

# Human Rights First Rwanda Association Strategic Plan 2025–2030



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# List of abbreviations

**CEDAW** - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

**CRPD** - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

**DPOs** - Disabled Persons' Organizations

**ED** - Executive Director

**GBV** - Gender-Based Violence

**HRBA** - Human Rights-Based Approach

**HRDs** - Human Rights Defenders

**HRFRA** - Human Rights First Rwanda Association

**LGBTQI+** - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and others

**M&E** - Monitoring and Evaluation

**MoUs** - Memoranda of Understanding

**NGOs** - Non-Governmental Organizations

**PWDs** - Persons with Disabilities

**SDG(s)** - Sustainable Development Goal(s)

**SRHR** - Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

**TAP Network** - Transparency, Accountability & Participation Network

**UN** - United Nations

**UPR** - Universal Periodic Review

# Executive Summary

Human Rights First Rwanda Association (HRFRA) is a non-partisan human rights organization dedicated to promoting justice, equality, and the rule of law in Rwanda. This Strategic Plan for 2025–2030 outlines HRFRA’s vision for a just and equitable society and its mission to empower the most vulnerable members of the community to know and claim their rights. It builds on over a decade of HRFRA’s experience in legal aid, human rights education, and advocacy, and aligns our programs with Rwanda’s development priorities and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## Key Strategic Focus

Over the next five years, HRFRA will concentrate on three core program areas:

### **Legal Aid and Access to Justice, Human Rights Promotion, and Advocacy for Agenda 2030 (SDGs).**

Within these areas, specific subprograms target the rights of women and girls, freedom of expression, the rights of persons with disabilities, sexual minority rights, and SDG-related advocacy (notably SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions, and SDG 5 on gender equality). Through these programs, HRFRA will provide pro-bono legal assistance to those who cannot afford it, educate communities on human rights, and campaign for policy reforms that protect marginalized groups.

# Strategic Priorities

HRFRA has identified five strategic priorities to guide all its work during 2025–2030:

- (1) educating and empowering vulnerable groups to claim their rights;
- (2) ensuring no one is left behind by linking all 17 SDGs to the rights of vulnerable communities;
- (3) conducting evidence-based research using a human rights-based approach to inform advocacy;
- (4) advocating for inclusive policies on sexual and reproductive health and rights for marginalized groups; and
- (5) strengthening HRFRA’s own organizational capacity and sustainability. These priorities reflect our commitment to impactful, inclusive, and sustainable human rights work.

## Implementation and Impact

HRFRA will adopt a participatory operational approach, working closely with government stakeholders, international partners, and local communities to implement this plan. A robust Monitoring and Evaluation framework will track progress, measure outcomes, and ensure accountability for results. By 2030, HRFRA aims to have significantly improved access to justice for the poor, raised public awareness of human rights (especially for women, children, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ individuals), and contributed to national and regional efforts to achieve the SDGs. This strategic plan is both a roadmap and a promise – to our beneficiaries, partners, and supporters – that HRFRA will continue striving for a Rwanda where human rights are truly for all.

# Institutional Background

Human Rights First Rwanda Association (HRFRA) was founded by a group of visionary human rights lawyers, university professors, and community activists who saw the need for an organization that would **promote human rights education and provide legal assistance to poor and vulnerable groups** in Rwanda. Registered as a non-profit in 2005 under Rwandan law, HRFRA has since grown into a leading national civil society organization in the field of human rights. From its inception, HRFRA has been non-partisan and inclusive, welcoming members from diverse backgrounds who share a commitment to justice and equality. The General Assembly – comprising human rights lawyers, academics, teachers, and community members – convenes twice a year to steer the organization’s direction and ensure that our mission remains grounded in community needs.

**Mission:** HRFRA’s mission is to **empower, promote, reinforce, and safeguard human rights, good governance, and the rule of law in Rwanda**. In practical terms, this means providing the tools and support necessary for individuals and communities to understand their rights and to seek redress when those rights are violated. We strive to be a voice for the marginalized and a bridge between communities and the justice system.

**Vision:** HRFRA envisions a **just and equitable Rwandan society** where the rights of every individual are respected and protected. This vision aligns with Rwanda’s own national aspirations for good governance and social cohesion, as well as international human rights principles. It inspires all our programs and activities – from legal aid clinics in rural areas to advocacy at the national and international levels – and it serves as a constant reminder of the change we seek to create.

Over the years, HRFRA has achieved notable milestones. We have provided free legal counsel and representation to countless individuals who could not otherwise afford justice and was instrumental in founding the Rwanda Legal Aid Forum that brings together over 38 organizations in Rwanda

intervening in Justice and Human Rights and has made several advocacies on policies and laws that are pro-poor and for vulnerable and marginalized groups. HRFRA is the current chair of the Rwandan Legal Aid Forum. We spearheaded a successful campaign in 2009 to abolish a legal provision that would have criminalized LGBTQI+ activism, helping to ensure that no one in Rwanda faces punishment simply for who they are or whom they love. We have also actively contributed to national dialogues on human rights, collaborated on shadow reports for international treaty bodies, and built a reputation for expertise in human rights-based advocacy. This rich history and experience form the foundation of our strategic plan, informing our understanding of what works and where the gaps remain in Rwanda's human rights landscape.

## Organizational Structure

HRFRA's organizational structure is designed to promote transparency, accountability, and effective decision-making. At the top of the structure is the **General Assembly**, which is the supreme governing body of the association. The General Assembly is composed of the organization's members – including human rights lawyers, academics, teachers, and community representatives – and convenes biannually. It sets broad policies, approves strategic plans (such as this one), and elects the leadership.

Under the General Assembly, a **Board of Directors (Executive Committee)** provides strategic oversight and guidance throughout the year. The Board typically includes a Chairperson, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and other committee members who bring diverse skills (legal expertise, financial management, advocacy experience, etc.). They meet regularly to review HRFRA's progress on strategic objectives, ensure financial oversight, and support the Executive Director in high-level decision-making.

The day-to-day operations are managed by the **Secretariat**, headed by the **Executive Director**. The Executive Director (ED) is responsible for implementing the strategic plan and managing HRFRA's programs, staff, and resources. Under the ED, there are program managers and coordinators



for each of the key program areas (Legal Aid, Human Rights Promotion, and SDG Advocacy). These program leads oversee teams of staff and volunteers who execute project activities. For example, the Legal Aid program may include attorneys and paralegals who provide direct services, while the Human Rights Promotion program might have outreach officers specialized in women's rights, disability rights, etc. Supporting the program teams are administrative and finance personnel who ensure that operations run smoothly and donor funds are managed responsibly.

HRFRA also values inclusive participation in its structure. We often establish **thematic working groups or committees** (composed of board members, staff, and sometimes external advisors) to focus on specific issues like Monitoring & Evaluation, Resource Mobilization, or Policy Advocacy. This allows experts and stakeholders to contribute to key areas of our work. Additionally, HRFRA collaborates with a network of **volunteer lawyers and community paralegals** who extend our reach to grassroots communities. These volunteers are trained and supervised by our staff and play a critical role in legal aid clinics and human rights education sessions across different districts.

This organizational setup enables HRFRA to remain **responsive and agile**. Clear lines of communication and responsibility ensure that decisions are made efficiently, while checks and balances (through the Board and General Assembly) uphold accountability. The structure also embodies our values – for instance, being non-partisan and member-driven – and is periodically reviewed to adapt to the organization's growing scope. As we implement the 2020–2025 Strategic Plan, we will continue to strengthen our human resources and internal systems so that our structure adequately supports our mission.

## Organizational Values

HRFRA is guided by a set of core values that inform our work culture, decision-making, and interactions with the communities we serve and our partners. These values include:

- **Integrity and Accountability:** We uphold the highest ethical standards in all our activities. HRFRA operates with honesty, transparency, and accountability to our beneficiaries, donors, and stakeholders. We take responsibility for our actions and results, ensuring that we remain worthy of the trust placed in us.
- **Inclusiveness and Non-Discrimination:** We believe in the inherent dignity and equal rights of every individual. HRFRA embraces diversity and is firmly committed to non-discrimination on any basis (such as gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or social status). We actively seek to include marginalized voices in our programs and to ensure that **no one is left behind** in our quest for human rights for all.
- **Empowerment:** Empowerment is at the heart of our mission. We work to empower vulnerable individuals and communities with knowledge of their rights and the skills to claim them. Whether through legal aid, education, or advocacy, we strive to amplify the voices of those who have been historically disempowered, enabling them to become agents of change in their own lives and communities.
- **Justice and Equity:** A commitment to justice and equity underpins everything we do. We are driven by the ideal of a just society – one where laws are fair, rights are respected, and there is equitable treatment for all. HRFRA’s programs seek to correct imbalances and support those who have unequal access to justice or opportunities. We approach each case and campaign with a firm resolve to achieve fair outcomes and systemic change that benefits the many, not just the few.
- **Collaboration and Partnership:** We recognize that advancing human rights is a collective effort. HRFRA values collaboration with a wide range of partners, including government institutions, other civil society organizations, international agencies, and the communities themselves. We approach our partnerships in a spirit of respect, learning, and shared purpose, believing that synergy and solidarity strengthen the impact of our work.
- **Professionalism and Excellence:** As an organization led by experienced professionals, HRFRA maintains a high level of professionalism in program implementation and service delivery. We are committed to continuous learning, evidence-based approaches, and reflecting critically on our work to improve. In providing legal services or conducting research, we adhere to the best practices of our fields and strive for excellence in outcomes.

These core values are not just abstract ideals; they are actively practiced in HRFRA's culture. From the way we design projects (e.g., ensuring community participation and gender sensitivity) to our internal governance (e.g., transparent financial reporting and monitoring), our values guide us. By adhering to these principles, HRFRA ensures that the **means** of our work are as honorable as the **ends** we pursue, thereby maintaining the moral credibility essential for a human rights organization.

## SWOT Analysis

In order to formulate an effective strategy for 2020–2025, HRFRA conducted a comprehensive analysis of its internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats (SWOT). This analysis helps us understand our current position and the context in which we operate, so we can leverage advantages and mitigate challenges in the implementation of this plan. Below is a summary of the SWOT analysis:

### Strengths

- **Expertise and Experience:** HRFRA has a strong team of qualified human rights lawyers and advocates with years of experience in legal aid and human rights education. Our track record – including successful advocacy campaigns such as the decriminalization of LGBTQI+ issues in 2009 – establishes us as a credible and knowledgeable actor in Rwanda's human rights sector.
- **Reputation and Trust:** The organization enjoys a positive reputation among communities and stakeholders. Because we have consistently stood up for marginalized groups and delivered on our promises, beneficiaries trust us to represent their interests. We have built constructive relationships with government bodies (like the Ministry of Justice and the National Human Rights Commission) and civil society networks, which facilitate dialogue and collaboration.
- **Grassroots Presence:** Through community paralegals and outreach volunteers, HRFRA has presence at the grassroots level in multiple districts. This allows us to stay informed about on-the-ground human rights issues and to respond quickly when needs arise. Our ability to reach vulnerable

populations in rural and urban areas is a significant asset in implementing rights-based programs.

- **Diverse Partnerships:** We have established partnerships locally, regionally, and internationally. Whether collaborating with women's organizations on gender equality or joining global networks for SDG 16 advocacy, HRFRA benefits from knowledge exchange, technical support, and funding opportunities through these alliances. Our membership in coalitions amplifies our advocacy voice beyond what we could achieve alone.
- **Adaptive and Innovative Approaches:** HRFRA has shown flexibility and innovation in its work – for instance, adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic by using radio programs and digital platforms to continue human rights awareness campaigns when in-person activities were limited. This adaptability is a strength that enables us to operate even under changing or challenging conditions.

## Weaknesses

- **Limited Funding and Resources:** Like many non-profits, HRFRA faces constraints in funding which can limit the scale and continuity of our programs. We rely on grants and donations, which are sometimes short-term or project-based, making long-term planning and staffing a challenge. Limited financial resources also mean our legal aid services cannot yet reach all areas of need, and we often must prioritize cases due to capacity constraints.
- **Staff and Capacity Gaps:** While our core team is strong, we are relatively small in size. This can lead to overextension of staff and volunteers who manage multiple responsibilities. There is a need for additional training in specialized areas (e.g., advanced research methods, monitoring & evaluation, digital security for activists) to keep pace with evolving human rights work. Succession planning and staff retention are areas to improve, to ensure we don't lose institutional knowledge.
- **Visibility and Communication:** Our public communications and visibility are still developing. Not all segments of Rwandan society are aware of HRFRA and the services we offer. We have limited dedicated communication staff and infrastructure to widely disseminate success stories or human rights information (though we have started using social

media). This weakness means we might be missing opportunities to engage more beneficiaries or attract more support.

- **Scope Creep and Strategic Focus:** HRFRA’s broad mission and the wide range of human rights issues in Rwanda risk stretching the organization too thin. In the past, we have occasionally taken on activities outside our main strategic focus in response to emerging needs or donor interests. Without careful management, this can dilute impact. We need to remain disciplined in aligning projects with our strategic priorities and avoid mission drift.
- **Resource Dependence:** A significant portion of our funding comes from a handful of external donors. This dependence is a vulnerability; if one major donor reduces support; some programs could be jeopardized. We have not yet fully diversified income through means like membership contributions, income-generating activities, or a broad base of small donors. Strengthening financial sustainability is an internal weakness we are addressing in this plan.

## Opportunities

- **Supportive Legal and Policy Frameworks:** The Government of Rwanda has committed to various international human rights treaties and the SDGs, providing a framework we can leverage. For example, the existence of laws and policies on gender-based violence, child protection, and disability rights means there is a basis for our advocacy (we can push for better implementation and resourcing of these laws). Additionally, Rwanda’s **Vision 2050** and national development strategies emphasize good governance and inclusive development, creating openings for collaboration on shared goals.
- **Growing Awareness and Global Momentum:** There is a growing public awareness in Rwanda, especially among youth, regarding human rights and social justice issues. Global movements (such as #MeToo or climate justice, and discussions on equality) resonate locally. This is an opportunity for HRFRA to engage and channel the energy of youth and community activists into our initiatives – for instance, training the next generation of human rights defenders. The global momentum on “**Leaving No One Behind**” in development agendas aligns perfectly with our focus on marginalized groups, offering us a common language to influence policymakers.

- **Technological Tools:** Advances in technology and the proliferation of mobile phone use in Rwanda offer new avenues for human rights work. HRFRA can utilize SMS hotlines for legal advice, social media for awareness campaigns, and online platforms for training and network-building. Embracing technology can increase our reach at relatively low cost and gather data for monitoring rights violations in real time.
- **Strategic Partnerships and Funding:** There are opportunities to forge new partnerships with international NGOs, UN agencies, and donors who are prioritizing rule of law, access to justice, and inclusive governance programs. For example, the Agenda 2030 (SDGs) has led to funding streams focused on SDG16 (peace, justice, strong institutions) and SDG5 (gender equality) - areas directly relevant to HRFRA's work. By aligning our programs with these global priorities, we increase our chances of securing grants. Regionally, networks in East Africa focusing on human rights (like legal aid forums or LGBT+ rights coalitions) present opportunities for joint initiatives and learning.
- **Legal Aid Policy Developments:** The concept of legal aid and community justice is gaining traction in Rwanda as a result of our advocacy through the legal Aid Forum. The Government's Justice Sector Strategic Plan shows interest in expanding access to justice, possibly through partnerships with NGOs. This could lead to formal recognition or support for organizations like HRFRA (e.g., contracting our services or involving us in policy formulation for legal aid), thereby expanding our impact and sustainability.

## Threats

- **Restrictive Operating Environment:** The political and civic space in Rwanda can be challenging for independent advocacy. There is a risk of undue scrutiny or regulatory pressure on NGOs working on sensitive issues such as governance or civil rights. Changes in NGO laws or bureaucratic hurdles could impede our work or subject us to frequent compliance checks. We must navigate advocacy carefully to avoid confrontation while still speaking up for rights, especially in areas like freedom of expression or minority rights.
- **Social and Cultural Resistance:** Some of the rights issues we champion face deep-rooted cultural or societal resistance. For instance, despite legal

progress, **sexual minorities in Rwanda still face stigma, discrimination, and even violence** in their daily lives. Efforts to promote LGBTQI+ rights or sexual and reproductive health rights for youth can encounter backlash from conservative community sectors or religious groups. Similarly, challenging gender norms or raising issues like marital rape can provoke opposition. Such resistance can slow down progress and even put our staff or beneficiaries at risk of harassment.

- **Economic and Public Health Shocks:** External factors such as economic downturns or health crises pose threats to both human rights conditions and our operations. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, not only strained public health and the economy but also led to **emergency measures that disproportionately affected vulnerable groups** (like strict lockdowns impacting informal workers, or interruptions in services for people with disabilities). Such crises can increase the demand for our services (as more people fall into vulnerability) at the same time that funding becomes scarcer and direct field work is restricted. We must plan for resilience in the face of such shocks.
- **Security and Safety Concerns:** Working on human rights, particularly on issues like opposing gender-based violence or defending LGBT individuals, can sometimes entail security risks. There is a potential threat to HRFRA staff, volunteers, or the clients we represent, whether from individuals who retaliate against rights claims or from general insecurity. For example, assisting victims of human trafficking or survivors of violence may put our team in confrontational situations. Ensuring the physical and digital security of our team and the confidentiality of our beneficiaries is an ongoing concern.
- **Competition and Duplication:** As the civil society sector grows, multiple organizations may start working on similar human rights themes. While collaboration is our preferred approach, competition for the same funding or working with the same target communities can lead to duplication of efforts and fragmentation. If not managed, this could confuse beneficiaries or reduce the overall effectiveness of interventions. It's a threat in the sense that HRFRA must continue to demonstrate its unique value and cultivate cooperative relationships to avoid isolation in the sector.

By understanding these SWOT factors, HRFRA has shaped the strategies in this plan to capitalize on our strengths and opportunities (for example, using

our legal expertise and partnerships to secure SDG-related projects) while addressing weaknesses and threats (for example, investing in organizational capacity and taking measures to ensure staff safety). The following sections detail how our strategic programs and priorities respond to this analysis.

## **Strategic Priorities and Outputs**

To achieve its mission over the 2025–2030 period, HRFRA will implement three major programs, each comprising targeted subprograms with defined outputs. These programs are designed to respond directly to the human rights needs identified in our situational analysis and SWOT, and to contribute to national and global objectives (such as Rwanda’s development goals and the UN Sustainable Development Goals). Below, we outline each program area, the subprograms under them, and the key outputs and outcomes we aim to deliver.

### **Program 1: Legal Aid and Access to Justice**

*Program Goal:* Increase access to justice for the poor and marginalized by providing free or low-cost legal services, legal education, and advocacy for a more inclusive justice system. This program addresses the barrier that many Rwandans face in seeking justice – lack of legal representation or knowledge – especially among indigent populations, women, and other vulnerable groups.

#### **Subprogram 1.1: Provision of Legal Aid to the Less Fortunate**

HRFRA will expand its **pro-bono legal aid services** to individuals who cannot afford attorney fees. This subprogram focuses on legal representation, legal advice, and mediation services for the most vulnerable members of society, including those living in poverty, survivors of gender-based violence, minorities facing discrimination, and others whose rights are at risk. Key activities and outputs include:



- **Legal Clinics and Helpdesks:** Establish and operate regular legal aid clinics in at least 5 districts, including rural areas. Through these clinics, our lawyers and paralegals will offer on-the-spot legal advice and intake cases.  
*Output:* At least 1,000 individuals (cumulatively over five years) receive legal consultations or assistance through HRFRA clinics by 2030
- **Court Representation:** Provide free legal representation in courts or tribunals for eligible clients. We will prioritize cases that have potential to set positive precedents (e.g., enforcement of rights in domestic violence, inheritance, unlawful eviction, or discrimination cases).  
*Output:* Handle a minimum of 100 strategic litigation or individual cases annually, ensuring fair trials and justice for clients who otherwise would stand alone.
- **Legal Empowerment & Counseling:** Beyond casework, we will conduct legal literacy sessions for community members so they understand basic laws and processes (for example, how to file a complaint or seek a protection order).  
*Output:* Conduct 4 community legal education workshops per year, translating complex legal concepts into Kinyarwanda and using simplified guides. Empower at least 500 community members with knowledge of legal procedures by the end of 2030.
- **Advocacy for Legal Aid Policy:** Use the evidence from our grassroots legal aid work to advocate for stronger national frameworks supporting access to justice (such as state-funded legal aid or paralegal recognition).  
*Output:* Publish an annual “Access to Justice Report” highlighting gaps and recommendations. Engage with the Ministry of Justice and the Rwanda Bar Association to influence policies that institutionalize legal aid for the indigent.

**Expected Outcomes:** This subprogram will directly resolve legal problems for vulnerable individuals, thereby protecting their rights to fair justice. We expect to see reduced case backlogs for our clients, improved satisfaction and trust in the justice system among communities we serve, and contributions to systemic changes (like improved legal aid policies or practices). By empowering people with legal knowledge, we also anticipate a preventative effect – people can avoid legal troubles or resolve disputes at community level before escalation.

## Program 2: Human Rights Promotion

*Program Goal:* Foster a culture of human rights in Rwanda by promoting awareness, understanding, and respect for the rights of all people, with particular focus on groups that are often marginalized. This program encompasses a range of human rights issues, implemented through subprograms that concentrate on specific thematic areas. Through training, advocacy, and community engagement, HRFRA will work to ensure that human rights principles are known, integrated into everyday life, and defended.

### Subprogram 2.1: Rights of Women and the Girl Child

This subprogram aims to advance gender equality and protect the rights of women and girls, in line with Rwanda's commitments to CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). Key components include:

- **Community Education on Gender Rights:** Conduct community dialogues and school-based workshops to educate women, girls, and community leaders about women's legal rights – such as property and inheritance rights, the right to be free from gender-based violence, and laws against child marriage.

*Output:* Reach at least 2,000 women and girls with human rights education sessions by 2030, with improved knowledge (measured by pre- and post-session surveys) of their rights and how to claim them.

- **Advocacy Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** Partner with local authorities and other NGOs to strengthen prevention and response to GBV. HRFRA will advocate for full enforcement of Rwanda's anti-GBV laws (like the Law No.59/2008 on prevention and punishment of GBV) and for resources to support survivors (e.g., shelters, medical care).

*Output:* Participate in annual 16 Days of Activism campaigns, release policy briefs highlighting GBV trends, and engage in at least two policy dialogues or forums each year to push for improvements in GBV services and accountability for perpetrators.

- **Legal and Psychosocial Support for Women and Girls:** Provide specialized legal aid for women and girls who are victims of rights violations, such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, or denial of education. We will coordinate with healthcare providers and counselors to ensure a holistic response (legal + psychosocial support).

*Output:* Assist at least 300 women/girl survivors with legal advice or representation over five years. Establish a referral system with clinics and safe houses so survivors receive comprehensive care.

- **Empowerment and Leadership Training:** Train a cohort of women’s rights defenders at the community level – women who can monitor rights issues and lead local advocacy. This will include capacity-building on leadership, public speaking, and how to engage with local governance structures to voice women’s needs.

*Output:* By 2030, form and train 10 community women’s rights clubs or networks, with at least 100 women trained as community paralegals or peer educators on gender equality and rights.

*Expected Outcomes:* Through these efforts, we anticipate greater empowerment of women and girls – they will be more aware of their rights and more confident to assert them. Communities will gradually shift attitudes, challenging harmful gender norms and reducing tolerance for abuse or discrimination. Over time, success will be reflected in increased reporting of GBV (as trust in the system grows), improved support for survivors, and more women participating in decision-making at the local level as their voices are amplified.

## **Subprogram 2.2: Freedom of Expression and Access to Information**

Under this subprogram, HRFRA will promote civil liberties, specifically the right to free expression, opinion, and access to information – rights enshrined in Rwanda’s constitution and international law. An informed and expressive society is crucial for accountability and good governance. Our work in this area will involve:

- **Media and Journalism Training:** Collaborate with media associations to train journalists and media professionals on human rights reporting, ethics, and the importance of free expression. This includes sensitization on how to report on sensitive human rights issues (such as minority rights or corruption) objectively and safely.

*Output:* Conduct at least 2 training workshops per year for journalists (total of 10 by 2030), with at least 20 journalists trained per workshop. As a result, increase the quantity and quality of media coverage on human rights topics, and decrease instances of hate speech or biased reporting through improved awareness.

- **Civic Education Campaigns:** Carry out public awareness campaigns about citizens' rights to free speech and information. Through radio talk shows, community theater, and social media, we will engage the public in discussions about why these freedoms are important and how to exercise them responsibly (for example, how to request information from public institutions under any access to information laws).

*Output:* Host a monthly radio show on a popular station discussing current human rights and governance issues (60 episodes over five years). Distribute user-friendly guides (brochures, infographics) on access to information procedures to at least 5,000 people, including students and grassroots leaders.

- **Protection of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs):** Advocate for and support individuals who speak out on human rights (journalists, activists, whistleblowers). This includes monitoring and documenting any incidents of harassment or violations against HRDs, providing legal support if needed, and engaging authorities on creating a safe environment for free expression.

*Output:* Establish a hotline or secure channel where HRDs can report threats or seek advice. Intervene in or follow up on at least 5 cases of violations against free expression (such as unlawful detention of a journalist or censorship incidents) per year, and issue statements or legal actions to defend the affected parties.

- **Access to Information Initiatives:** Work with government bodies to improve the implementation of the Law on Access to Information. This can involve joint workshops with public officials on proactive disclosure of information and responding to citizen requests.

**Output:** By 2030, collaborate with at least 2 government ministries or local authorities to develop user-friendly information portals or transparency bulletins. Measure progress by the reduction in reported refusals or delays in providing public information and by positive feedback from citizens utilizing these channels.

**Expected Outcomes:** The anticipated impact is a more open civic space in Rwanda where people feel informed and free to express their views. Journalists and media will be better equipped to report on human rights and governance issues, leading to a more informed public discourse. We also expect improved trust and communication between citizens and government due to greater transparency. Ultimately, safeguarding freedom of expression and information contributes to accountability – helping expose human rights abuses or governance failures early and enabling collective problem-solving.

## **Subprogram 2.3: Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

This subprogram is dedicated to ensuring that persons with disabilities (PWDs) enjoy equal rights and full inclusion in society. Despite Rwanda’s laws protecting people with disabilities and its ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), many PWDs still face barriers in access to education, employment, and public services. HRFRA will work to bridge the gap between policy and practice through the following initiatives:

- **Disability Rights Awareness:** Conduct awareness campaigns to combat stigma and misconceptions about disability. Through community meetings, radio segments in local languages, and engagement with religious and community leaders, we will promote the message that disability is not inability, and emphasize the rights to accessibility and equal opportunity.

**Output:** Organize annual Disability Rights Awareness Weeks (one each year) in collaboration with disability organizations, reaching an audience of at least 10,000 each year via media and community events. Track changes in

attitudes through surveys or testimonies, aiming for improved acceptance of PWDs in community life.

- **Legal Support and Advocacy for PWDs:** Provide legal aid to persons with disabilities who face discrimination or rights violations – for example, a child with a disability denied school accommodation, or an employee unfairly terminated due to disability. We will also advocate for stronger enforcement of existing laws (like the building code standards for accessibility and inclusive education policies).

*Output:* Take on at least 300 legal aid cases related to disability rights over five years, resolving issues in favor of inclusion or compensation. Publish two monitoring reports (mid-term and end of plan) evaluating government and private sector compliance with disability rights laws, which will be used to lobby for improvements.

- **Capacity Building for Service Providers:** Work with schools, healthcare centers, and local government officials to sensitize and train them on disability inclusion. This includes training educators on inclusive teaching methods, training employers on workplace accommodations, and guiding local officials on consulting PWDs in planning processes.

*Output:* Train 100 service providers (teachers, health workers, administrators) per year on disability rights and inclusion practices. Secure commitments from at least 20 institutions to implement more inclusive measures (like installing ramps, providing sign language interpreters, or adopting inclusive curricula) by 2025.

- **Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities:** Support PWD-led advocacy by partnering with disabled persons' organizations (DPOs). We will facilitate leadership workshops and advocacy planning sessions for PWD advocates so they can effectively voice their needs to policymakers.

*Output:* Collaborate with DPOs to host an annual National Dialogue on Disability Rights, bringing together PWDs and government representatives to discuss progress and challenges. Ensure representation of women with disabilities and youth with disabilities in these dialogues. Aim to have at

least 5 policy or practice recommendations from these forums taken up by authorities for action.

*Expected Outcomes:* We expect to see tangible improvements in how persons with disabilities experience their rights in Rwanda. Indicators of success will include increased accessibility of public facilities, better inclusion of children with disabilities in schools, more PWDs employed or in skills training programs, and greater representation of PWD perspectives in local decision-making. In the long term, reducing discrimination and barriers will help PWDs lead more independent and dignified lives, fully participating in Rwanda's socio-economic development.

## Subprogram 2.4: Sexual Minority Rights

HRFRA has a proud history of advocating for the rights of sexual minorities (LGBTQI+ individuals) in Rwanda. Although Rwanda does not criminalize same-sex relations, sexual minorities often face social stigma, discrimination in healthcare or employment, and lack explicit legal protections. This subprogram seeks to promote understanding, protection, and inclusion of sexual minorities through the following efforts:

- **Awareness and Sensitization:** Implement public education initiatives to **debunk prejudice, stereotypes, and hate speech** against LGBTQI+ people. We will engage the general public through culturally sensitive campaigns that humanize sexual minority communities and clarify that human rights are universal. This will include story-telling approaches (testimonials, community dialogues) and working with influential figures (such as local leaders or allied religious figures) to spread messages of tolerance.

*Output:* Conduct at least 3 major sensitization campaigns or events per year (e.g., community forum, cultural event, radio program specifically on LGBTQI+ inclusion). By 2030, aim to reduce negative perceptions – as measured by attitude surveys – in target communities, and increase the number of community leaders openly supporting non-discrimination.

- **Media Training on Sexual Minority Issues:** Building on our free expression program, we will specifically train journalists and broadcasters on responsible, respectful coverage of LGBTQI+ issues. This includes correct terminology, understanding the challenges sexual minorities face, and countering myths.

*Output:* Train at least 50 media professionals over five years specifically on LGBTQI+ rights reporting. Facilitate the production of at least 60 positive media pieces (articles, radio segments, TV spots) featuring LGBTQI+ voices or discussions on inclusion, through grants or media contests.

- **Legal and Paralegal Support:** Continue to provide legal advice and representation to LGBTQI+ individuals whose rights have been violated – for example, cases of discrimination, family abandonment, or violence due to sexual orientation or gender identity. We will also train a small cadre of LGBTQI+ community paralegals and peer counselors to do initial outreach and documentation of abuses.

*Output:* Provide direct legal assistance in at least 20 cases involving sexual minority clients per year. Train 180 LGBTQI+ community members as paralegals/peer supporters by 2027, who will extend our reach and refer cases to HRFRA. Establish a confidential support and referral system for reporting abuses.

- **Advocacy and Policy Engagement:** Advocate for inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity as protected categories in anti-discrimination laws and policies. Regionally and internationally, HRFRA will raise awareness of Rwanda’s situation and seek solidarity. We will participate in coalitions or initiatives such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Rwanda’s human rights record to highlight sexual minority issues.

*Output:* Contribute to at least three policy proposals or position papers that call for stronger protections for sexual minorities (e.g., inputs to a national anti-discrimination policy, GBV policy or health policy to ensure LGBTQI+ access to services). Ensure that sexual minority rights are represented in any civil society reports to treaty bodies or the UPR during this strategic period.



*Expected Outcomes:* The work in this subprogram should lead to a safer and more accepting environment for LGBTQI+ individuals in Rwanda. We aim for concrete improvements such as health clinics being more welcoming and non-discriminatory in providing services like HIV prevention and treatment for LGBTQI+ clients, employers adopting non-discrimination policies, and community members intervening against bullying or violence targeting sexual minorities. Over five years, success would also be measured by the absence of regressive laws (no criminalization efforts succeeding) and by incremental policy gains (for instance, recognition by a government ministry of the needs of sexual minorities in a national strategy). HRFRA's efforts, in collaboration with partners, will help ensure that sexual minorities are not excluded from Rwanda's human rights progress and that their dignity is upheld.

## **Program 3: Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals Advocacy**

*Program Goal:* Align and integrate human rights with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Rwanda, ensuring that the principles of equality, justice, and inclusion underpin development efforts. HRFRA recognizes that development and human rights go hand in hand – the SDGs, especially Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and Goal 5 (Gender Equality), closely mirror our mission. Through this program, we aim to influence policy at the national, regional, and global levels so that development initiatives effectively include human rights considerations and benefit the most vulnerable.

### **Subprogram 3.1: Regional and Global Advocacy on Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)**

Goal 16 of the SDGs focuses on building peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions. HRFRA will actively engage in advocacy around SDG16 by

linking our grassroots experiences to broader policy dialogues. Key activities include:

- **Participation in International Forums:** Take part in regional and international conferences, working groups, and civil society coalitions focused on SDG16 and human rights (such as the **TAP Network** for Goal 16 accountability) which we co-chaired for two consecutive terms and was part of the team that developed goal 16 toolkit <https://tapnetwork2030.org/goal16/>
- By sharing Rwanda's experiences and HRFRA's insights, we aim to influence global discussions and also bring back best practices to implement locally.

*Output:* Attend or present in at least one international SDG or human rights forum per year (e.g., UN High-Level Political Forum, African regional SDG meetings). Contribute case studies or reports that highlight Rwanda's progress and challenges on access to justice and human rights.

- **Shadow Reporting and Follow-ups:** Collaborate in the preparation of shadow reports or civil society assessments when Rwanda is undergoing international reviews (for example, the Universal Periodic Review or reporting on SDG progress). We will ensure that issues like access to justice, civic space, and accountability are well documented and communicated.

*Output:* Lead or co-author at least two shadow reports or position papers during 2020–2025 that cover SDG16 targets (such as reduction in violence, justice services for all, transparent institutions). Use these reports to engage with the government and international partners on recommended actions.

- **National SDG16 Dialogues:** Organize multi-stakeholder dialogues at the national level on Goal 16. This would involve government officials (from justice, governance, police, etc.), civil society, academia, and community representatives, reviewing Rwanda's progress on peace and justice and identifying gaps.

*Output:* Convene an annual "Justice and Accountability Forum" in Rwanda that brings 50+ stakeholders together to discuss SDG16 implementation. Document the outcomes and follow up on agreed recommendations (for

instance, if the forum suggests improving legal aid as part of SDG16, ensure that is communicated to policymakers and monitor any action).

- **Promotion of Rule of Law Innovations:** Advocate for and pilot innovative approaches that advance Goal 16 locally – such as community mediation programs, legal aid networks (building on Program 1), or technology for legal information – showing how they contribute to SDG targets.

*Output:* Implement at least one pilot project demonstrating an innovative model for improving access to justice (e.g., a mobile app for legal information or a community justice center) and evaluate its impact. Use the results to advocate for scaling up successful models through government or donor support.

*Expected Outcomes:* Through regional and global advocacy, HRFRA will elevate Rwanda’s human rights and justice issues on the world stage, garnering support and attention for domestic challenges. Domestically, the increased dialogue and scrutiny around SDG16 will push institutions to be more transparent and responsive. We expect to see stronger commitments by the Rwandan government towards things like judicial reforms, anti-corruption measures, and protection of civil liberties as part of achieving SDG16. Our involvement will also ensure that international indicators and monitoring for Goal 16 accurately reflect on-the-ground realities for Rwandans. Ultimately, success in this subprogram means that human rights are embedded in the development narrative – that progress on SDGs in Rwanda is measured not just in economic terms, but also in terms of justice, inclusion, and human rights fulfillment.

## **Subprogram 3.2: Raising Awareness on Gender Equality**

### **(Advocacy for SDG 5)**

While our Program 2.1 directly addresses women’s and girls’ rights, this subprogram situates those efforts in the broader context of the SDGs, particularly **SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and**

**girls.** The aim is to ensure that the global goals on gender equality translate into local action and that Rwanda’s progress on gender-related targets remains inclusive of all women and girls, including those in vulnerable situations.

- **Community Engagement on SDG 5:** Localize the concept of SDGs by linking them to everyday issues faced by women and girls. For example, when talking about women’s economic empowerment (SDG 5’s target on equal rights to economic resources), connect it to local realities like land inheritance or access to finance. We will create simplified materials (in Kinyarwanda) explaining how global goals like SDG 5 relate to the community and how community members can help achieve them.

*Output:* Produce and disseminate an “SDG 5 Community Guide” (print and audio versions) to at least 50 communities, with illustrations and examples relevant to Rwandan contexts (e.g., stories of women entrepreneurs or leaders). Host 20 community meetings by 2030 where these guides are used to spark conversation and commitment to gender equality actions (such as forming village savings groups for women, or community bylaws supporting girls’ education).

- **Youth and Men as Champions:** Expand our outreach by specifically involving youth and men in gender equality advocacy. We will run initiatives in schools and universities that encourage young people to champion women’s rights (essay competitions, debate clubs on gender equality topics). Additionally, engage men through workshops that discuss positive masculinity and the role of men in supporting SDG 5 (for instance, fathers supporting daughters’ education, or husbands sharing domestic responsibilities).

*Output:* By 2030, establish gender equality clubs in at least 10 schools/universities, with a combined membership of 500+ students actively organizing awareness activities. Conduct annual “Men for Gender Equality” training sessions (at least 5 sessions, one per year) in different districts, training a total of 200 men as allies who pledge and carry out community actions like campaigning against domestic violence or mentoring young boys on gender respect.

- **Monitoring Gender-Related SDGs:** Work alongside women’s organizations to monitor and hold accountable the commitments under SDG 5 and related goals (such as maternal health under SDG 3, or education

under SDG 4). This will involve tracking indicators such as gender-based violence rates, women’s representation in decision-making, and access to reproductive health services. We will use this data to advocate for any lagging targets.

**Output:** Publish a “Gender Equality Progress Scorecard” bi-annually (in 2027, 2029) that evaluates Rwanda’s performance on key SDG 5 indicators and highlights areas needing attention, especially for marginalized women (e.g., women with disabilities, rural women). Use these reports to conduct advocacy meetings with relevant ministries or at platforms like the Gender Monitoring Office.

- **Global Solidarity and Learning:** Link local activists and women’s groups with global SDG 5 campaigns. For example, participate in the UN’s Generation Equality forums or Africa-wide networks on women’s rights, bringing grassroots Rwandan voices to those spaces. Conversely, bring back innovative ideas (such as successful gender budgeting initiatives or community interventions from other countries) to pilot in Rwanda.

**Output:** Facilitate representation of at least 5 Rwandan grassroots women’s advocates in international conferences or exchanges on gender equality. Initiate at least one pilot project in Rwanda inspired by international best practice – for instance, a community-led monitoring of gender-based violence services – and document its results for wider adoption.

**Expected Outcomes:** This subprogram will help sustain Rwanda’s reputation as a leader in gender equality while also shining light on gaps that need addressing. We expect increased public engagement with the concept of gender equality – moving it from policy circles to community ownership. Concrete outcomes would include higher levels of gender parity in local initiatives (like more women in community committees), improved services for women (like better access to family planning, or legal aid for GBV survivors through joint efforts with Program 2), and a vibrant network of gender equality champions across the country. By the end of 2030, gender equality will not just be a goal discussed in reports, but a lived priority in the communities we work with, contributing to Rwanda’s overall achievement of Agenda 2030.

# Strategic Priorities

In executing the above programs, HRFRA will be guided by five overarching strategic priorities. These priorities represent the essential approaches and high-level objectives that cut across all our programs, ensuring that our work is coherent and aligned with our mission. They are the pillars that support the entire strategic plan, and each priority is translated into concrete actions in our programs and operations:

- **Educate and Empower Vulnerable Groups:** HRFRA prioritizes human rights education as a tool of empowerment. We will intensify efforts to educate the most vulnerable members of society about their rights and the mechanisms available to protect those rights. By demystifying legal and human rights concepts and delivering trainings at the grassroots level, we empower individuals and communities to confidently claim their rights. This priority is reflected in activities like community legal literacy clinics, women’s leadership trainings, and disability rights workshops. When people know their rights, they are better equipped to stand against injustice and participate in decision-making processes.
- **Leave No One Behind (Linking SDGs to Rights):** In line with the core principle of the Sustainable Development Goals – “Leaving No One Behind” – HRFRA commits to ensuring that all our efforts explicitly include those who are most marginalized. We will link all 17 SDG goals to vulnerable groups’ rights, recognizing that each development goal (from health to education to climate action) has human rights implications. This means, for example, advocating that poverty alleviation programs (SDG1) reach historically marginalized communities, or that climate change actions (SDG13) consider indigenous peoples’ rights. By framing development issues as rights issues, we will hold stakeholders accountable to include vulnerable populations in every goal. Our work under Program 3 directly advances this priority by bridging human rights and development agendas, and we will continuously analyze our programs through the lens of inclusion to make sure no group is overlooked.
- **Evidence-Based Research and Human Rights-Based Approach:** We will strengthen our capacity for **evidence-based research** to inform all advocacy and interventions. Adopting a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)

means that our research and programs will actively involve rights-holders (the people affected) and duty-bearers (those responsible, like government officials) in identifying problems and solutions. HRFRA will conduct baseline studies, needs assessments, and policy research to gather data on issues such as access to justice, incidences of rights violations, or the efficacy of current laws. This evidence will guide our priorities and enable us to advocate with authority and precision. Moreover, by adhering to HRBA principles, we ensure participation, accountability, non-discrimination, and empowerment in the way we design and execute projects. For instance, if we research the barriers women with disabilities face in accessing services, we will involve those women in developing the recommendations for change. This priority ensures our work remains relevant, impactful, and anchored in the real experiences of people.

- **Advocacy for Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR):** Recognizing that the fulfillment of sexual and reproductive health and rights is fundamental to human dignity and intersects with multiple human rights (health, education, gender equality, etc.), HRFRA will advocate for policies and practices that improve access to SRHR for marginalized groups. This includes pushing for youth-friendly and non-discriminatory health services, comprehensive sexuality education, and the removal of any stigmas or legal barriers that prevent people (especially women, girls, LGBTQI+ individuals, and people with disabilities) from accessing the sexual and reproductive health care they need. For example, we will support campaigns for better access to contraception and maternal health services in rural areas, and stand against discrimination in healthcare settings (such as healthcare providers refusing to treat someone because of their sexual orientation or gender identity) This priority is woven into our programs: in women's rights (ensuring survivors of sexual violence get justice and care), in sexual minority rights (addressing HIV and health access issues), and in our SDG advocacy (linking to SDG3 on health and SDG5 on gender). Through policy briefs, strategic litigation, and public advocacy, we aim to influence laws and policies so that Rwanda's health system is more inclusive and rights-based.
- **Strengthen HRFRA's Organizational Effectiveness and Sustainability:** To achieve ambitious goals, HRFRA must continually fortify itself as an organization. A key strategic priority is therefore to **build a strong, sustainable HRFRA**. This involves several dimensions: improving our

governance systems and internal management, enhancing staff skills and wellbeing, diversifying funding sources, and upgrading our infrastructure (including digital systems for data and security). We will invest in staff training (e.g., in new human rights topics, project management, M&E), and put in place succession plans to nurture new leadership from within. Financial sustainability efforts will include developing a fundraising strategy that reaches out to a mix of donors (grants, individual donors, possibly social enterprise initiatives) so that we are not overly reliant on any single source. We will also measure our organizational performance regularly, seeking feedback from beneficiaries and partners to learn and adapt. By 2030, we aim for HRFRA to have not only achieved programmatic results, but also to have a stronger institutional foundation – meaning stable finances, robust policies (finance, HR, safeguarding, etc.), active and well-governed Board oversight, and the ability to continue growing our impact beyond this strategic plan period. A stronger HRFRA is better positioned to serve our mission in the long run, making this a critical cross-cutting priority.

Each of these strategic priorities reinforces the others. Together, they ensure that our work is **holistic** – combining grassroots empowerment with high-level advocacy – and that our internal capacity keeps pace with our vision. By focusing on these priorities, HRFRA will maximize its effectiveness and remain true to its core purpose throughout the 2025–2030 strategy period.

## Operational Approach

Achieving the goals outlined in this strategic plan requires not just knowing *what* to do, but *how* to do it effectively. HRFRA’s operational approach is the blueprint for turning strategy into action on the ground. It emphasizes collaborative, efficient, and adaptive methods to ensure we deliver results for our beneficiaries and remain accountable to stakeholders. Key elements of our operational approach include:

- **Participatory Planning and Community Engagement:** From design to implementation, HRFRA will involve the communities and target groups in our projects. Before rolling out activities, we will hold consultations (focus group discussions, community meetings, key informant interviews) to tailor



interventions to local contexts and needs. This participatory approach not only empowers communities by valuing their input, but also enhances the relevance and acceptance of our programs. For example, when setting up a legal aid clinic in a new district, we will engage local leaders and potential beneficiaries to decide on the best location, timing, and types of legal issues to prioritize. Continuous feedback loops (suggestion boxes, community surveys) will be maintained, allowing us to adjust our activities based on what works and what doesn't.

- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Recognizing that we cannot do it alone, HRFRA will implement this strategy in close partnership with a variety of stakeholders. We will collaborate with **government bodies** (such as the Ministry of Justice, Gender and Family Promotion, Health, and the National Human Rights Commission) to align our efforts with national programs and to advocate for policy changes. Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) or joint action plans may be developed for clarity in collaboration. At the same time, we will work with **civil society networks and coalitions** – for instance, partnering with women's organizations for gender projects or joining forces with disability associations for joint advocacy. International organizations and donors are also key partners; we will coordinate with them to leverage resources and technical expertise (e.g., working with UN agencies on a campaign or with global human rights networks for capacity building). By operating in a spirit of partnership, we not only expand our reach but also ensure synergy, avoiding duplication and building a united front on human rights issues.
- **Capacity Building and Training:** To deliver quality programs, HRFRA will continuously build capacity – both within the organization and among stakeholders. Internally, we will schedule regular training for our staff and volunteers on topics such as new human rights developments, project management, data collection methods, and advocacy skills. Externally, capacity building of local actors is a major strategy: for example, training local mediators in conflict resolution, training community paralegals (so they can handle some legal aid queries independently), and strengthening the capabilities of community-based organizations to monitor human rights. These trainings will be practical and ongoing rather than one-off, creating a cadre of knowledgeable local human rights champions who extend HRFRA's impact.

- **Integrated and Multisectoral Approach:** Human rights issues are often interconnected. Our operational approach will emphasize breaking silos – integrating different thematic areas for a more comprehensive impact. For example, a program addressing women’s rights will also consider health, education, and economic factors (reflecting multiple rights and SDG linkages). If we run a project on child rights, it may involve schools (education rights), local authorities (protection rights), and health services (health rights). By designing interventions that cut across sectors, we address root causes and create sustainable change. This also means that teams within HRFRA will work closely together – the legal aid team, for instance, will coordinate with the human rights promotion team when a case has broader advocacy implications.
- **Outreach and Communication:** Effective communication is vital for operational success. We will enhance our outreach strategies to raise awareness about HRFRA’s services and campaigns. This includes improving our online presence (regularly updating social media and a website with program updates, success stories, and resources), producing easy-to-understand informational materials in local languages, and engaging with media outlets to broadcast our key messages. Internally, clear communication channels will be maintained (regular team meetings, updates to the Board, etc.) to ensure everyone is informed and working in sync. Additionally, we will use communication as a tool for transparency – regularly informing stakeholders, including communities and donors, about project progress and financial utilization, thereby building trust and credibility.
- **Flexibility and Adaptive Management:** The landscape of human rights and development can change rapidly due to events like new laws, political shifts, or unforeseen crises (e.g., a pandemic or natural disaster). HRFRA’s operational approach incorporates flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances. We will employ adaptive management by conducting periodic reviews of project implementation and the external context. If an approach is not yielding the expected results, or if new needs emerge (for example, a sudden increase in evictions in a community we work in), we will adjust our activities, budgets, or timelines in consultation with donors and stakeholders. The strategic plan is a guiding document, but it allows for recalibration. We will also maintain an emergency response protocol for human rights crises – such as urgent legal defense for activists in trouble or

rapid assessments if a conflict or disaster threatens human rights – enabling us to respond quickly while staying within our mission scope.

- **Efficiency and Accountability in Management:** Operational excellence also means making the best use of resources. HRFRA will strengthen its internal systems for financial management, procurement, and logistics to ensure that resources are used efficiently and with integrity. We will develop annual work plans and budgets derived from this strategic plan, and track expenditures meticulously. Regular financial audits and reports will be carried out as required by Rwandan law and our donors. Programmatically, we'll use project management tools (like Gantt charts for activities, indicator tracking tables, etc.) to keep implementation on schedule and results-oriented. If targets are not met, we will investigate why and document lessons learned. Both our beneficiaries and donors will be kept informed of progress and challenges, reflecting our commitment to accountability.

Through this operational approach, HRFRA ensures that the lofty goals of the strategic plan translate into practical, well-managed action. It stresses working **with** people (not just for them), coordinating widely, and being a learning organization that can navigate the complexities of promoting human rights in Rwanda.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is an integral component of HRFRA's strategic plan, providing the mechanism to measure progress, demonstrate impact, and inform decision-making. A robust M&E framework will be established to track the implementation of all programs and the achievement of our strategic objectives from 2025 through 2030. Key features of our M&E approach include:

- **Clear Indicators and Targets:** For each program, subprogram, and strategic priority outlined in this plan, HRFRA will define specific indicators and targets. These will include output indicators (e.g., number of people trained, number of cases handled) and outcome indicators (e.g., percentage increase in rights awareness, policy changes achieved, improvement in beneficiary well-being). Wherever possible, baseline values for 2025 will be determined (through initial surveys or existing data) so that progress can be measured

quantitatively. For example, if an output is “1,000 individuals receive legal aid,” we will track the count of clients served; if an outcome is “improved community perceptions of PWDs,” we will measure that via surveys at baseline and end line.

- **Data Collection and Management:** We will utilize both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data consistently throughout the project cycles. Field staff and volunteers will be trained in data collection tools – such as attendance sheets for trainings, client satisfaction forms for legal aid, and structured interview guides for community feedback. Wherever feasible, we will use digital data collection (mobile apps or spreadsheets) to compile information efficiently. Collected data will be stored in a secure database, enabling us to aggregate results and analyze trends over time. Regular data quality checks will be performed to ensure reliability (for instance, random spot checks of reported figures and validation of stories or case studies).
- **Monitoring Schedule and Responsibilities:** A detailed M&E plan will lay out the schedule for ongoing monitoring activities. Monthly monitoring meetings will be held by program teams to review progress against work plans and indicators. Quarterly, the management team (including the Executive Director and M&E officer) will conduct more comprehensive reviews of each program’s performance. The Board of Directors will receive semi-annual progress reports summarizing key achievements and flagging any areas of concern. Roles will be clearly assigned: front-line staff collect data, program managers compile and analyze it, and the M&E officer (or assigned focal person) coordinates the system and verifies information. If deviations from targets are observed, these will trigger management discussions on corrective actions.
- **Mid-Term Review:** HRFRA will undertake a **Mid-Term Evaluation** of the strategic plan in mid-2028. This review, potentially conducted with the help of an external evaluator for objectivity, will assess the progress made halfway through the plan period. It will evaluate the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and emerging impact of our interventions. The mid-term review will involve consultations with beneficiaries, staff, partners, and possibly donors to gather a 360-degree perspective. The findings will be used to refine strategies, reallocate resources if necessary, and adjust targets for the remaining period. For instance, if the mid-term review finds that some subprogram is under-performing (or an unexpected need has arisen),

HRFRA can revise the plan accordingly, ensuring the strategic plan remains a living document.

- **Final Evaluation:** At the end of 2030, a **Final Evaluation** will be conducted to assess the overall achievement of the strategic plan objectives. This will look at the cumulative results, the impact created in the lives of the rights-holders, and the sustainability of the interventions. We plan to engage external evaluators to carry out an impartial and thorough evaluation, including field visits and stakeholder interviews. The final evaluation report will measure the extent to which HRFRA met its targets (e.g., how many people gained access to justice, what policy changes occurred, how attitudes shifted) and will highlight success stories as well as lessons learned. Importantly, it will also examine HRFRA's growth in organizational capacity as aimed by the plan.
- **Learning and Adaptation:** M&E is not just about accountability but also learning. HRFRA will foster a culture where data and evaluation findings are openly discussed and used for learning. We will organize annual reflection workshops with staff and key stakeholders to discuss what has worked well and what challenges were faced in the past year. Best practices identified (for example, a particularly successful approach in a community that could be replicated elsewhere) will be documented in case studies or how-to guides for future reference. Challenges or failures will also be examined to extract lessons – perhaps an outreach method didn't engage youth as expected, or a partnership didn't yield results; understanding why will help avoid similar issues in the future. This continuous learning will be fed back into program design, making our interventions increasingly effective over time.
- **Reporting and Transparency:** Regular monitoring reports will be produced for different audiences. Internally, brief monthly reports and detailed quarterly reports will keep everyone aligned. For external accountability, HRFRA will produce an **Annual Progress Report** each year of the strategic plan, summarizing activities, results against targets, and financial expenditures. These reports will be shared with donors, partners, and made available to the public (e.g., via our website or at our Annual General Meeting) to maintain transparency. Additionally, any critical incidents or significant deviations will be communicated promptly to relevant stakeholders along with our mitigation actions.

In summary, HRFRA's Monitoring and Evaluation framework for 2025–2030 is designed to ensure we stay on track towards our goals and can demonstrate tangible impact. By rigorously tracking our work and being willing to learn and adapt, we will enhance our effectiveness and credibility. M&E is essentially our compass and feedback mechanism – it will tell us if we are heading in the right direction toward a just and equitable society, and it will guide necessary course corrections. Through diligent monitoring and honest evaluations, HRFRA will uphold its commitment to its stakeholders: to deliver what we set out to do, and to continually improve in our mission to protect and promote human rights for all in Rwanda.

HRFRA STRATEGIC