

# Data Impact on Gender Equality in Work: Introducing the 19th ICLS Definitions of Work in **Rwanda**

## Summary

Rwanda—the first country in the world to achieve a female majority in parliament—has a strong enabling environment for gender data and evidence-based policymaking. The national gender machinery comprises the lead ministry, a National Women’s Council, a separate gender monitoring office, and a forum of women parliamentarians to lead policymaking from the highest level.

Rwanda first introduced the new concepts of work, employment, and labor underutilization (adopted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS)) in its first ever Labour Force Survey (LFS) conducted in 2016. The changes had a huge impact on national statistics, with labor force participation falling from almost 90 percent for both women and men to 42 percent for women and 61 percent for men. Rwanda also provided actionable new data on the number of underutilized people in the labor force and on the size of the potential labor force, with a particular emphasis on women.

Since the first LFS in 2016, the National Institute of Statistics in Rwanda has conducted two surveys each year, and since February 2019, it has conducted a quarterly LFS. The statistics office producers consolidated annual statistics and thematic analyses, including special reports on gender and the labor force. Data producers were careful to include data users throughout the process of introducing the new survey and definitions and to discuss the potential impact on key indicators. They supported the transition by presenting data according to both old and new definitions.

New concepts such as the potential labor force and labor underutilization are evident in the new national employment policy. Importantly, where gender gaps were previously hard to see, the new statistics are bringing them to light. Women’s participation in paid employment is much lower than men but their combined hours of paid and unpaid work are significantly higher. There are many women currently outside of the labor force that are underutilized, providing promise for future employment policies.

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## About this case study

In 2013, the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians agreed upon a new definition of work with subcategories relating to both paid and unpaid working activities.<sup>i</sup> The changes narrowed the definition of employment to work for pay or profit only. People who produce goods for subsistence, volunteer, or work for training are no longer classified as being employed, which in some countries was a significant part of the labor force.

As the table below shows, the changes to the definition of employment were significant.<sup>ii</sup>

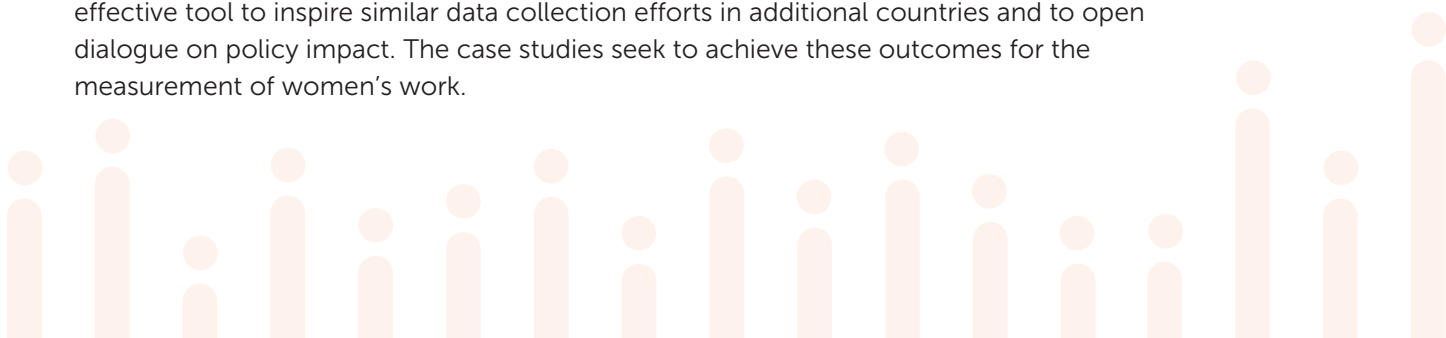
Labor Force before the 19th ICLS		Labor Force after the 19th ICLS	
<b>Employed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All who work for pay</li> <li>▪ All who work for profit</li> <li>▪ All who work for training</li> <li>▪ All who work to produce goods for own final use</li> <li>▪ All who volunteer for organizations</li> <li>▪ All who volunteer to produce goods for households</li> </ul>	<b>Not employed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Everyone else whether or not they:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Provide services for own final use</li> <li>◆ Volunteer providing services for households</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>Employed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All who work for pay</li> <li>▪ All who work for profit (employers, own-account workers, contributing family workers, etc.)</li> </ul>	<b>Not employed if they exclusively:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide services for own final use</li> <li>▪ Volunteer providing services for households</li> <li>▪ Work unpaid for training</li> <li>▪ Produce goods for own final use</li> <li>▪ Volunteer through/for organizations</li> <li>▪ Volunteer producing goods for households</li> </ul>

The changes also introduced new measures of underutilization. They go beyond unemployment to measure how many people meet the new definition of employment but are not working for as many hours as they want to be (underemployed). Statistics are also produced on how many people are not employed or unemployed but are either actively seeking employment or are available to start (potential labor force).

Combined, the new definition and measures of work provide a different but more relevant picture of a country's labor force and the types of work people are engaged in. From a gender perspective, this was a landmark step towards making the work that women typically do visible. The 19th ICLS framework puts more emphasis on measuring all forms of work including:

- Crucial caring and domestic activities that women are overwhelmingly responsible for, that households and economies rely on to function (own-use production of services);
- Work women do to produce food and other goods which enable them and their families to survive (own-use production of goods);
- Work women do for pay or profit (formal and informal employment); and
- Volunteer work and work in exchange for training.

Widespread adoption of these new definitions has not yet been achieved and policy implications remain uncertain. Data2X has found case studies of first movers to be an effective tool to inspire similar data collection efforts in additional countries and to open dialogue on policy impact. The case studies seek to achieve these outcomes for the measurement of women's work.



# Background

Situated in Eastern Africa, Rwanda is a low-income, landlocked country of around 13 million people (51 percent women).<sup>iii</sup> Fertility remains high (4.1 children per woman in 2020), child mortality is rapidly reducing, and the population is young—70 percent are under 30 years old.<sup>iv</sup>

Despite a difficult economic situation and emerging concerns following the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994, Rwanda has experienced fast and sustained growth. Annual economic growth was around 8 percent between 2000 and 2017, and there has been a gradual shift away from agriculture towards the services sector.<sup>v</sup> In 2018, the agriculture sector provided 40 percent of employment opportunities, compared to 42 percent for the services sector.<sup>vi</sup>

Rwanda has made impressive developments in gender equality and women's empowerment. In 2020, the Global Gender Gap report by the World Economic Forum ranked Rwanda ninth of 153 countries and the best performer in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>vii</sup> Gender equality is recognized as one of the key enablers for achieving sustainable development in national strategic plans. In 2020, women hold the majority share (61 percent) of seats in national parliament—the highest share of women in parliament in the world.<sup>viii</sup> The Constitution provides a quota of 30 percent representation of women in all decision-making organs, a share already surpassed by many institutions.

Gender equality and women's empowerment in the labor market is lagging in comparison to other national achievements. Gender gaps persist in labor force participation, and occupational and industry segregation is prevalent.<sup>ix</sup> Labor statistics are essential to shed light on these gaps and show progress over time. Rwanda conducted its first national LFS in 2016 using the new conceptual framework for work adopted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statistics (ICLS) in 2013. Prior to this, data from population censuses and an integrated household survey on living conditions provided labor statistics based on the old definitions of employment and other forms of work.

## Supporting women's empowerment and gender equality in Rwanda

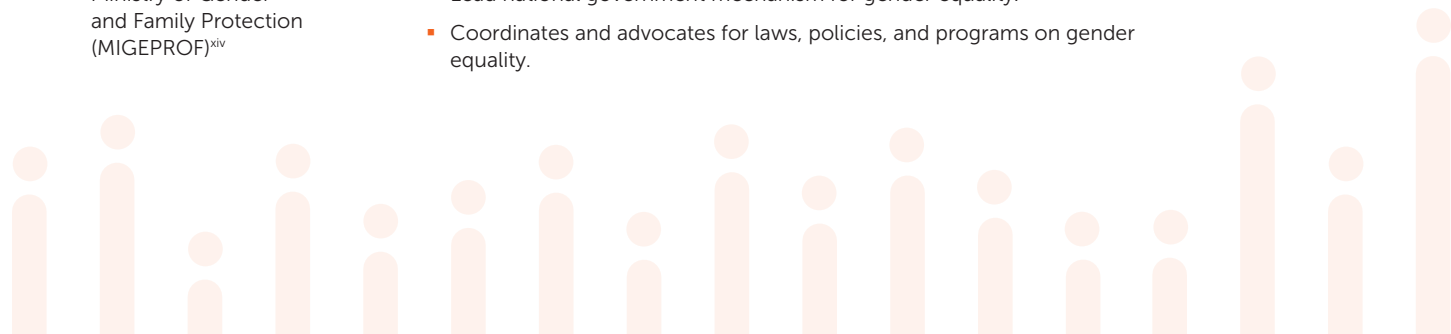
### Enabling environment

Adopted in 2003 and amended in 2015, Rwanda's Constitution provides the foundation for gender equality—including free choice of employment, elimination of discrimination, and equal pay for equal work. Rwanda ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1981, committing to equal pay for equal work for women, social protection, and balancing women's productive and reproductive roles through maternity leave, family-friendly work environments, and child-care facilities. Since then, the country has been establishing an enabling environment for gender equality in paid and unpaid work through national strategies and mechanisms that support women's economic empowerment (Table 1).



**Table 1:** Enabling environment for gender equality in paid and unpaid work

Strategy or mechanism	Description
Rwanda Vision 2050*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Long-term strategic development framework covering 2020–2050.</li> <li>▪ Aims to increase living standards to the equivalent of an upper-middle income country by 2035 and high income one by 2050.</li> <li>▪ Structured around five national priorities: human development; competitiveness and integration; agriculture for wealth creation; urbanization and agglomeration; and accountable and capable governance and institutions.</li> <li>▪ Gender integrated in several priorities and equity (including gender) and inclusiveness are among the shared values for 2050.</li> <li>▪ A transformed workforce for higher productivity is one of the human development strategies with special attention to gender and youth.</li> <li>▪ Regular reviews every five years and a mid-term review in 2035.</li> </ul>
National Gender Policy 2010 <sup>xi</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Second national policy on gender (first was in 2004).</li> <li>▪ Aims to support achievement of national and international commitments to gender equality.</li> <li>▪ Strategies include gender mainstreaming in all sectors, affirmative action, capacity development of gender machineries, and the involvement of men in addressing gender issues.</li> <li>▪ Establishes an Economic Empowerment for Employment Growth and Markets program that focuses on food security, supply chain transformation, financing to support agricultural transformation, empowering rural women, and significantly reducing the number of women in the care economy through support to transition to paid employment.</li> </ul>
National Skills Development and Employment Promotion Strategy (NSDEPS) 2019-2024 <sup>xii</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Comprehensive and gender-sensitive national strategy aiming to provide market-relevant skills and access to quality employment.</li> <li>▪ Focus on closing gender gaps in the labor market.</li> <li>▪ Includes six national programs: capacity development fund; access to markets; access to capital; high-quality business advisory services; graduate labor market transition; and strengthening employment services and career guidance.</li> <li>▪ Summarizes lessons learned and mapped to the previous national employment policy.</li> </ul>
Law No. 13/2009 Regulating Labor in Rwanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provides for equal opportunities in the labor force.</li> <li>▪ Equal pay for women and men.</li> <li>▪ Prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace.</li> </ul>
Law No. 43/2013 Governing Land in Rwanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Equal rights for women and men in access to, ownership, and use of land.</li> </ul>
Law No. 3/2016 Establishing and Governing Maternity Leave Benefits Scheme <sup>xiii</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National employer-based scheme with shared contributions by employer and employee.</li> <li>▪ Six weeks of paid maternity leave.</li> <li>▪ Conditions include presentation of a medical certificate of delivery from a recognized health facility.</li> <li>▪ Managed and administered by the national social security authority.</li> </ul>
Ministry of Gender and Family Protection (MIGEPRO) <sup>xiv</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lead national government mechanism for gender equality.</li> <li>▪ Coordinates and advocates for laws, policies, and programs on gender equality.</li> </ul>



National Women's Council (NWC)<sup>xv</sup>

- Operates under the guidance and supervision of MIGEPROF.
- Organizes, advocates, and builds capacity for women's participation in national development.
- Includes a General Assembly, National Executive Committee (seven people) and secretariat responsible for daily management.
- Committees and councils operating at Kigali City and provincial levels and district level.

Gender Monitoring Office (GMO)<sup>xvi</sup>

- Established in 2007 and sits under the Prime Minister's Office.
- Responsible for monitoring progress towards national gender equality goals.
- Monitors compliance with gender-related commitments across public, private, non-governmental, and religious institutions.
- Promotes accountability for achieving gender equality.
- Carries out evidence-based gender analysis and research.

Rwanda Women Parliamentary Forum (FFRP)<sup>xvii</sup>

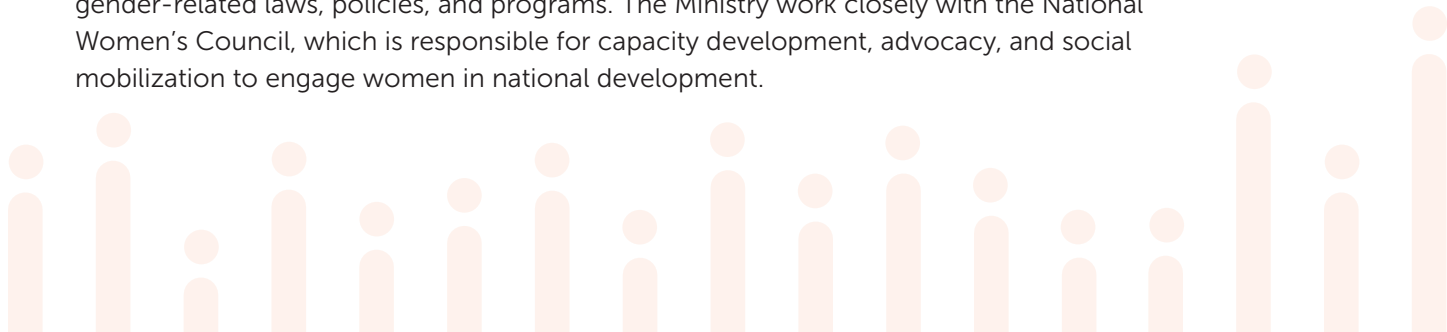
- Established in 1996.
- Unites women members of parliament to champion for gender equality.
- Oversees and advocates for enactment of gender-sensitive laws.
- Develops capacity of women parliamentarians to advocate for gender and development issues.

Rwanda's second National Gender Policy 2010 provides the high-level framework for gender equality and includes priorities for employment work—such as shifting from subsistence agriculture to market-oriented production and improving rural transport infrastructure. The policy aims to remove barriers that constrain women's access to and control over resources. Recruitment and retention of women in key positions, and capacity development to increase women's participation in employment work—especially in technical areas—are priorities envisaged for achievement by 2020.

Sectoral plans are impressive in their inclusion of gender analysis and gender-related commitments. The Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation 2018–2024 for example, focuses on empowering women and youth. It aims to narrow gender gaps in agriculture by empowering women to engage in income-generating activities; it has prioritized knowledge, skills development, and incentives for farm and off-farm jobs for women and youth; and it promotes women in leadership in farmer organizations. The collection and analysis of gender and age-disaggregated data is a cross-cutting priority and essential for tracking the effectiveness of these actions.

The National Skills Development and Employment Promotion Strategy (NSDEPS) 2019–2024 is a comprehensive and gender-sensitive national strategy aimed at providing market-relevant skills and access to quality employment. It has a strong focus on closing gender gaps in the labor market and includes programs to boost access to markets and capital, provide high-quality business advisory services, graduate labor market transition, and strengthen employment services and career guidance.

The Ministry of Gender and Family Protection (MIGEPROF) is the lead public institution for gender-related laws, policies, and programs. The Ministry work closely with the National Women's Council, which is responsible for capacity development, advocacy, and social mobilization to engage women in national development.



Government monitoring and reporting on gender commitments is led by a separate Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) under the Office of the Prime Minister. The GMO monitors compliance with gender-related commitments across public, private, non-governmental, and religious institutions, and it promotes accountability on advancing gender equality.

## Data sources for labor statistics in Rwanda

The National Institute of Statistics Rwanda (NISR) is the lead producer of official statistics in the country. Since it was established in 2005, there has been a tremendous increase in statistics use not only by government but also by the private sector, academia, and the media. NISR is currently implementing the third National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) covering 2019–2024.

**Figure 1.** Logo of the national statistics office



Gender statistics are regularly produced and disseminated by NISR and the GMO through statistical publications including a National Gender Statistics Report released in 2013, 2014, 2016, and 2019. In 2019, GMO launched a Gender Management Information System (GMIS), which is expected to improve both the gathering and use of gender data for policies and decision-making. NISR has published a thematic gender report from the 2017, 2018, and 2019 LFS, providing valuable gender analysis of the main data source on employment and unemployment. Further gender research is conducted by the Center for Gender Studies at the University of Rwanda.

Until recently, labor force statistics in Rwanda were mainly produced through the Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (EICV) first conducted in 2000 and repeated in 2005, 2011, 2014, and 2017. A module on economic activities is a major part of the survey, collecting data on employment; underemployment; hours of work; wages and other entitlements and benefits of employees; occupations and industries; unemployment and job-search methods; special employment programs; and other productive activities of the population outside the boundary of the System of National Accounts. Population censuses provided another source of national labor force statistics and were conducted in 1978, 1991, 2002, and 2012.

**Figure 2.** Timeline of milestones relevant to gender, development and measuring women's work



The low frequency of the EICV Survey and dynamic labor force led to an unmet need for labor statistics. To bridge the gap in the high demand for labor statistics, NISR decided to include a regular LFS in the second National Strategy for Development of Statistics (NSDS2) covering the period 2014–2018. Planning began in 2014 and the first national LFS was conducted in 2016 using the new 19th ICLS definitions of work, marking an important milestone in labor statistics in Rwanda. The overall timeline of milestones related to measuring women’s work in Rwanda is shown in Figure 2. Details of the main household surveys used to produce labor statistics are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Sources of labor statistics in Rwanda

Names	Year	Sample Size	Concept of work	Responsible agencies	Technical support
Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (EICV1)	2000	6,431 households	13th ICLS	NISR	World Bank
Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (EICV4)	2013/14	14,419 households	13th ICLS	NISR	
Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (EICV5)	2016/17	14,580 households	13th ICLS	NISR	
Labour Force Survey	2016	18,688 households	19th ICLS	NISR	
Labour Force Survey	2017	18,688 households	19th ICLS	NISR	
Labour Force Survey	2018	18,592 households	19th ICLS	NISR	GIZ
Labour Force Survey	2019	18,792 households	19th ICLS	NISR	

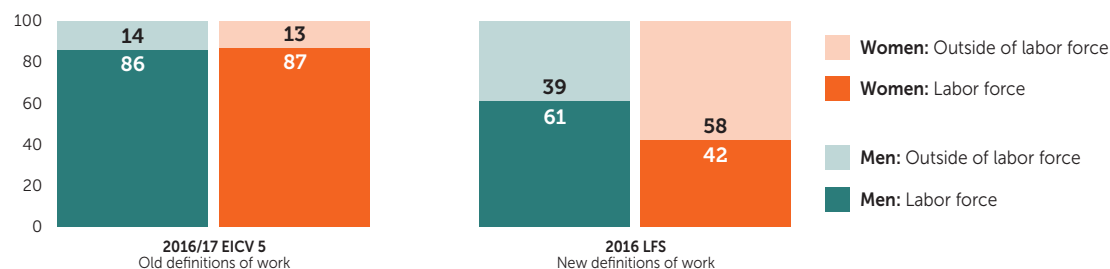
**Sources:** National Institute Statistics Rwanda (NISR) publications on each survey

## Impact of the new definitions on statistics

Subsistence agriculture is a major part of economic production in Rwanda and the new definition of work and employment brought about significant changes in labor force statistics. No longer counting subsistence agriculture and other own-use production as employment work, the 2016 LFS found much lower labor force participation rates, especially for women. Under the old definitions, the percentage of women and men in the workforce were both around 87 percent. The 2016 LFS saw this reduced to 61 percent for men and 42 percent for women—a gender gap of nearly 20 percentage points.



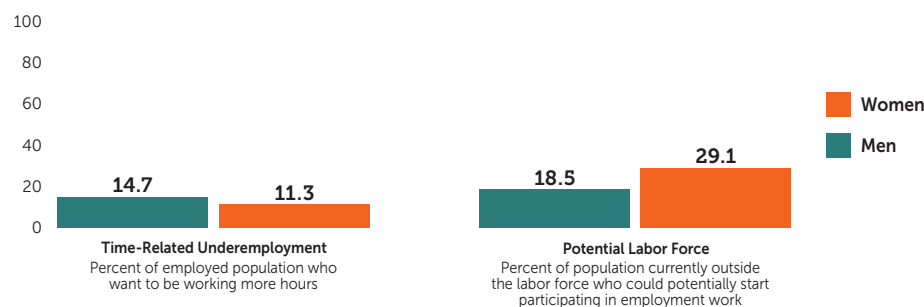
**Figure 3.** Distribution of population in the labor force and outside the labor force before and after the new definitions of employment were introduced in Rwanda



Under the new definitions, the unemployment rate has jumped from its former level of two percent in 2013/14 to 19 percent in 2016. Rates are much higher for women (22.7 percent) compared to men (15.7 percent). The new statistics reveal that unemployment is particularly high among young women aged 16–24 years (26.2 percent) and those aged 25–34 years (27.0 percent) compared to 18.5 percent and 15.1 percent respectively for young men.

Under the new conceptual framework, data on labor underutilization is produced to complement the usual measures of employment and unemployment. In 2016, the LFS results showed that almost 15 percent of employed men wanted to be working more hours compared to 11 percent of employed women. Among people outside the labor force (neither employed nor unemployed), a large proportion of women (29 percent) fit the criteria for the potential labor force, meaning they were either seeking employment but not currently available, or they were available but had not been actively looking for work. Almost 19 percent of men were outside the labor force in the same situation. These people could be drawn into the labor force under the right circumstances. In particular, the gender gap suggests women could be ready to join the labor force.

**Figure 4.** Measures of labor underutilization, Rwanda 2016



The introduction of new standards revealed gender gaps that were harder to see under the old definitions. As intended, the 19th ICLS definitions provide a clearer distinction between paid work and the work being done to produce goods and services for family members. Women continue to do most of the unpaid work in the home to provide and care for others. The 2016 LFS confirmed this with questions on combined hours worked in employment and unpaid home services. Data reveals that while men work 38 hours per week in paid work and women work 32 hours, men only average one hour per week of unpaid work in the home while women average ten hours.



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## Explaining the new data

The anticipated significant changes from the new conceptual framework made it essential to communicate early with stakeholders to build understanding and avoid misinterpretation and confusion. This engagement and communication happened in a variety of ways.

In February 2014, prior to the implementation of new standards, key stakeholders were informed of the new global standards and their possible impact on key labor market indicators. A workshop organized by Rwanda's Ministry of Public Service and Labour, National Institute of Statistics, and the ILO on implementation of the new standards provided a national forum for discussion.

Stakeholders were involved throughout the process of revising the LFS to reflect the new standards. Further workshops were held in May and July 2015 to update and discuss the survey tools. In each workshop, experts explained the changes in concepts and the likely consequences for key labor market indicators.

It was also essential to inform senior decisionmakers about the changes. After conducting a pilot survey in February 2016, senior representatives of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Public Service and Labour, and the Prime Minister's Office were updated using real findings from the pilot.

There were also strategies to communicate the results of the survey once collection and analysis were complete. This communication began early with a questionnaire designed specifically to present key indicators—such as the labor force participation rate, employment to population ratio, unemployment rate, employment by economic activity and by occupation—based on both the new and old standards. This helped differentiate between changes due to definitions and actual changes in the labor market. Publishing key indicators using both standards continued in the LFS publications until users were familiar with new data and a time series based on new standards became an established practice.

Good metadata is always needed to guide users in their interpretation of statistics. The changes were well explained in the LFS reports and a detailed annex on concepts and definitions was included.

## Impacts of new data on advocacy, policies, and decisions

The new concepts introduced by the changed standards are already proving to be effective policymaking tools. The overall objective of a new employment policy, adopted in 2019, is to create sufficient and productive jobs to reduce labor underutilization and enhance productivity and competitiveness. The policy also identifies a reduction in the number of people in the potential labor force as a policy priority and mentions the need to bridge



gender gaps and focus on youth. It identifies the LFS as one of the key sources of statistics for monitoring progress, and more than 30 labor market indicators are presented in its annex. The policy mandates that, "All relevant indicators in the monitoring framework will be disaggregated by sex."

The new data has had several other known impacts on policymaking in Rwanda:

- Adoption of a National Skills Development and Employment Promotion Strategy in 2019 to reduce unemployment and underemployment.
- Introduction of Agri-business facilities to transform subsistence agriculture into commercial farming.
- Development of gender mainstreaming strategies in employment, in agriculture, and in the private sector, to increase women's labor force participation.
- Establishment of Employment Service Centers to facilitate youth transition into employment.
- A Kora Job Portal was established to improve information dissemination on employment opportunities available.
- Upgrading of the Rwandan Labour Market Information System (LMIS) using new data.

New labor statistics are being used to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. In the national report, *The State of Gender Equality in Rwanda: From Transition to Transformation*,<sup>xxiv</sup> data from the 2018 LFS has been used to describe gender equality in economic transformation. The Decent Work Country Programme includes data from the 2017 LFS, highlighting existing gender disparities in employment and unpaid work.

Many stakeholders interviewed during the preparation of this case study appreciated the new standards and the potential they present for better targeting policies. More nuanced data on types of work other than employment combined with new measures of labor underutilization are helping policymakers to develop more meaningful policies in Rwanda. The focus of policies is starting to shift from a sole focus on employment creation to improving employment conditions. Removing subsistence work from the definition of employment has also helped policymakers adopt new thinking and approaches to increase production to support building on own-use to market-oriented agriculture.

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However, it is not all good news. Some key stakeholders are not aware of the transition to new standards even though they have experience in using labor statistics in policies, programs, and strategies related to gender equality and women's empowerment. This points to the need to continue raising awareness around measurement standards and guide data users on the availability and application of gender data.



Priorities for future policymaking that will rely on good gender data include addressing disparities between sectors to boost the number of jobs, transitioning the informal sector to formal jobs, and focusing more on the quality of work, income, and conditions of employment.

## Key Highlights and Lessons Learned

### 1. Engage stakeholders in the development and implementation of a new LFS

Rwanda's successful transition to the new definitions of work is linked to the ongoing stakeholder engagement that occurred throughout the development of the LFS. The National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda focused on communicating early with stakeholders to build understanding and avoid misinterpretation and confusion. Engagement happened in a variety of ways, through workshops, consultations, and through written information. Clear documentation and metadata supported consistent messaging that is essential when such major changes are being introduced.

The impact of the new data in Rwanda is easy to see in national policies, strategies, and program documents. Bringing stakeholders along as an active part of the entire process—from design to dissemination—was key to their success.

### 2. Continue to invest in the dissemination and communication of gender data

Rwanda should build on this successful implementation of significant new data collection efforts and continue to invest in the dissemination and communication of gender data. The thematic report on gender (pictured right) released annually as part of the LFS series provides excellent added value to national labor statistics and gender data.

Increasing access to and the use of gender data calls for ongoing, systematic efforts and not one-off activities. Developing data literacy should be integral to training and development programs for government staff and elected officials. Private sector, civil society organizations, and development partners should also be targeted with gender-sensitive labor statistics products that are shaped to their specific needs. This includes ongoing training to build data literacy skills.

The lessons learned from the dissemination and communication of gender-sensitive labor statistics can be transferred to other domains of statistics so that gender data gaps are closed in more areas.

**Figure 5.** Rwanda's Thematic Report on Gender is released annually.



The case of Rwanda demonstrates just how much the size of the labor force can shift under these new definitions, and the huge impacts this can have on women's labor force participation. Rwanda, an economy that previously seemed equitable in terms of employment, looks quite different when subsistence production of goods is no longer counted as employment. This provides important insights for policymakers and those supporting women's economic empowerment with policies and programs. The direct links from data to policy change in Rwanda show how measuring employment differently provides more actionable and relevant statistics. It will be interesting to see how data uptake, policies, and gender equality outcomes develop further in the coming years.

**Rwanda, an economy that previously seemed equitable in terms of employment, looks quite different when subsistence production of goods is no longer counted as employment.**

## Acknowledgements

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