

EXCHANGE PROGRAM

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

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PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN RWANDA'S PUBLIC
INSTITUTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Rwanda stands is among leading nations in the world in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Over the past two decades, the country has made significant progress in integrating women into leadership positions, both in public and private institutions. Guided by the principles of inclusiveness enshrined in the **Rwanda Constitution of 2003 (as revised in 2015)** and the **National Gender Policy**, the Government of Rwanda has created an enabling environment where women can effectively participate in decision-making and leadership. Today, Rwanda is globally recognized for having the highest percentage of women in Parliament over **60%** demonstrating the country's strong political will and commitment to gender equality.

Within the public sector, and particularly in Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) such as the **Office of the Auditor General (OAG)**, promoting women in leadership is not only a matter of equality but also a means of improving governance and accountability. Women leaders bring unique perspectives, promote inclusiveness and strengthen ethical decision-making.

The main objective of this report is to analyze the progress made in promoting women's leadership within the OAG and the wider public service in Rwanda, identify challenges that persist and propose strategies to strengthen gender-responsive leadership.

This analysis serves as a roadmap to understand the current context, the existing frameworks guiding gender equality in Rwanda, and how OAG and other public institutions can continue to foster an environment where women are empowered to lead, innovate and inspire future generations.

DEVELOPMENT

In Rwanda, the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) and the Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) are in charge to mainstream gender across all sectors.

On the 28 October 2025, there was a meeting between the Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) and the Office of the Auditor General of State Finances (OAG) on the audit of gender budget statement and concluded with a shared commitment to strengthen collaboration between GMO and OAG in auditing the Gender Budget Statement (GBS). Both institutions recognized the importance of integrating gender accountability mechanisms into the national auditing framework. OAG team requested GMO representatives to initiate the guidelines relating to the reporting on GBS. This can be a starting point for OAG to enforce the implementation of GBS guidelines during the normal course of audit conducted by OAG. Despite these achievements, women's representation in OAG remains lower at 39%.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Scholars argue that gender diversity in leadership enhances institutional performance and innovation. According to **Eagly & Carli (2007)**, women leaders often adopt transformational leadership styles, fostering teamwork, communication and inclusiveness. The **UN Women Global Leadership Framework (2021)** further emphasizes that women's participation in leadership leads to stronger governance and sustainable outcomes.

In Rwanda, the gender mainstreaming approach ensures that gender perspectives are incorporated at every stage of policy and program design. This aligns with the **African Union's Agenda 2063** and Rwanda's **Vision 2050**, which advocate for equitable participation in national development.

Relevant Policies, Laws, and Regulations

The legal foundation for promoting women in leadership in Rwanda is solid and comprehensive. Key frameworks include:

- **The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda (2015):** Guarantees at least 30% of leadership positions for women.

- **National Gender Policy (2019):** Guides all sectors in implementing gender mainstreaming strategies.
- **Gender Equality Seal Certification Program:** Encourages public institutions to integrate gender equality principles into their operations.
- **Public Finance Management (PFM) Reform Strategy:** Requires gender-responsive budgeting across ministries and agencies.

For institutions like OAG, these policies provide the basis for developing gender-sensitive audit approaches and internal staff development programs.

The OAG has made commendable strides toward promoting gender equality internally. Measures include:

- Establishment of a Gender Committee: A male and a female to oversee gender mainstreaming activities.
- Establishment of OAG gender policy;
- Capacity-building programs where female auditors receive leadership and professional development training.
- Participation in women's leadership initiatives at national and international levels, allowing female staff to share experiences and build networks.

Near future plan:

- Inclusion of gender-responsive audits: After discussing with Gender Monitoring Office (GMO), OAG plans focusing on whether public budgets address the needs of both men and women in Gender budget statement.

In addition, the OAG will align its gender policy with the **UNDP Gender Equality Seal** standards to strengthen institutional gender responsiveness.

Case Study: OAG's participation in the Women's Leadership Forum

In 2025, selected OAG female staff participated in the **Women in Leadership Forum**, aimed at enhancing confidence, analytical reflection and strategic leadership among women in the audit profession. Through workshops and discussions, participants developed skills in negotiation, mentorship and gender-responsive auditing.

The forum also encouraged participants to design personal leadership projects and propose institutional changes to promote gender balance in leadership roles. One key takeaway was the need to integrate leadership skills into OAG's training programs to prepare women for senior positions.

This experience not only empowered the participant but also fostered an institutional culture that values diversity, inclusion and continuous professional growth.

CONCLUSION

Rwanda's progress in promoting women's leadership continues to set an example across Africa and beyond. The country's robust policy framework, political will, and institutional reforms have significantly advanced gender equality. Within the Office of the Auditor General (OAG), these national principles are will be translated into practical actions through gender-responsive audits, staff capacity building and alignment with international gender standards.

However, challenges remain, particularly in increasing women's representation in senior technical and managerial roles. Addressing these gaps requires continuous leadership development, mentorship opportunities, and institutional commitment to gender balance in recruitment and promotion.

Moving forward, the OAG should:

- Strengthen mentorship programs linking junior female staff with experienced leaders.
- Integrate leadership skills training in staff development programs.
- Conduct regular reviews of gender policies to align with evolving standards such as the Gender Equality Seal.
- Promote gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis in audits.

By implementing these strategies, OAG will not only empower its female professionals but also reinforce Rwanda's broader vision of inclusive leadership and good governance. Empowered women leaders within public institutions contribute to improved accountability, ethical standards and service delivery.

Ultimately, promoting women's leadership is not just a gender issue; it is a governance priority that strengthens the performance, credibility and sustainability of Rwanda's institutions.

REFERENCES

- The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda (2015)
- National Gender Policy (2019)
- Gender Equality Seal Certification Program
- Public Finance Management (PFM) Reform Strategy