Update on the context and situation of children

Despite being landlocked and the second most densely populated country in Africa with an estimated population of 12.7 million people (RNIS-2020), Rwanda has made important economic and structural reforms and recorded strong economic growth over the past two decades, peaking at 9.4 percent in 2019. Rwanda now aspires to reach Middle Income Country (MIC) status by 2035 and High-Income Country (HIC) status by 2050 thanks to a series of National Strategies for Transformation (NST) that aim to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (World Bank – July 2020).

Rwanda has managed the COVID-19 pandemic better than many countries with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasting an economic contraction of only 0.2 percent in 2020. During 2020, Rwanda recorded 8,383 positive cases and less than 100 deaths including only two children. While highly successful in containing the epidemic, the Government acknowledged that socio-economic impacts on the population were significant. The Government’s Economic Recovery Plan supported key industries and provided critical social protection packages for the poor.

Pre-primary and primary children (Grades 1-3) did not return to school in 2020 and children in need of protection were at risk of not accessing essential services during movement restrictions. Children were at risk of wandering in the streets or being exposed to violence. Children were also more online in 2020 due to school closures and online learning, which put them at risk of child online exploitation.

Years of sustained economic growth in Rwanda have resulted in substantial improvements in human development indicators, with poverty declining from 77 per cent to 55 per cent in the last two decades (World Bank). However, despite the progress made, the need for quality education and health care and demand for nutrition, WASH, protection and participation remain strong. The 2020 Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS6) findings revealed progress in child welfare and stagnation in mortality rates. The country still hosts approximately 150,000 refugees from neighbouring countries, of which half are children.

While maternal and child mortality have been declining over the previous 20 years, DHS6 indicates a slow decline in the previous five years compared to data from previous DHS reports. In 2020, Rwanda’s progress in improving access to essential maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (MNCAH) and HIV services was hampered by COVID-19. During the second quarter of the year, as a result of movement restrictions and resources being diverted to COVID-19 response, the health system’s capacity to measure and provide quality MNCAH services has been strained. A preliminary assessment conducted in June of the impact of COVID-19 on MNCAH services noted that 56 per cent of hospitals and 33 per cent of health centres reported the MNCAH workforce being diverted to COVID-19 response; 53 per cent of hospitals and 42 per cent of health centres reported stockouts of essential MNCAH supplies in the second quarter; and 13 per cent of health centres reported interruption to basic emergency obstetric and newborn services.

The nutrition situation in Rwanda has improved over the past 10 years with stunting levels now at 33 per cent of children under five (DHS6). Stunting increases with age and still affects more boys than girls (37 and 29 per cent respectively). Likewise, children in rural areas are more affected by stunting (36 per cent) compared to urban areas (20 per cent) and the difference in stunting between the lowest (49 per cent) and the highest wealth quintiles (11 per cent) has increased when compared with 2015 data.

Wasting has reduced to one per cent while underweight is at 8 per cent. The proportion of children
receiving a minimum acceptable diet increased from 18 per cent in 2015 to 22 per cent in 2020 while
the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in children under 6 months decreased slightly from 87 per cent in
2015 to 81 per cent in 2020. Timely introduction of complementary feeding now stands at 79 per cent
of children 6-8 months, a significant improvement from 2015 (56 per cent).

**Early Childhood Development** (ECD) remained high on the national agenda as a pre-requisite for
human capital development and long-term economic transformation. The Government merged the
National Commission for Children and the National Early Childhood Development Programme
(NECDP) into the National Child Development Agency (NCDA) to enhance coordination, integration
and leveraging of resources. NCDA provided leadership to the programme and strengthened
coordination of key thematic areas for optimal child growth and development.

Rwanda is one of the top performing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa in universal **primary education**,
with a net enrolment rate of 98.5 per cent (MINEDUC, 2019). Quality of education remains an issue,
with the Learning Achievement in Rwanda Schools study noting significant concerns about students’
literacy and numeracy.

In addition, inequities persist, with data indicating that only 17,952 students with disabilities, of a total
of 2,794,895 students, are enrolled in pre-primary and primary schools, representing only 0.64 per cent
of pupils (MINEDUC, 2019). Gender inequities remain prevalent, and access to quality pre-primary
education remains limited with an enrolment rate of 29.8 per cent in 2019.

Rwanda has set an ambitious goal of reaching universal **Basic WASH Services** by 2024. While basic
sanitation services are rapidly increasing in rural areas, progress on water services is stifled in rural
areas. In urban areas, the number of people using basic water services remain high as well as people
using limited sanitation services. Handwashing with soap lags behind but has renewed political
support, in part due to COVID-19.

Further, climate change impacts are becoming more apparent. The Government now recognizes the
negative impact that increasingly frequent heavy rains and floods, as well as droughts in some parts of
the country, are having on WASH infrastructure and services. The Government has committed to
improving problem analysis and developing solutions to better safeguard WASH investments in future,
in order to achieve and sustain the SDGs.

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**Major contributions and drivers of results**

The year 2020 was programmatically and operationally challenging due to the prevention and
containment measures for the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ebola Virus disease in the first half of the
year. However, despite challenges, UNICEF Rwanda ensured effective and efficient annual
implementation of the Country Programme, achieving planned results and compliance on all
performance indicators.

In the area of **Health**, as co-chair of MNCAH and Community Health technical working groups,
UNICEF advocated for and supported the Government to initiate working groups through virtual
forums. As a result, the interruptions to MNCAH services were identified early and corrective
measures were put in place to ensure the related critical interventions could be implemented in the
second half of this year.

UNICEF supported the COVID-19 response in areas of surveillance, improving respiratory care
capacity, water, sanitation and hygiene, risk communication and community engagement, nutrition,
child protection, social protection and education. UNICEF provided technical support to the COVAX
initiative and procurement services support for COVID-19 test kits. To address the decline in coverage of certain MNCAH services as a result of COVID-19 response, the Government, in partnership with UNICEF, used mass media and other methods to promote the continuous use of these services. Similarly, television and radio shows, which were normally used to promote key family practices, were directed towards improving child health care seeking behaviour, including for HIV services and adherence to the immunization calendar. This has reduced the dropouts due to fear of contracting COVID-19.

Rwanda developed its Community Health Policy in 2020, which will guide the community health programme in the coming years. As a result of UNICEF support, 22 hospitals and 115 health facilities have received nine ventilators and 40 oxygen concentrators to improve maternal, newborn and child care in 2020. UNICEF also provided technical support to the implementation of the cold chain equipment operationalization platform, distribution and installation of cold chain equipment (437 refrigerators), and training for health workers to improve coverage in high risk districts.

The RapidPro system was customized to replace the RapidSMS system. This will provide Rwanda with a more user friendly and updated community health information system.

The HIV prevention package using peer volunteers among adolescents in high risk districts was scaled up to two districts in 2020 and plans finalized to reach five districts in 2021. The tools and learnings from the initial small-scale implementation in 2019, and adding additional elements related to referral and linkages to treatment and a broader prevention package, are expected to contribute to increased access to both prevention and treatment services among adolescents. UNICEF also supported modelling of HIV self-testing, leading to increased uptake of HIV testing among partners of pregnant women attending antenatal care.

With UNICEF support, national and district capacity was built on policy development, planning, coordination, implementation, and monitoring of nutrition-specific interventions in all districts and of nutrition-sensitive interventions in 14 target districts, contributing to improvements in dietary diversity and to stunting reduction in children under five.

National systems were reinforced to deliver quality interventions with activities including a new peer-to-peer community support initiative, which is expected to boost complementary feeding. Growth monitoring and promotion for more than 1.2 million children under five was maintained through supervision and printing of updated counselling cards. Micronutrient deficiencies were reduced through the provision of vitamin A (reaching 1.2 million children under five) and MNP (reaching 239,474 children 6-23 months). Management of severe acute malnutrition was supported by provision of ready-to-use-therapeutic food and therapeutic milk, and treatment quality was improved through mentorship visits in health facilities.

The integrated social protection and nutrition programme, developed in partnership with the Ministry of Local Government, NECDP and World Relief, has shown promising results in improving existing nutrition-sensitive interventions, strengthening decentralized coordination mechanisms and developing a system of community case management and referral through involving public service providers and users.

The main driver of the increased ECD results was the sustained high-level government commitment to lead, finance, coordinate and provide guidance in the implementation of the national ECD policy and the corresponding child development polices. With the leadership of the NCDA, key partners in health, nutrition, protection, education and WASH actively participated in the programme. Their participation was key as child development depends on sustained child access to these basic services. Government continued to finance ECD services both at central and decentralized levels with UNICEF’s support.
Improved UNICEF internal coordination enhanced provision of integrated ECD services, especially nurturing care of younger children (0-3 years), through the health, nutrition and protection national systems. UNICEF continued to co-chair the national ECD sub-cluster and participated in child development technical working groups. These interactions enhanced coordination and experience-sharing, resulting in improved delivery of an integrated ECD programme. The implementation of the national curriculum and the on-going two-year multi-media campaign also equipped more parents with skills and knowledge on child development.

UNICEF continued to work closely with the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) and its agencies to integrate education data systems for ease of data production, accessibility and use. This initiative built upon the current operationalization of the teacher management information system (TMIS) and the teacher data use framework. Further, UNICEF also supported MINEDUC in the revision of the Education Policy (2003), ensuring it is aligned with global and national priorities.

In 2020, UNICEF continued to work with the Government of Rwanda to address access to education for the most marginalised children. As a result, 16,826 refugee children (8,963 boys and 7,863 girls) and more than 7,000 children with disabilities (3,912 boys and 3,088 girls) had access to learning opportunities.

UNICEF also played a leading role in ensuring education and responding to the health crisis. In this regard, 887 education officials and school managers were provided with knowledge on COVID-19 and skills on COVID-19 prevention and response to guarantee safe school reopening.

Some progress has been noted in early childhood education with an increase in access from 13 per cent (MINEDUC, 2013) to 29.8 per cent (MINEDUC, 2019) because of strong partnerships between the MINEDUC, development partners, faith-based organizations and communities, leading to reduction of supply-related bottlenecks. Yet, noting the challenge that remains, UNICEF partnered with the MINEDUC to identify areas which could be addressed to improve access to quality early learning. The diagnosis resulted in a costed workplan to strengthen the pre-primary education sub-sector.

UNICEF supported MINEDUC in programming for quality education in a two-fold approach: strengthening of the school-based mentoring programme and providing technical support to the reform of the pre-service teacher training while integrating play-based learning approaches in teaching methods in Rwanda. With the impact of COVID-19 and subsequent school closure, UNICEF ensured continuity of quality learning for basic education students through the development of radio and television lessons, reaching more than 2,473,625 students (1,241,760 boys and 1,231,865 girls) including children with disabilities and pre-primary children.

A model remedial support programme to address gender disparities in learning achievement reached more than 9,000 students (80 per cent girls) in 150 schools with UNICEF support.

In support of systems strengthening, UNICEF and the Government agreed on a case management framework for child protection and contracted an institution to assess current child protection service delivery in order to recommend the right case management system for Rwanda.

UNICEF partnered with World Vision to strengthen the Inshuti Z’Umuryango (IZU – Child Protection Volunteers) in 22 districts. UNICEF and World Vision also strengthened the national support to IZU, including the development and training of a new module on children in emergencies and collection of baseline data on IZU capacity to help determine needs. UNICEF procured mobile phones and vests for all 29,674 IZU to further strengthen the visibility and functionality of the IZU. During the onset of COVID-19, UNICEF procured masks and sanitizers for all IZU and professionals.

41,900 children were reached through the community-based workforce (IZU) with referrals or child
protection support. UNICEF and the professional social workforce supported the assessment and placement of over 2,000 children on the streets due to COVID-19 back into families and provided financial support to families in distress. To address the online child protection risks, UNICEF and the government launched an awareness campaign spanning social and traditional media which reached over 200,000 persons.

In the area of child-care reform, UNICEF partnered with the Government to develop and validate the operational guide on inclusive de-institutionalization and training of 30 district Child Protection and Welfare Officers, Gender Officers and District Disability Mainstreaming Officers. Seventeen children with disabilities have been reintegrated back into families using this guide. Activities were stalled temporarily during the COVID-19 lockdown but during that time 348 children with disabilities who were sent home from institutional care (due to fears of COVID-19 infection) were assessed and assisted.

In the area of justice for children UNICEF partnered with the Institute for Legal Practice and Development (ILPD) to finalize and validate a six-month post graduate Diploma programme. This will be rolled out to justice practitioners, including Judges, Prosecutors and Lawyers. A simplified version of the curriculum is also being developed for all child protection frontline workers.

UNICEF also supported the government to increase awareness of the risks of child protection violations during COVID-19, including risk messaging for National Commission for Children (NCC), Rwanda Health Communications Center (RHCC), and the initiation of a campaign around Child Online Protection with the Ministry of ICT and Innovation. The campaign has reached over 200,000 people.

UNICEF supported three districts to model a new approach to accelerate household sanitation and hygiene by capacitating and building ownership of district authorities to monitor and promote community and household hygiene and sanitation. The programme, driven by district authorities, resulted in an increase of 15 per cent for household basic sanitation (176,343 people; 41,010 households) and 13 per cent for handwashing facilities (173,587 people; 40,369 households) in the three districts.

UNICEF also contributed essential evidence to strengthening sustainability of rural water services by providing recommendations for a tariff structure and tariff-setting methodology. UNICEF strengthened the financial management capacity of private operators and the ability of the Rwanda Utility Regulatory Authority (RURA) to oversee private operators with a new online reporting system. A nationally-representative rural water affordability study, completed in 2020, will enable improved decision-making and investment to ensure the most vulnerable can afford water services.

In the area of social policy, UNICEF supported the consolidation of a more integrated and evidence-based framework to address child poverty through the implementation of the Demographic & Health Survey and the design of the new Social Protection policy and Social Protection response plan to COVID-19. UNICEF also continued to promote integrated, nutrition-sensitive social protection models for the poorest households as well as more inclusive child participation in planning and budgeting processes. UNICEF achieved these results by engaging strategically with the Government and other stakeholders in policy-making processes, systems strengthening and capacity building for more effective service delivery. UNICEF together with FAO, WFP and UNDP mobilised resources from the Joint SDG fund to continue piloting integrated social protection services at community level in five districts and to strengthen the SDG financing framework in Rwanda.

UNICEF provided technical and financial support for data collection of large surveys, including the Integrated and Living Condition Survey (EICV6) and DHS6, which will contribute to illustrating further progress that Rwanda has made in the social economic transformation as well as challenges.
DHS6 data will be used to generate an updated ECD index as well as a new Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA) covering children below age five.

UNICEF generated evidence on public investments allocated to priority areas for children in Rwanda through budget briefs analyzing the 2020/21 national budget. Further efforts were undertaken to increase the role of children and young people in decision making through capacity building in national planning and budget process, allowing them to voice their priorities.

UNICEF closely worked with the Ministry of Youth and Culture (MinYC) on Generation Unlimited (GenU) initiatives. As a result, Generation Unlimited Rwanda was successfully launched in September 2020 and the Government committed strong leadership for the GenU initiative, with President Kagame as the Co-Chair of the Global GenU partnership, and the Minister as a lead of GenU Rwanda. The GIGA initiative to connect schools and communities to the internet was also kicked off in Rwanda in 2020.

UNICEF supported MinYC to establish GenU Rwanda governance mechanism and contributed to the development of Landscape Analysis and Investment Cases for GenU. In November 2020, a roundtable discussion was organized with key private sector partners in Rwanda, as an effort to strengthen private sector involvements in GenU initiatives and to develop shared value partnership between business and the public sector. UNICEF is working with the MinYC to develop a database of adolescents’ and young people’s initiatives, aiming to map out various youth initiatives implemented by different stakeholders. Based on those researches and coordination efforts, a GenU Roadmap will be developed in early 2021.

UNICEF also supported the wellbeing and development of adolescents and young people in various programmatic areas. To name a few achievements during the reporting period, 320 youth volunteers successfully disseminated HIV/AIDS information to 60,000 adolescents; 140,000 adolescents were reached via community radio and nearly 8,000 adolescents accessed HIV testing services.

UNICEF’s successful advocacy with the National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB) resulted in investment in child-friendly workspaces. Eleven tea companies have invested in 20 ECD centres using their own resources, with UNICEF’s contribution limited to capacity building, and procurement of toys and tents. Five tea companies that do not have any ECD centres have been supported with tents and are ready to have functional centres by January 2021. Two mining companies and two rice cooperatives have committed to establish ECD centres – UNICEF has provided technical support in community mobilization and has engaged a local NGO to provide training to caregivers and parents in these sectors.

In 2020, UNICEF also placed the spotlight on children and young people with disabilities through the Activate Talks event, which shared stories directly from persons with disabilities or who had a loved one with a disability. In a powerful advocacy moment, these stories were broadcast twice on Rwanda National Television during prime time and on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Furthermore, UNICEF adapted multimedia communication materials on EVD and COVID-19 to the needs of persons with different types of disabilities: 8,700 persons (60 per cent female and 40 per cent male) were reached directly and 60,000 persons (60 per cent female and 40 per cent male) through scale-up interventions by the National Council of Persons with Disabilities supported by UNICEF. Communities in six Congolese refugee camps were sensitized on EVD prevention. Over 100,000 persons (52 per cent female and 48 per cent male) living in the Mahama refugee camp and host communities were engaged in COVID-19 RCCE effort.

UNICEF assisted the Government to implement the National Integrated ECD, Nutrition and WASH Behaviour and Social Change Communication Strategy. Iitero radio and TV programmes were broadcast and re-broadcast more frequently during COVID-19 lockdown and included live quizzes
which allowed UNICEF to interact with communities and assess knowledge and programme listenership.
UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

In the Health Sector, results were achieved with the leadership of Government and technical and financial support from partners including WHO, UNFPA, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Global Fund, Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI), Belgium Development Agency (Enabel), and various international and national non-government organizations (NGOs) and professional bodies.

UNICEF also continued its close partnership with other UN agencies involved in Nutrition in Rwanda, namely WFP, WHO and FAO.

Other partnerships in Nutrition included the engagement with the Rwandan Women Parliamentary Forum (FFRP), which included a high-level workshop on nutrition budgeting with the participation of all Parliamentarians and Senators.

UNICEF’s achievements in the Education Sector were made possible in 2020 through the collaboration with multiple partners, including UNHCR on refugee children’s access to education, British High Commission around sector coordination, Imbuto Foundation on girls’ education, Inspire, Educate and Empower Rwanda (IEE) focusing on teacher training, Humanity and Inclusion on children with disabilities, VSO around early learning and World Bank on leveraging funding opportunities for the education sector.

In 2020 the partnership with the Government proved invaluable during the COVID-19 pandemic where the close working relationship with them enabled UNICEF to advocate for Child Protection as an essential service. This partnership has also enabled UNICEF to ensure child protection remains a top priority for the Government in the institutional transition from NCC to NCDA which took place in the second half of 2020. In addition, UNICEF and UNHCR finalized the Blue Print which formalized joint efforts to increase access to education, child protection and WASH services for refugees in Rwanda. Finally, UNICEF has taken over from DFID as GPE grant agent at the request of the Minister of Education.

UNICEF’s collaboration with WFP, FAO and UNDP in Social Policy and Research has been considerably strengthened with the launch of two new Joint Programmes (JP) financed by the Joint SDG Fund under the coordination of the UN Resident Coordinators Office. The JP on Social Protection promotes catalytic approaches for a more integrated, shock-responsive social protection system while the JP on SDG Financing supports a wide array of thematic areas, including private sector engagement and strengthened planning and budgeting for nutrition. The UN agencies’ collaboration has continued beyond the design stage of the JP with several activities jointly implemented using the same contractors or partners.

UNICEF committed to empower adolescents and young people as part of the ONE UN Joint Youth Programme together with UNDP, UNFPA, WHO, UNESCO, UN Women, and FAO. UNICEF has also established a strong partnership with MinYC and supported the Ministry to launch the national GenU initiative. The GenU Rwanda governance mechanism involves different stakeholders, including MinYC and other government partners, UN agencies, CSOs and youth entrepreneurs. Under the GenU initiative, UNICEF pursues shared value partnerships between business and the public sector in Rwanda to deliver social impact and empower young people.

Lessons Learned and Innovations
UNICEF’s comparative advantage as a convener and provider of technical support has been the key driving factor of the education programme’s achievements. As co-chair of the education sector, UNICEF has been able to utilize its platform to inform critical decisions, policy advocacy, and education programme development. UNICEF led the sector to respond to the school closure, ensuring continuity of remote learning through radio and television lessons and coordinating efforts for COVID-19 response, in general, and school reopening, specifically. Moreover, through coordinated efforts, the Government of Rwanda has been able to leverage funding for COVID-19 education response through the GPE Accelerated Funds for which UNICEF is the Coordinating Agent.

Children with disabilities continued to benefit from learning opportunities during COVID-19. Progress was made in the regular programme with the increased parental demand for support for children with disabilities for remote learning opportunities. Both national and community-level interventions were needed to ensure that children with disabilities were provided learning opportunities, which included the inclusion of sign language interpretation of television lessons, to the provision of airtime for local education stakeholders to be able to reach households and provide remote support via telephone.

Building on lessons learned from previous years, technology was embedded into remedial learning content to ensure positive effects on learning. In fact, the consultation process with stakeholders which guided the revision of the curriculum used for remedial classes has enhanced the relevance of learning and the participation of low performing girls and boys.

Child protection must be an essential service in all emergencies, including health pandemics. The exclusion of child protection as an essential service was initially observed during the EVD preparedness phase but confirmed during COVID-19 response. In both cases the health sector took the lead and the national response strategies did not include child protection even though children continued to experience violence, abuse and exploitation. During COVID-19 UNICEF advocated for inclusion of child protection as an essential service and is developing guidance specifically on child protection in health emergencies.

A strong child protection system and case management is critical to protect children during unexpected events. This year, the numbers of child protection cases being referred to the National Child Development Agency rose, due in part to the growing recognition and capacity of the institution, however, the institution struggled to handle the cases as there was no clear case management system. UNICEF began to support the development of such a system in 2020.

The equity agenda in ECD improved social, physical and psychological well-being of children of incarcerated women. UNICEF, in partnership with UMUHUZA, supported NCDA and Rwanda Correction Services (RCS) to provide ECD services to children of incarcerated mothers, including those who are either pregnant or breastfeeding. The children leave the prisons at the age of 3 years to stay with foster parents or other family members. Before that, the children lacked a stimulating environment and facilities to advance their growth and development. In response, UNICEF supported the construction and operationalisation of an ECD centre in Musanze prison as well as the training of 15 Prison Wardens (8 Females; 7 Males) as ECD trainers/facilitators. A total of 73 parents in Musanze and four other prisons were also trained as ECD trainers/facilitators. This will provide a safe, secure and stimulating environment which is ideal for optimal growth and development to 441 children (224 girls; 217 boys) in the prisons. Interaction with other children through play has enriched their social, physical and psychological well-being.

Ebola Virus Disease preparedness was key to the successful response to COVID-19 response in Rwanda. Rwanda responded quickly and effectively to COVID-19, with continuing minimal community transmission due to quickly putting in place effective preventive measures and drawing on the extensive capacity building, established guidance and pre-positioned supplies delivered during the
period of EVD preparedness. UNICEF’s support for new outbreaks such as COVID-19 will remain vital to consolidate Government’s capacity to prepare and respond to public health emergencies that threaten decades of development gains across society.

**Companies are very effective in convincing other companies to support child-friendly spaces.** By facilitating peer-to-peer learning visits between stakeholders in the tea industry and other sectors, UNICEF identified champions who shared their experience and encouraged action from companies in the mining, rice and textile companies to invest in child friendly spaces. This emerged as a powerful advocacy tool in engaging other industries.

**While the COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges, it also created new opportunities to engage with adolescents.** UNICEF utilized social media and TV/Radio, including the adolescent-led Itetero TV/Radio series, to disseminate key messages to children and adolescents. UNICEF promoted remote learning for adolescents using the ICT platform and utilized multi-media channels to disseminate key information to adolescents. UNICEF closely worked with the MINEDUC to develop ICT platforms for remedial education, and it helped adolescents to continue learning during the COVID-19 school closure. Digital content for remedial education reached 8,900 adolescents (7,200 female) in school and 1,000 adolescent girls in youth centres.

**Rwanda’s strong internet providers enabled UNICEF to operate remotely during COVID movement restrictions and to implement time-saving digital techniques.** UNICEF now utilizes electronic fund transfers, reducing transaction time from a full day to about one hour and eliminating the need to take paper requests to the bank. All staff have been connected to the internet and almost all transactions can be done online. While these methods do not substitute for crucial human interaction, they enable business continuity during lockdowns and movement restrictions.