment (RAM).

The workshop brought together experts from diverse sectors to explore UNESCO's Ethical Guidelines on AI, stressing the need for human-centered and inclusive technologies.

Discussions highlighted the importance of robust infrastructure, governance frameworks, and equitable access to ensure AI empowers all citizens.

With policies like the National AI Policy, Rwanda is positioning itself as a continental leader in AI development, supported by international partnerships such as the Government of Japan.



# SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH: what do we tell our children?

Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO organized a two-day consultative meeting on the Eastern and Southern Africa Ministerial Commitment on education and health for the well-being of Adolescents and young people under the theme: “Young people to be global citizens”. The objective is to raise well-educated youth, healthy,

resilient, socially responsible, and informed decision-makers with the capacity to contribute to their communities, countries, and regions. The meeting was held at the Fatima Hotel from 11th to 12th January 2024.



The Rwanda NatCom Secretary General gave a warm welcome to the participants. He expressed his gratitude to the UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa for having included Rwanda in this program. This is a cross-cutting program to be implemented by various ministries and agencies in Rwanda’s education system through the Comprehensive Sexual Education but it still needs to be ratified by Rwanda

Government. Mr Albert Mutesa explained that all participants were invited to follow their role in the health and well-being of adolescents and young people. He reminded the school headmasters of UNESCO Associated Schools to take this meeting as an opportunity to share experiences and issues based on reproductive health and the way to manage them in their respective schools. He encouraged them to host

information sessions on sexual matters to prevent them from false information grasped from their colleagues and from different channels transmitted by those who intend to disorient them as parents still face cultural barriers when it comes to sexual and reproductive health.



This O3 program means **Our Lives, Our Rights, Our Future.** This program aims at improving sexual and reproductive health, gender, and education outcomes for adolescents and young people through a sustained reduction in new HIV infections, other sexually transmitted infections and early and unintended pregnancies, gender-based violence, and child marriage. Its vision is to have young Rwandan, Africans, as a global citizen who is empowered, educated, healthy, resilient, and socially responsible an autonomous decision-maker who can reach their full potential and contribute to the development of their community, country, region, and the world in general.

# UNESCO SUPPORTS RWANDA'S TVET DIGITIZATION STRATEGY

## Rwanda Takes a Key Step Toward Digitizing TVET and Skills Development Systems

With the support of UNESCO and its partners, Rwanda has joined the Pan-African Initiative for the Digital Transformation of TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) by organizing a national kick-off workshop on

September 12, 2024. This high-level gathering marked the official start of the process to develop Rwanda's National Strategy Document for the Digitization of TVET and Skills Development Systems.



<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-supports-rwandas-tvet-digitization-strategy>

The workshop brought together a wide range of stakeholders including government representatives, educators, private sector actors, and development partners who collectively assessed the current state of digital integration within Rwanda's TVET sector. Participants

engaged in in-depth discussions on the opportunities and challenges of advancing digital learning, as well as on the methodological framework that will guide the drafting of the national strategy.

Following this launch, a national technical team of Rwandan experts, supported by UNESCO specialists, will prepare a foresight note. This document will articulate the long-term vision, strategic directions, and practical approaches needed to build a comprehensive national action plan. Once completed, the plan will serve as the backbone for the forthcoming TVET digitization strategy document.

Rwanda is following in the footsteps of Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, and Guinea, which have already advanced in this process. The government has expressed its intention to finalize, validate, and begin implementing its strategy document before the end of 2024.

This effort is part of the broader Pan-African Initiative, launched by UNESCO in partnership with the African Union and regional stakeholders. Its ultimate ambition is to establish an ecosystem for digital

transformation in TVET and skills development systems across Africa by 2030. By that target year, the initiative aims for at least 27 African countries half of the continent to have developed and adopted a national strategy for digital transformation in TVET.

Aligned with the African Union's Agenda 2063, this initiative underscores the central role of digital skills, innovation, and modernized vocational training in accelerating socio-economic growth, creating jobs, and equipping Africa's youth for the future world of work.

For Rwanda, the successful implementation of its strategy will position the country as a regional leader in leveraging digital tools to expand access, improve quality, and enhance the relevance of technical and vocational education.



# PARTNERSHIPS STRENGTHEN SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS AT GISHWATI-MUKURA BIOSPHERE RESERVE

Rwanda marked the International Day of Biosphere Reserves with a two-day celebration at Gishwati-Mukura, highlighting how beekeeping, forest restoration, and knowledge-sharing are improving community livelihoods while protecting ecosystems. The event brought together national authorities, UNESCO partners, researchers, and local women beekeepers to explore the links between nature and sustainable development. Rwanda joined the world in celebrating the International Day of Biosphere Reserves on 3–4 November 2025, with activities held at

Gishwati-Mukura Biosphere Reserve under the theme of advancing sustainable livelihoods through conservation and science.

The event brought together national and local authorities, UNESCO representatives, conservation partners, researchers and community members, demonstrating how beekeeping and the restoration of indigenous trees can strengthen both ecosystems and economies.



Celebrating the International Biosphere Reserve Day at GMNP, on 3rd November



Biosphere Reserve field Visit



**E**nvironmental stewardship also featured prominently in recent months, Rwanda joins the global network in celebrating the International Day for Biosphere Reserves at Gishwati-Mukura National Park, under the theme “Building Pathways to Sustainable Solutions.”

The event combined scientific workshops, site visits, and knowledge-sharing to promote conservation, community engagement, and regional leadership.

Programs like “Women for Bees”, which empower local women through sustainable beekeeping, demonstrated how ecological preservation and socio-economic growth can work hand in hand.

# WORLD BEE DAY?

Rwanda further advanced this theme on 20 May 2025, marking its first World Bee Day in the Gishwati-Mukura Biosphere Reserve.

The celebration raised awareness about the critical role of pollinators, which support 75% of global food crops but face existential threats from pesticides, habitat loss, and climate change. Local women beekeepers shared personal stories of loss and resilience, calling for safer agricultural practices to protect bees and ecosystems.

UNESCO and its partners reaffirmed their support, recognizing bees as essential not only for biodiversity but also for food security and livelihoods.

At the same time, Rwanda has been investing in equipping its youth with future-ready skills. Between September and October 2024, stakeholders came together to draft the TVET Digitalization Strategy,

Designed to modernize Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

This initiative, led by the Rwanda TVET Board and Rwanda Polytechnic, aims to embed digital tools, e-learning platforms, and modern resources across institutions, preparing students for the demands of Industry 4.0.

By embracing digital transformation, Rwanda seeks to foster a skilled workforce, bridge inequalities in access, and fuel its transition toward a knowledge-based economy.

Bees, though small, were presented as powerful indicators of the health of ecosystems. Prof. Venuste NSENGIMANA, conservation biologist and lecturer at the University of Rwanda, emphasized their extreme sensitivity to environmental change, warning that every alteration to nature reverberates through all forms of life.



He recalled how human fear and misunderstanding children throwing stones or adults swatting them away often result in irreversible damage, as once a hive is disturbed, it may never recover.

He reminded that bees flourish in biodiverse environments, yet modern threats such as monocultures and chemical pesticides strip them of their food, shelter, and survival.

To address these dangers, Rwanda has begun proactive measures. Dr. Solange UWITUZE, Deputy Director General of Animal Resources at RAB, explained that farmers are being educated to spray crops only after noon, when bees have completed their foraging, and that highly hazardous pesticides have already been banned.

The government also promotes beekeeping in forested zones to support biodiversity. Meanwhile, Rutsiro's Vice Mayor Emmanuel UWIZEYIMANA noted that monitoring of pesticide use around the Gishwati-Mukura Reserve is ongoing, with a focus on reducing or eliminating chemical use near key bee habitats.



# DISCOVERING RWANDA'S GEODIVERSITY

From October 16th to 18th, this commitment to sustainability extended further through the celebration of International Geodiversity Day, marked by a two-day field trip across Musanze and Burera districts.

Under the theme “Conserving the Past, Sustaining the Future,” a group of around 30 experts including geologists, conservationists, ecologists, economists, and community leaders visited sites of immense natural and cultural heritage. These included the Twin Lakes of Burera and Ruhondo, the Rugezi Marsh, and the Musanze Caves.

Each site revealed Rwanda’s geological richness while underscoring the intricate relationship between biodiversity, culture, and community livelihoods.

The Twin Lakes, formed by volcanic activity, symbolized both natural beauty and community reliance, with one lake lifeless yet deeply respected for its spiritual and ecotourism value.

The Rugezi Marsh, once degraded by illegal farming and poaching, now stands restored, sustaining endangered species like the Grey Crowned Crane and offering lessons in ecological resilience. Along the journey, cultural heritage interlaced with nature, exemplified by the traditional blessing tree believed to bring unity and good fortune.

Equally inspiring was the Ntaruka Hydropower Plant, showcasing sustainable use of natural resources, and the RWCA’s community projects, where women were supported with alternative livelihoods such as handicrafts to reduce pressure on wetlands.

The trip concluded with a moonlit reflection by the Twin Lakes, reinforcing a shared vision of designating the area as a UNESCO Global Geopark. Such a status would elevate international visibility, promote ecotourism, and

balance conservation with economic development.

The second day explored the cultural and technological heartbeat of the region.

The Musanze Hanga Hub highlighted Rwanda’s leap into digital innovation, equipping youth with advanced tools like 3D printers and CNC machines while fostering entrepreneurship in agriculture and tourism.

At the Red Rocks Cultural Centre, visitors are immersed in Rwanda’s living traditions from drumming and dance to medicinal plant use while also witnessing community programs that tie cultural preservation to sustainability and livelihoods.

The Musanze Caves, volcanic formations of immense geological and historical significance, stood as both natural wonders and poignant reminders of Rwanda’s resilience, having served as refuge during the 1994 genocide.

Finally, the INES-Ruhengeri Institute of Applied Sciences showcased its botanical gardens, a hub for conserving native plants and training future conservationists.

Collectively, these experiences revealed how geology, culture, and innovation converge in Rwanda’s pursuit of Geopark designation.



Beyond conservation and geodiversity, Rwanda also positioned itself as a continental leader in scientific advancement.

From September 23rd to 28th, 2024, Kigali hosted the inaugural African Forensic Science Academy (AFSA) Conference, uniting professionals to strengthen Africa's forensic science ecosystem and justice systems.

The event underscored the pivotal role of forensic science in rule of law while fostering global collaborations, including a high-level meeting with the Israeli Ambassador to bolster Rwanda's STEM education.

Symbolically, participants joined Rwanda's Umuganda day to plant trees seeding both environmental renewal and future scientific cooperation.



## The Power of Emerging Technologies for Sustainable Development



**Albert MUTESA**, Secretary General of Rwanda National Commission of UNESCO

Finally, the Global Engineering Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Kigali from October 15th to 18th, marked a historic milestone as the first such global engineering gathering on African soil since 1968.

Supported by UNESCO, it spotlighted engineering as the backbone of sustainable progress advancing infrastructure, energy, and smart systems aligned with both the SDGs and Africa's Agenda 2063.

Rwanda's leaders stressed the need for homegrown solutions tailored to local realities rather than mere adoption of foreign technologies.



The conference strengthened Rwanda's global engineering presence and reaffirmed its commitment to sustainable innovation.

These diverse but interconnected initiatives from bee conservation and geodiversity protection to forensic science collaboration and engineering innovation paint a vivid picture of Rwanda's holistic pursuit of sustainability.

They reveal a nation where science, culture, and community engagement intersect, and where every effort, whether in conservation, technology, or education, contributes to building a resilient and inclusive future.

# A Courtesy Visit from Mr. Soichiro Yasukawa

In the same spirit of international collaboration, Rwanda also welcomed Mr. Soichiro Yasukawa, UNESCO Chief of the Disaster Risk Reduction Unit, on a courtesy visit.

His discussions with national institutions highlighted Rwanda's growing engagement with UNESCO beyond cultural heritage expanding into the critical field of disaster preparedness and resilience.

Mr. Yasukawa's visit reaffirmed the importance of combining traditional knowledge and new technologies to strengthen Rwanda's ability to withstand natural and human-induced hazards.

Capacity Building Workshop on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Disaster Resilience

Adding further momentum, Rwanda hosted a five-day capacity building workshop on

the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Held at the Karongi Museum of Environment, the workshop trained cultural officers, heritage practitioners, and researchers on how to document and safeguard Rwanda's living traditions through participatory inventories.

But the workshop also extended its scope to cutting-edge concerns: enhancing disaster resilience in land use planning and management through the integration of artificial intelligence.

This innovative approach bridges heritage preservation with sustainable development, recognizing that communities' cultural practices and indigenous knowledge can contribute significantly to disaster risk reduction.

The Director General of the Rwanda Housing Authority joined the discussions with the UNESCO team, exploring avenues for collaboration in disaster risk reduction and improving the built environment.

These conversations open new opportunities for integrating AI tools, traditional ecological knowledge, and modern planning systems to create safer, more sustainable, and culturally rooted communities across Rwanda.



# RWANDA HOSTS 7TH AFRIMAB GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

## A Landmark for Ecosystem Restoration and Biosphere Conservation.

From May 2–5, 2023, Rwanda proudly hosted the 7th General Assembly of the African Network of Biosphere Reserves (**AfriMAB**) in Musanze, a region globally known for its mountain gorillas and breathtaking natural reserves.

The event brought together representatives from 33 African countries, reaffirming Rwanda's growing role as a leader in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

The assembly unfolded under the theme: "Ecosystem Restoration in the Context of Sustainable Development: African Biosphere Reserves Towards 2030.

*" This forward-looking theme reflects the urgency of ecosystem restoration across the continent and aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to biodiversity, climate action, and sustainable livelihoods.*

The event was organized by the Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO in collaboration with the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Regional Network for Africa, reinforcing Rwanda's close partnership with UNESCO in advancing ecological and cultural conservation.



## TWO MAJOR MILESTONES MARK THE ASSEMBLY

The assembly was defined by two landmark moments that signal new directions for Africa's biosphere conservation efforts:

### Launch of the Center of Excellence in Biodiversity and Natural Resources

Rwanda officially launched its UNESCO Category II Center of Excellence in Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management, a hub designed to promote research, training, and collaboration across Africa.

The Center will play a vital role in sharing knowledge, guiding conservation strategies, and equipping local communities with tools to restore ecosystems while improving livelihoods.

The establishment of such a center in Rwanda underscores the country's progress since creating its MAB National Committee in 2005. Rwanda further strengthened its conservation framework with the 2010 legal establishment of the MAB committee, the nomination of Gishwati-Mukura National Park as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in October 2020, and the recognition of its Center of Excellence as a UNESCO Category II Center in October 2021.

### Passing of the Baton from Ivory Coast to Rwanda

During the assembly, Ivory Coast handed the organizational leadership of AfriMAB to Rwanda. The Late Ms. Gauze Martine Touao, the outgoing Chair of AfriMAB, explained the choice of Rwanda:

*"We need a country that can get things*

*done."* Rwanda's leadership is anchored in strong political will, with a President committed to meeting environmental challenges.

Communities around Rwanda's biosphere reserves benefit directly from conservation efforts, receiving 10% of tourism revenue—a model of inclusive conservation.

Rwanda's youth were highlighted as resilient and engaged, embodying the energy needed to drive the AfriMAB agenda forward.



**The Late Ms. Gauze Martine Touao,**

*The outgoing AfriMAB Chair*

# Voices from the Assembly

## Ms. Beatrice CYIZA,

A Rwandan representative, stressed that AfriMAB debates are crucial for delivering on ecosystem restoration commitments. She emphasized the need for humanity to live in harmony with nature and called for collective action and partnerships to ensure sustainable restoration efforts.



## Albert MUTESA

*Secretary General of Rwanda NatCom*

Reflected on Rwanda's progress since establishing its MAB National Committee. He noted milestones such as the legal framework established in 2010, the recognition of Gishwati-Mukura as a biosphere reserve in 2020, and the Category II designation of the biodiversity center in 2021 all achievements that paved the way for Rwanda to host this assembly.

## Dr. Hans Dencker Thulstrup

*Chief of Section, Division of Ecological*

*and Earth Sciences at UNESCO*

Urged participants to make the most of the assembly:

"The AfriMAB is your event and an opportunity to meet colleagues, make friends across the region, to learn from one another, to share and to make the most of the good company you are in."



# The AfriMAB Network: A Growing African Family

The **AfriMAB Network** was created in 1996 by **Ms. Noelline**, a pioneering figure who dedicated 27 years to its growth and earned the affectionate nickname “Mama AfriMAB.” Since its creation, the network has evolved into a strong community of state institutions, researchers, scientists, biosphere reserve managers, conservationists, youth, and local stakeholders.



AfriMAB provides a unique platform for African nations to share knowledge, exchange experiences, and collaborate on conservation challenges. It serves as a family where members can learn from both successes and failures, adapting practices to diverse ecological and cultural contexts across the continent.

## **Ms. Noelline Raondry Rakotoarisoa, Ph.D.**

*Director, Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences  
& Secretary, Man and Biosphere (MAB)  
Programme, Natural Science sector, UNESCO*



# LOOKING AHEAD: Biosphere Reserves Towards 2030

The Musanze assembly closed with a renewed commitment to ecosystem restoration in Africa's biosphere reserves, guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With Rwanda taking leadership, participants emphasized the need for:

**Stronger community** engagement to ensure conservation benefits reach local populations.

**Youth participation** to sustain long-term stewardship of natural resources.

*Regional collaboration* to tackle cross-border environmental challenges.

**Integration of science, policy, and traditional knowledge** to create innovative solutions.

## Rwanda's Global Reputation in Biodiversity Conservation

Rwanda's selection as host is no accident. The country has earned international acclaim for its protection of mountain gorillas, once critically endangered but now thriving due to deliberate conservation policies.

One of Rwanda's most celebrated conservation practices is the annual Kwita Izina ceremony, where baby gorillas born in the wild are given names. Each year, the event attracts global attention and serves as both a conservation milestone and a cultural celebration. In recent years,

Rwanda has proudly welcomed the birth of more than 20 gorilla infants annually, symbolizing a remarkable turnaround in species survival.

This success is often cited as evidence of Rwanda's ability to combine conservation, tourism, and community development in a way that benefits both people and nature.



# FORMER POUR INFORMER: 30 journalistes rwandais outillés en Éducation aux Médias et à l'Information

Dans un contexte mondial marqué par la désinformation, les discours de haine en ligne et la montée des manipulations médiatiques, renforcer les capacités des professionnels de l'information est plus que jamais une priorité. C'est dans cette perspective que la Commission Nationale Rwandaise pour l'UNESCO, avec le soutien financier de l'UNESCO et en partenariat avec plusieurs associations rwandaises de

journalistes, a organisé une formation de haut niveau sur l'Éducation aux Médias et à l'Information (MIL – Media and Information Literacy) au profit de 30 journalistes issus de divers organes de presse à travers le pays.

Une presse libre et responsable au cœur du développement



La formation, qui s'est tenue en juin 2024 à Kigali, s'inscrit dans le cadre des efforts constants de la Commission pour promouvoir la liberté d'expression, l'accès à une information fiable et le renforcement du journalisme professionnel au Rwanda.

L'initiative visait à doter les participants des compétences nécessaires pour naviguer dans l'écosystème informationnel complexe d'aujourd'hui, où les réseaux sociaux, les algorithmes et les fausses nouvelles redéfinissent les règles du jeu médiatique.



Le concept de MIL repose sur un socle fondamental : permettre aux citoyens – et en particulier aux journalistes de comprendre, analyser, produire et diffuser l'information de manière critique et éthique. Pour les professionnels des médias, cet approche est essentielle afin de jouer pleinement leur rôle de relais de l'information, de gardiens de la démocratie et de vecteurs de cohésion sociale.

Durant la session de formation, les journalistes ont exploré divers modules allant de l'éthique journalistique à la vérification des faits (fact-checking), en passant par la lutte contre les discours de haine en ligne, la responsabilité numérique et l'éducation du public à la lecture critique des médias.

### Une synergie nationale autour des enjeux médiatiques

L'événement a été marqué par une forte collaboration entre la Commission, les associations de journalistes et les formateurs nationaux. Cette synergie illustre une volonté

commune de renforcer l'écosystème médiatique rwandais et d'en faire un pilier du développement durable, de la paix et de la bonne gouvernance.

### Vers une culture de l'information critique

En dotant ces 30 journalistes des outils du MIL, la Commission Nationale Rwandaise pour l'UNESCO espère favoriser l'émergence d'une nouvelle génération de professionnels plus conscients de leur rôle, plus exigeants envers leurs sources, et plus soucieux de la qualité de

l'information diffusée au public. Ce renforcement de capacités constitue une étape importante vers une culture nationale de l'information fondée sur la responsabilité, la transparence et la citoyenneté active.





**unesco**

Rwanda  
National Commission

## **VISION**

Contribute to building a peaceful society in accordance with universal values promoted by UNESCO.

## **MISSION**

To promote ideas for peace and mutual understanding in the country, to advise Government on UNESCO activities and to encourage initiatives for intellectual and moral solidarity by making the public opinion interested in UNESCO objectives, programme and work.