Education Budget Brief
Investing in child education in Rwanda
2018/2019
Preface

This education budget brief explores the extent to which the Government of Rwanda addresses the educational needs of children under 18 years of age. The brief analyses the size and composition of budget allocations to the education sector for the fiscal year (FY) 2018/19, as well as the adequacy of past spending. The budget briefs aim to synthesize complex budget information and offer recommendations to strengthen budgeting for children. The budget data for 2018/19 are from the original budget, while for previous years’ budgets, the data were based on revised budgets.

Key messages

- The education sector budget allocation for 2018/19 amounts to 273.0 billion Rwandan francs (FRW). This indicates a nominal increase of 13.3 per cent when compared to the approved budget in 2017/18. Between 2014/15 and 2018/19, the budget of the education sector realized a nominal increase of about 16 per cent, from FRW 235.3 billion to FRW 273 billion. However, the education budget as a share of national budget shows a decreasing trend, from 13.4 to 11 per cent in FY 2018/19.

- Pre-primary, primary and secondary education programmes account for large and increasing budget allocations: The pre-primary and primary education programme budget increased from FRW 63.8 billion in 2014/15 to FRW 104.5 billion in 2018/19, reflecting an increase of 64 per cent. This shows the government commitment to ensure universal access to basic education. There is still a need to increase allocations to pre-primary and primary education in order to increase enrolment (pre-primary) and reduce class size (primary). Splitting of the budget lines for pre-primary and primary is also necessary to allow for budget adequacy monitoring along two distinct tiers of the education programme.

- In 2018/19, there were significant changes made in the budget allocations among different education agencies: (i) the budget allocated to the Rwanda Education Board has declined, while; (ii) the budget for the Higher Education Council and the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) has increased considerably. This is attributed to the recent education sector restructuring, where some functions were transferred from the Rwanda Education Board to the Higher Education Council (tertiary education financing) and MINEDUC (schools’ inspection and construction).

- The development budget as a share of the total education budget continued to reduce. It declined from 22.5 per cent in 2014/15 to 17 per cent in 2018/19, while the recurrent budget, which includes the salaries of teachers, has nominally increased from FRW 168.1 billion in 2014/15 to FRW 226.5 billion in 2018/19, reflecting an increase of 35.7 per cent. This denotes the government’s effort to support teacher welfare as an indirect means of increasing the quality of education.

- As in many other sectors, the share of external financing for education has decreased in recent years. The share of external financing in the education budget fell from 6.7 per cent in 2015/16 to 2.2 per cent in 2018/19. However, Rwanda has fiscal space options available to increase its total revenues and fill the external financing gap without increasing the public debt level.
1. Introduction

1.1 Understanding the Rwandan education sector

The Rwandan education sector is coordinated by the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), whose mission is to ensure equitable access to quality education by focusing on combating illiteracy, promoting science and technology, and developing critical thinking and positive values. The following agencies are involved in managing the education sector: the Rwanda Education Board, responsible for pre-primary, primary and secondary school programmes; the Workforce Development Authority, responsible for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and Rwanda Polytechnic Higher Learning Institution; the Higher Education Council, responsible for university accreditations and tertiary schools regulation, which has also recently been mandated to oversee the functions of higher education financing; and districts, responsible for daily management of schools at decentralized levels.

Table 1: Levels of education in Rwanda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of education</th>
<th>Acceptable years of schooling</th>
<th>Age range (approximate)</th>
<th>School age population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-primary</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>3–6</td>
<td>1,251,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>6–12</td>
<td>1,820,362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary general</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>12–18</td>
<td>1,660,932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary vocational</td>
<td>2–3 years</td>
<td>12–15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational – polytechnic</td>
<td>2–3 years</td>
<td>18–21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate (BA/BSc)</td>
<td>3–5 years</td>
<td>18–23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-graduate</td>
<td>1–4 years</td>
<td>Above 23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education in Rwanda is structured following the International Standard Classification of Education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (Table 1). Rwanda’s constitution of 2003 and its revision of 2015, Article 20, stipulates that primary education is compulsory and free in public schools, and the 12-Year Basic Education Programme (12YBE), established in 2012, guarantees free education for 12 years, including primary and secondary levels. Additionally, education services are decentralized and coordinated from local levels (administrative sectors) to the national level.
### 1.2 Key strategic documents and targets

**Table 2: Strategic documents and targets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic documents</th>
<th>Priorities, performance indicators and/or targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| National Strategy for Transformation (2017–2024)\(^4\) | • Net enrolment rates will reach 45 per cent by 2024 from 17.5 per cent in 2016  
• Schools connected to the Internet will increase to 100 per cent by 2024 from 10 per cent in 2016/17  
• Primary and secondary schools with access to electricity will increase from 32 per cent and 46 per cent in 2016 to 100 per cent in 2024  
• Transition rates from primary to lower secondary will increase from 71.1 per cent in 2015 to 92.4 per cent by 2024  
• Ensure that people with disabilities can start and complete all levels of education  
• Achieve 80 per cent of students enrolled in science, technology, engineering and mathematics in higher learning and TVET institutions by 2024 from 44 per cent in 2016  
• Ensure digital literacy for all youth (16 to 30 years) by 2024. |
| Education Sector Strategic Plan\(^5\) 2018/19–2023/24 | • Enhanced quality learning outcomes that are relevant to Rwanda’s social and economic development  
• Strengthened continuous professional development and management of teachers across all levels of education in Rwanda  
• Strengthened science, technology, engineering and mathematics across all levels of education in Rwanda to increase the relevance of education for urban and rural markets  
• Enhanced use of information and communication technology to transform teaching and learning, and to support the improvement of quality across all levels of education in Rwanda  
• Increased access to education programmes, especially at pre-primary, secondary, TVET and higher education levels in Rwanda  
• Strengthened modern school infrastructure and facilities across all levels of education in Rwanda  
• Equitable opportunities for all Rwandan children and young people at all levels of education  
• More innovative and responsive research and development in relation to community challenges  
• Strengthened governance and accountability across all levels of education in Rwanda. |
1.3 Education sector performance against selected indictors

The Government of Rwanda’s Vision 2020 aims to transform Rwanda’s economy into a sophisticated, knowledge-based economy by 2020.6

Throughout the implementation of the Vision 2020 objectives, Rwanda has achieved notable success towards ensuring universal education for all. Rwanda’s Vision 2050 (under preparation) aspires to attain a high quality and standard of living. To achieve this, one of the focuses of the government is on ‘quality education’.

The education sectors’ performance indicators across five levels of education – pre-primary, primary, secondary, TVET and university – are summarized below.

1.3.1 Pre-primary education
Pre-primary education has seen rapid growth in recent years. The net enrolment rate at the pre-primary level increased from 17.5 per cent in 2016 to 20.6 per cent in 2017. In total, 220,435 children were enrolled in pre-primary education, comprising 108,462 (49.2 per cent) boys and 111,973 (50.8 per cent) girls. According to the UNICEF Situation Analysis Report (2017)7, early childhood attendance is relatively high in the following areas; (i) Urban setting (City of Kigali): 37.5 per cent; (ii) Population with higher levels of education: 48.8 per cent; and (iii) High-income quintile households: 44.8 per cent. However, early childhood education access is significantly lower among children from the lowest income quintile households (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage of early childhood attendance rates

![Figure 1: Percentage of early childhood attendance rates](image)

Source: Situation Analysis of Children in Rwanda (2017)
1.3.2 Primary education

Universal free primary school education was introduced in 2003. From 2014 to 2017, the gross enrolment rate has remained far above 100 per cent among girls and boys in primary schools (Figure 2).

Equally important, the net enrolment rate remained above 96 per cent for both male and female children (Figure 3). The primary school to secondary school transition rate (the percentage of students admitted to the first grade of a higher level of education in a given year, when compared to the number of students enrolled in the final grade of the lower level of education in the previous year) remained above 70 per cent for both male and female children. There is, however, still a large number of children who do not have access to secondary education. Over the past three years, the school drop-out rate fell to less than 6 per cent. In primary schools, it dropped from 14.3 per cent in 2013 to 5.6 per cent in 2017 (Figure 4).

There has been a slight improvement in the primary school teacher-to-pupil ratio, which reduced from 61:1 in 2014 to 59:1 in 2017 (Figure 5). There is a strong need, however, for increased investments to further reduce the ratio of pupils to qualified teachers to achieve the Education Sector Strategic Plan and National Strategy for Transformation targets.
1.3.3 Secondary education

The number of students enrolled in lower and upper secondary schools rose from 486,437 to 592,501 between 2011 and 2017, reflecting an increase of 21.8 per cent over the past six years. Over the past two years (2016 and 2017), the net enrolment rate realized an increase from 28 per cent in 2015 to 34 per cent in 2017 (Figure 6). This increase can be attributed to government efforts to strengthen 9YBE and 12YBE and strengthened school feeding programmes across all secondary schools, including non-boarding schools, among other measures. Repetition and drop-outs in secondary schools were reduced significantly in the past five years, from 11.6 per cent and 14.7 per cent in 2013 to 5.2 per cent and 4.4 per cent respectively in 2016 (Figure 7).

![Figure 6: Gross and net secondary school enrolment rates](image)

Source: Education Statistical Yearbook 2018

![Figure 7: Repetition and drop-out rates](image)

Source: Education Statistical Yearbook 2018

1.3.4 Technical and vocational education

In 2008, the Government of Rwanda instituted a TVET policy, which was revised in 2015. The TVET policy set out the strategic direction to be followed for the promotion of vocational and technical training with the aim of aligning Rwanda’s education with market demand and reducing dependence on external human resources in priority sectors for development. The policy aimed to reach 60 per cent of upper secondary school leavers being enrolled in TVET schools. As a result: (i) the number of TVET institutions increased from 306 in 2013 to 402 in 2017 (Figure 8), reflecting an increase of 44.6 per cent over the past six years; (ii) the number of tertiary-level TVET institutions (integrated polytechnic colleges) realized a rapid increase from just seven in 2013 to 17 in 2017, and; (iii) the number of TVET students grew from 83,983 in 2013 to 107,501 in 2017, reflecting an increase of 28.1 per cent. However, there is notable gender inequality at this level of education, as male participation remains higher (60.8 per cent) compared to female participation (Figure 9).

1.3.5 Tertiary education

Unlike other levels of education, the number of students in tertiary education has realized only a slight increase in the past years. Between 2013 and 2017, the tertiary enrolment increased from 84,448 to 91,193 reflecting an increase of 8 per cent (Figure 10). Male students attending public tertiary schools are in the majority, representing 54.6 per cent – indicating a widening gender gap. By 2017, only 33.9 per cent of students enrolled in public tertiary schools were girls.
Figure 8: Number of TVET training centres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Vocational training centres</th>
<th>Technical secondary schools</th>
<th>Technical tertiary institutions</th>
<th>Total centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Education Statistical Yearbook 2018

Figure 9: Student enrolment in TVET institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total students</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>83,893</td>
<td>37,228</td>
<td>46,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>52,369</td>
<td>47,251</td>
<td>45,118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>54,912</td>
<td>39,289</td>
<td>38,694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>54,199</td>
<td>38,959</td>
<td>38,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>65,327</td>
<td>42,174</td>
<td>23,153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Education Statistical Yearbook 2018

Figure 10: Enrolment in tertiary education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>47,226</td>
<td>37,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>48,858</td>
<td>38,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>48,858</td>
<td>38,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>48,858</td>
<td>38,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>48,858</td>
<td>38,052</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Education Statistical Yearbook 2018
Primary school transition rates remain low, which requires more effort to ensure universal access to 12 years’ basic education by 2024.

The high pupil-to-teacher ratio requires special consideration, as it impedes the quality of education services and further degrades education outcomes for children (employability and innovation). Increased investment in human resources for education will increase the number of qualified teachers.

Despite a commendable effort to reduce primary school drop-outs, the rate is still high; greater effort towards reducing school drop-outs should remain a national priority and should be addressed through interventions targeting the most vulnerable households located in rural areas, where the drop-out rates remain above average.

Government interventions to increase early childhood education access in rural areas and address the requirements of poor households need to be strengthened to ensure equitable access to early learning.

As the participation rate in pre-primary school will continue to rise, government will need to strengthen investments in the training of the pre-primary teachers.
2. Trends in government spending for education

2.1 Size of government spending

During the past years, the budget allocated to education has increased in nominal terms. Between 2014/15 and 2018/19, the budget allocated to the education sector has increased from FRW 235.3 billion to FRW 273 billion, reflecting an increase of 16 per cent. However, the education sector as share of national budget indicates a declining trend, from 13.4 per cent in 2014/15 to 11 per cent in 2018/19 (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Size of government spending in education

Source: Calculated using Budget Laws and microframework data, 2018

The budget allocations for the education sectors of countries in which UNICEF has conducted budget briefs vary considerably. Rwanda prioritizes education spending less than some of these countries, with 11 per cent of its total budget allotted to education, while Ethiopia allocated 24.2 per cent of its total government budget to education (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Percentage of education expenditure on government budget

Source: UNICEF budget briefs 2017/18

2.2 Governments spending in education: An outlook of selected countries

Source: © UNICEF/Houser

© UNICEF/Houser
2.3 Budget allocation against government priority areas

The education sector ranks third in budget allocation among public sectors, after general services, which include all budgets for functioning of legislative and executive organs of public sectors, and economic affairs, and include all allocations for infrastructure projects. In the past two years, the increase in national budget was also reflected in the budget allocated to education (Figure 13).

2.4 Changes in the education budget

2.4.1 Original vs. revised budgets

By law, the national budget is revised mid-year (usually December–January), in response to emerging priorities. With the exception of 2014/15, the education budget revisions in subsequent years did not significantly affect the initial approved budget (Figure 14).

Figure 13: Public spending trend by different sectors (billion FRW)

Source: Calculated using National Budget Laws, Annex-2-8

Figure 14: Changes in the education budget – original vs. revised budgets

Source: Calculated using National Budget Laws
2.4.2 Nominal vs. real changes in the education sector budget

When looking at the trends of nominal and inflation adjusted education budgets, there have been significant effects of inflation on government investments in education.

From 2014/15 to 2015/16, the education sector budget shows a decreasing trend. The decrease additionally widened when adjusted for inflation, from -6.5 per cent to -10.5 per cent in 2014/15 and from -7.8 per cent to -9.5 per cent in 2015/16. However, the inflation effect started to narrow from 2016/17 to 2018/19 due to larger nominal increases in comparison to inflation levels (Figure 15).

2.5 Budget trends by education programmes

Pre-primary, primary and secondary programmes account for large and increasing budgets. Pre-primary and primary education programme budgets increased from FRW 63.8 billion in 2014/15 to FRW 104.5 billion in 2017/18, reflecting an increase of 64 per cent. The increase in budget allocated to primary schools could partly explain the high net enrolment in primary schools over the past decade.

The budget allocated to secondary schools has remained constant, hovering around FRW 65 billion between 2014/15 and 2018/19. The budget allocated to tertiary education registered a significant increase, from FRW 35.9 billion in 2017/18 to FRW 57 billion in 2018/19 (Figure 16).

Figure 15: Nominal vs inflation adjusted (real) budget

Source: Calculated using National Budget Laws

Figure 16: Education budget per key programme

Source: Calculated using National Budget Laws
2.6 Budget allocation for education quality enhancement programmes

When looking at spending on different programmes aimed at strengthening the quality of education, the government has strongly invested in three areas: (i) education quality and standards, (ii) curricula and pedagogical material development, (iii) information and communication technology integration in education. Teacher development and management was allocated a relatively constant budget over the past four years (Figure 17). The budget allocated to education quality promotion as a share of the total MINEDUC budget was at 18.2 per cent in 2018/19.

![Figure 17: Budget allocation in education quality-strengthening programmes](image)

Source: Calculated using National Budget Laws

2.7 Government spending for education per student

Between 2014 and 2017, per-student spending across education levels showed mixed trends.

- Per capita spending for pre-primary and primary levels nominally increased from FRW 26,250 to FRW 32,280. However, taking into consideration currency depreciation, the spending level has remained constant over the past four years (US$ 38).
- In secondary and tertiary education, per capita spending decreased from FRW 118,004 (US$ 171) to FRW 86,549 (US$ 103) and from FRW 1,233,396 (US$ 1,790) to FRW 849,276 (US$ 1,017) respectively.
- Per capita spending for post-secondary non-tertiary education, which includes TVET, increased from FRW 20,828 (US$ 30) in 2014 to FRW 36,184 (US$ 43) in 2017. This increase indicates a renewed focus by the Government of Rwanda on technical skills development (Figure 18).

![Figure 18: Education budget/spending per student and education levels](image)

Source: Calculated using National Budget Laws and education statistics

Note: US$ 1 was equivalent to FRW 835 in 2017 and FRW 689 in 2014
Several critical areas will require increased investments in the education sector: (i) Insufficient school infrastructure and old school buildings require a significant increase in development budget, given the large student-per-classroom ratio, ranging from 50 to 70 students per classroom in primary schools. The recent government decision to phase out double shifting in primary schools, and the increasing number of schools in need of rehabilitation (old schools) also need to be taken into account. (ii) Improving quality of education at all levels: Given the Sustainable Development Goals’ focus on quality of education, the government needs to commit increased funding to the recurrent budget for recruitment of teachers, provision of teachers’ training, and development of learning materials. (iii) Low level pre-primary school enrolment and underfunding: A large number of children do not have access to pre-primary education in both rural and urban areas. In order to ensure equitable and inclusive enrolment, the government needs to establish a financing framework for pre-primary education.

The budget allocations for the education sectors of countries in which UNICEF has conducted budget briefs vary considerably. Rwanda prioritizes education spending less than some of these countries, with 11 per cent of its total budget allotted to education, while Ethiopia allocated 24.2 per cent of its total government budget to education in 2017/18.
3. Composition of education spending

3.1 Budget allocation by education agency and district

When looking at spending by different agencies, districts receive the largest education budget. The budget allocated to districts increased from FRW 102.7 billion in 2014/15 to FRW 143.5 billion in 2018/19. The Rwanda Education Board budget increased from FRW 42.1 billion in 2014/15 to FRW 70.7 billion in 2017/18 but dropped to FRW 23.3 RWF million in 2018/19 (Figure 19). The decrease in budget allocation to the Rwanda Education Board is attributed to education sector restructuring, during which a number of functions were transferred from the Rwanda Education Board to the Higher Education Council, including tertiary education financing, and to MINEDUC for functions such as school inspections.

3.2 Education budget by economic activity: recurrent vs. development budget

The development budget as a share of the total education budget has declined from 22.5 per cent in 2014/15 to 17 per cent in 2018/19.

The recurrent budget, which includes the salaries of teachers, has nominally increased by 35.7 per cent, from FRW 168.1 billion in 2014/15 to FRW 226.5 billion in 2018/19, (Figure 20). The increase is attributed to growing teachers’ incentives, including salary increases, which range between 10 per cent and 15 per cent after three years of outstanding performance.

---

**Figure 19: Budget allocation by main agency**

![Graph showing budget allocation by main agency]

Source: Calculated using National Budget Laws and population projections

**Figure 20: Composition of education budget (recurrent vs. development budgets)**

![Graph showing composition of education budget]

Source: Calculated using National Budget Laws and population projections
4. Budget execution

Budget execution has been consistently high across education agencies. During FY2016/17, both district and central government have performed well, achieving 95 per cent and 96.3 per cent budget execution rates respectively (Figure 21). The increased budget execution rates indicate strengthened capacities in budget planning and execution across the education sector.

![Figure 21: Budget execution](source)

Source: Calculated using national budget execution reports published by MINECOFIN

5. Financing the education sector

As in many other sectors, the share of external financing in education has decreased in recent years. It fell from 6.7 per cent in 2015/16 to 2.2 per cent in 2018/19 (Figure 22).

![Figure 22: Budget execution rate](source)

Source: Calculated using National Budget Laws
There is a need to increase allocation to pre-primary and primary education with the view to strengthening the quality of education. Specific focus should be put on (i) capacity-building for pre-primary teachers and (ii) improvement in the well-being of primary teachers, which should include, among other measures, an increase in their fringe benefits.

Given the need to reduce the teacher-pupil ratio in public primary schools, and the increasing number of newly enrolled students across all education levels, the government will need to continue strengthening measures for domestic resource mobilization, with the aim of guaranteeing stable funding for the education sector.

The need for modern education sector infrastructure development and phasing out of the double-shift system in primary schools will also require an increased budget allocation for development projects in the foreseeable future.

The demand for domestic financing to cater for education sector needs will continue to increase and put pressure on the national budget. As a result, the government will need to continue identifying alternative financing sources to support the education sector, particularly the pre-primary and primary education sub-sectors.
Endnotes


