



CONTACT US

Ho use #25, KN 16 Ave
Nyarugenge, Kiyovu
P.O. Box 6935, Kigali, Rwanda

+250 788315029 | +250 788315039

rwanda@iucn.org

IUCNRwanda

www.iucn.org

SCAN TO



LEARN MORE



Building resilient

landscapes and livelihoods through
Nature-based Solutions

RWANDA COUNTRY PROFILE



ABOUT IUCN

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is a membership Union of government and civil society organisations. Together, we work to advance sustainable development and create a just world that values and conserves nature. Created in 1948, IUCN is now the world's largest and most diverse environmental network, harnessing the knowledge, resources, and reach of our more than 1,400 Member organisations and 14,000 experts. This diversity and expertise make IUCN the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.

IUCN'S APPROACH IN RWANDA

The IUCN Rwanda Country Office collaborates closely with the Government of Rwanda, a long-standing Member State, to advance the country's conservation and sustainable development goals. Over the years, IUCN has implemented programmes that have contributed to Rwanda's national policies and international commitments, including the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, as well as global goals such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Bonn Challenge.

Under the leadership of the Government of Rwanda and its strong institutions including the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources, the Rwanda Forestry Authority, the Rwanda Water Resources Board, the Rwanda Environment Management Authority, Rwanda Development Board, and the Rwanda Green Fund, IUCN Rwanda works in partnership to advance Nature-based Solutions (NbS) as practical approaches that use nature to address challenges such as climate change, food security, biodiversity loss and land degradation among others. These joint efforts help protect ecosystems, support communities, and contribute to global development goals.

Through ecosystem restoration initiatives, IUCN Rwanda and its partners reverse biodiversity loss while strengthening local livelihoods. At the same time, the IUCN emphasizes community-led conservation, empowering local people, including women and youth, to take an active role in protecting natural resources and developing sustainable ways of living that benefit both their communities and the environment.

Our approach in Rwanda is centered on nature-based and community-driven solutions that integrate restoration with climate resilience and livelihoods. We recognize that environmental challenges cannot be addressed solely through conservation efforts, but require strong partnerships among government institutions, civil society, development partners, local communities, and the private sector. This inclusive and science-based strategy combines forest and landscape restoration, water resource management, climate adaptation, and sustainable agriculture, while ensuring cross-cutting attention to biodiversity, gender, youth, and natural resource governance.

THE KEY PILLARS OF IUCN RWANDA'S APPROACH

RESTORATION OF LANDSCAPES AND ECOSYSTEMS

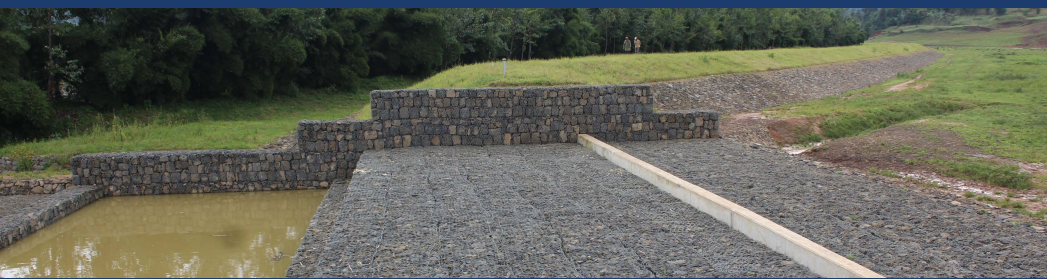
IUCN Rwanda places ecological restoration at the heart of its work, recognizing that healthy landscapes are vital for biodiversity, climate resilience, and livelihoods. Restoration is not limited to tree planting, but includes a comprehensive approach to restoring degraded soils, farmlands, and grazing areas, while ensuring that communities benefit directly.

- Expanding forest cover through reforestation and agroforestry.
- Rehabilitating soil, pasture, and erosion-prone areas to restore productivity.
- Linking restoration to improved livelihoods and climate resilience.

SUSTAINABLE WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Water resources are central to Rwanda's development, and the IUCN in Rwanda integrates water security into its conservation efforts. By combining ecological restoration with participatory governance, the approach helps reduce flooding risks, improve water availability, and sustain agricultural productivity.

- Protecting catchments and wetlands through ecological restoration.
- Supporting participatory governance to strengthen local water management.
- Enhancing water security for agriculture, biodiversity, and energy systems.



CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION

IUCN Rwanda integrates climate considerations across its portfolio, helping both ecosystems and communities adapt to increasing variability while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Restoration, sustainable land use, and conservation finance mechanisms all contribute to national climate commitments.

- Promoting sustainable land use practices that build resilience.
- Enhancing ecosystem capacity to buffer communities from climate shocks.
- Developing financing mechanisms such as payments for ecosystem services and carbon schemes.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

Agriculture underpins rural livelihoods, and IUCN Rwanda promotes climate-smart practices that protect the environment while increasing productivity. By aligning agriculture with restoration, the approach ensures that food systems contribute to both development and conservation goals.

- Promoting agroecological and agroforestry practices to improve soils and yields.
- Strengthening farmer capacity to adapt to climate variability.
- Aligning agricultural development with biodiversity conservation goals.

CONSERVATION FINANCE AND INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Sustaining conservation outcomes requires long-term investment, and IUCN Rwanda prioritizes new financing models and partnerships. These approaches encourage community participation, attract private investment, and ensure conservation is embedded in the national economy.

- Establishing models that reward communities for ecosystem protection.
- Building blended financing opportunities that attract private investment.
- Supporting national platforms that link conservation with economic development.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES: PEOPLE-CENTERED CONSERVATION

At the core of IUCN Rwanda's approach is the belief that conservation must benefit people and promote equity. All programmes are designed to embed livelihood benefits, strengthen local ownership, and ensure inclusive participation of women, youth, and communities.

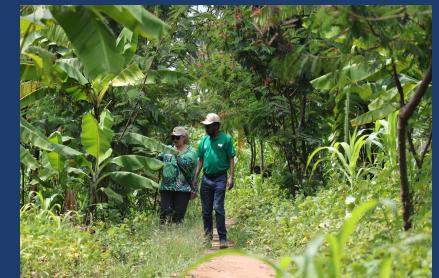
- Embedding livelihood benefits into restoration to build local ownership.
- Promoting equity by integrating gender and youth into decision-making.
- Strengthening governance frameworks to ensure transparency and accountability.

SNAPSHOT OF IUCN'S WORK IN RWANDA

IUCN Rwanda operates under the leadership of the Government of Rwanda and in close collaboration with national institutions, including the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources, the Rwanda Forestry Authority, the Rwanda Water Resources Board, Rwanda Development Board, the Rwanda Environment Management Authority, and the Rwanda Green Fund among others. Together with these institutions, civil society, development partners, communities, and the private sector, IUCN Rwanda advances Nature-based Solutions (NbS) to address pressing challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, food security, and land degradation to name a few.

The organization's work is built on six key pillars:

- Restoration of landscapes and ecosystems**, reversing degradation and strengthening livelihoods.
- Sustainable water resource management**, securing catchments and wetlands while reducing disaster risks.
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation**, embedding NbS into national climate actions and commitments.
- Sustainable agriculture and food systems**, promoting agroecology and climate-smart farming practices.
- Conservation finance and innovative partnerships**, including ecosystem service payments and blended finance models.
- Cross-cutting themes of people-centered conservation**, empowering women, youth, and communities in conservation decision-making.



IUCN Rwanda main key thematic areas are :

RESTORE AND SUSTAIN LANDSCAPES AND ECOSYSTEMS

Promote large-scale restoration of degraded forests, farmlands, pastures, and wetlands through Nature-based Solutions (NbS) to reverse biodiversity loss, strengthen ecosystem services, and improve community livelihoods.

IUCN Rwanda main key thematic areas are :

ADVANCE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

Promote climate-smart and agroecological farming practices that restore soil fertility, enhance productivity, and align agricultural development with biodiversity conservation and food security.

PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Support integrated water resources management and wetland governance to enhance water availability, reduce risks of floods and droughts, and safeguard freshwater ecosystems for agriculture, energy, and biodiversity.

DEVELOP CONSERVATION FINANCE AND PARTNERSHIPS

Mobilize innovative financing, including payment for ecosystem services, community conservation funds, and blended finance, while strengthening partnerships with government, civil society, development partners and the private sector.

STRENGTHEN CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION

Embed NbS into national climate actions to build resilience against climate shocks while reducing greenhouse gas emissions, contributing directly to Rwanda's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and long-term climate goal.

ENSURE INCLUSIVE, PEOPLE-CENTERED CONSERVATION

Empower local communities, especially women and youth to actively participate in conservation decision-making, governance, and benefit-sharing, ensuring that conservation outcomes are equitable, sustainable, and locally owned.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Our achievements in Rwanda reflect a strong partnership with the Government of Rwanda and its institutions, including the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources, the Rwanda Forestry Authority, the Rwanda Water Resources Board, the Rwanda Environment Management Authority, and the Rwanda Green Fund. Working collaboratively with these institutions, local communities, civil society, and international partners, IUCN Rwanda advances Nature-based Solutions (NbS) that benefit both people and ecosystems. Some notable accomplishments include:

STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

IUCN Rwanda has supported the Government of Rwanda in aligning national policies with global biodiversity and climate frameworks. We provided technical assistance to update the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), ensuring it reflects the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Our expertise also contributed to the development of Rwanda's Climate Change Gender Action Plan (ccGAP), embedding equity and gender priorities into climate policy. Through our role as a neutral platform, we continue to bring together government, NGOs, communities, and the private sector to coordinate restoration, biodiversity, and climate initiatives at national and regional levels.

LANDSCAPE RESTORATION AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

IUCN Rwanda has played a leading role in advancing Rwanda's ambitious landscape restoration targets. Working closely with national and local institutions, we have supported the restoration of tens of thousands of hectares of degraded land into climate-resilient ecosystems. These efforts include reforestation, agroforestry, pasture rehabilitation, and soil erosion control. Restoration achievements have already enabled Rwanda to surpass its 30% forest cover target and have directly enhanced the resilience of smallholder farmers. This work contributes to Rwanda's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving community livelihoods.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

IUCN Rwanda has demonstrated how NbS can improve water security and reduce vulnerability to floods and droughts. In partnership with government agencies, we have helped restore catchments and wetlands, reduced the impacts of flooding in vulnerable areas, and improved water availability for communities and ecosystems. By embedding integrated water resources management and community-led governance, these efforts strengthen resilience in both drought-prone and flood-affected regions while securing freshwater ecosystems critical to agriculture, energy, and biodiversity.

ADVANCING BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Through our initiatives, IUCN Rwanda has expanded biodiversity-supportive areas and improved ecological connectivity in the Eastern Province. We have facilitated the development of forest management plans, supported the removal of invasive species, and piloted payment for ecosystem services to create new conservation finance streams. These efforts contribute to both national and global goals by conserving species, restoring habitats, and building sustainable financing models that benefit local communities.

CONSERVATION FINANCE AND PARTNERSHIPS

IUCN Rwanda has pioneered new approaches to conservation financing in the country. Working with the Ministry of Environment, Rwanda Environment Management Authority, Rwanda Water Resources Board and the Rwanda Green Fund, we have developed pilots for payments for ecosystem services and carbon credit initiatives that deliver direct benefits to communities. In addition, IUCN Rwanda is working with national stakeholders to establish a Public-Private Partnership Platform for Nature-based Solutions, unlocking private investment for restoration and conservation. These efforts are ensuring long-term sustainability by moving beyond donor dependence and embedding conservation into Rwanda's economic development strategy.



IUCN MEMBERS IN RWANDA

National Members:



International NGO Members with physical presence in Rwanda:



OUR PARTNERS

We are grateful to be working in collaboration with our strategic Government partners and Member organisations in Rwanda.

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MINAFET)
- Ministry of Environment
 - Rwanda Forestry Authority (RFA)
 - Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA)
 - Rwanda Meteorology Agency (Meteo Rwanda)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI)
 - Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board (RAB)
 - National Agriculture Export Board (NAEB)
- Rwanda Green Fund
- Rwanda Development Board (RDB)
- Rwanda Water Resources Board (RWB)



LIST OF PAST AND CURRENT PROJECT PORTFOLIO

Current & past IUCN projects in the country

Project name	Funding partners	Duration	Objectives	Key achievements to date	Alignment with IUCN goals (e.g., biodiversity conservation, climate resilience)						
Transforming Eastern Province through Adaptation (TREPA)	Green Climate Fund	2022 - 2027	The project intends to restore 60,000 hectares of degraded landscapes into climate resilient ecosystems through re-forestation, agroforestry, restoration of pasture lands and erosion control measures. It also intends to increase the resilience of 75,000 smallholder farmers.	By the midterm review of the project term in June/July 2025, at least 50% of landscape restoration targets have been achieved.	Climate change adaptation and mitigation	Improving resilience of farmers' livelihoods to climate change through innovative, research proven climate-smart agroforestry and efficient use of tree resources in the Eastern Province and peri-urban areas of Kigali City (DeSIRA)	European Union Delegation to Rwanda	2022 - 2025	To decrease the vulnerability of communities in Eastern Province, the DeSIRA project is enhancing capacity of smallholder farmers to cope with the impacts of climate change through knowledge-sharing to agroforestry actions aligned to the IUCN Nature-based Solutions	The project has led to better understanding of the impact of selected agroforestry systems on tree biomass productivity and value chain, biodiversity, above-ground carbon stocks, microclimate and water balance on degraded agricultural land with associated improvements of land health, livelihoods and poverty reduction.	Food systems and sustainable agriculture
Alliance for Restoration of Forest Landscapes and Ecosystems in Africa (AREECA)	German Federal Ministry for Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMUKN)	2020 - 2025	Targeting the restoration of 25,000 ha of degraded lands in the Kirehe and Nyagatare districts, the programme is putting up catalytic and supportive measures that impact the livelihoods of over 13,000 households and over 50,000 people.	With the project ending in December 2025, the project landscape restoration targets have been achieved. The sustainability and scale up plans have been developed.	Climate change adaptation and mitigation	Embedding Integrated Water Resource Management in Rwanda (EWMR) commonly known as Sebeya Project	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Rwanda	2019 – 2023	The Embedding Integrated Water Resource Management in Rwanda (EWMR) project (Sebeya Project) sought to increase livelihood and conservation benefits in Sebeya & other catchments from restoration and improved land management, in Nyabihu, Ngororero, Rubavu, and Rutsiro districts under a community-based planning and implementation framework (community-based participatory approach).	Through proactive and participatory engagement, the project has yielded tangible benefits that include reduced impacts of flooding in the catchment, landscapes restored, enhanced agricultural yields and improved community livelihoods. IUCN deployed its collective expertise, strengths, and resources to address the challenges in the Sebeya catchment through implementing various strategies for restoration and integrated water resource management.	Ensuring freshwater security and stewardship Scaling up Nature-based Solutions
Reducing vulnerability to climate change through enhanced community based biodiversity conservation in the Eastern Province of Rwanda (COMBIO)	Embassy of Sweden in Rwanda	2021 - 2027	COMBIO aims to increase the geographic distribution of biodiversity enhance the ecosystem's biodiversity connectivity. The project is expected to directly benefit a total of 220,796 people and over 12,700 ha planted on protective landscapes across the Eastern Province.	IUCN activities have led to the development of forest management plans for 6 remnant forests in the Eastern province. Implementation of activities in the plans in the remaining project lifetime will lead to enhanced biodiversity conservation. IUCN is also leading in the implementation of a PES pilot project under this project while working with GoR to develop a carbon credit selling activity as a supplementary conservation finance mechanism with direct community benefits.	Climate change adaptation and mitigation						