



Tel: (+250) 789 003 737

Email: childrenrwanda@gmail.com

Twitter: [@cvtrwanda](https://twitter.com/cvtrwanda)

Facebook: [@cvtrw](https://www.facebook.com/cvtrwanda)

P.O. Box 1253 Kigali

Address: KN 9 Ave, Kigali-Rwanda

Website: www.cvtrwanda.org

Our views on how Children's Rights are respected in Rwanda- Report by Children

August 2018

**This report is to be submitted to The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC); the
Government of Rwanda (GoR) has been given a copy**

1. INTRODUCTION

WE, as Rwandan children, we are aware of the fact that we should participate in making reports (including making our own reports) submitted to The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), regarding the implementation of our rights.

We are also aware that every child has the right to participate in the implementation of his/her own rights and development,

We, as children, we know the problems we face more than anyone else,

This opportunity given by UN Committee on CRC to make our own reports, is a great privilege to make known how our Government respect our rights. It is also an opportunity to the UN Committee on CRC to know advantages and challenges we face in our Country in terms of respecting our rights.

Therefore, we, as children who are members of Grassroots Groups, also members of Children's Voice Today (CVT), have prepared a report which shows what we are thankful of and what we ask to be improved in order to show more consideration to the respect of our rights.

2. METHODOLOGY USED TO PREPARE THE REPORT

Our Organization Children's Voice Today (CVT) helped us to join together and we selected among ourselves those who would collect information. We have selected 21 children (9 Boys and 12 Girls) from 10 districts where our organization CVT is operating. These districts include Rusizi, Rubavu and Rutsiro in Western Province; Bugesera and Gatsibo in Eastern province; Nyaruguru and Huye in Southern province; Musanze in Northern province; Nyarugenge and Gasabo in Kigali.

After being selected by our fellow children in purpose of collecting information, CVT helped us to make a guiding document that helps children to know how to make and send the report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

After obtaining that document, we started collecting views of children in all those 10 districts listed above. We collected information from 1073 children from the following categories:

| Categories of children inquired | Number |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Children members of CVT Grassroots Groups | 643 |
| Children members of Children's Fora Committees | 22 |
| Children, "domestic work-leavers" | 5 |
| Children who still perform "domestic work" | 91 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Street children | 52 |
| Children who live in institutions of children with disability | 45 |
| Deaf children | 30 |
| Children who work in Tea plantations | 8 |
| Children who work in Mining sites | 6 |
| Children who work as “Milk Collectors” for dairies | 2 |
| Children who were reunified with their families from orphanages | 30 |
| Children headed households (CHH) | 5 |
| Children who dropped out the school | 45 |
| Children fostered in families | 12 |
| Other children | 77 |
| Total | 1073 |

We collected additional information from 37 adults’ people from Nyarugenge, Rubavu, Nyaruguru and Bugesera districts.

Thereafter, we compiled the information we collected in every district that shows advantages, challenges and our suggestions on what should be improved. The views of children and information from adults are summed up in 6 domains: **Education, Health care, Child Protection, Entertainment, Child participation and Nutrition.**

By the time of compiling our findings, we also analyzed them in order to fulfill our purpose.

In our analysis, we did all the following:

- We analyzed every issue mentioned and wrote it plainly and clearly;
- We put together all data (statistics, comments, artworks drawn by children, pictures and videos), and made a chart showing statistics of our evaluation results;
- We analyzed the way our rights are respected in nowadays compared to past days, and gave our observations;
- In our analysis, most reported issues are the ones we put in our report.

After analyzing all data and writing them on papers, we selected 3 children who should type our report in Kinyarwanda using a computer, with the help of Children’s Voice Today.

3. COLLECTED CHILDREN'S VIEWS

3.1. EDUCATION

3.1.1. What we appreciate and what should be improved in education domain

We are sincerely appreciative of several things the Government of Rwanda (GoR) has done in Education domain. For instance, the GoR distributed laptops in schools, even though in some schools they are not used properly, because there is no electricity. Many teachers have insufficient knowledge to operate them, and school authorities do not give us time to use them, instead they always keep them. In other cases, these laptops are mostly used by children whom their parents are teachers, as they are allowed to take them at home.

We are also grateful that many children no longer have to travel long distances to reach their schools because the Government built many all over the country and inclusive education for disabled children is promoted in country. Another pleasing fact is that several schools provide lunch to students, under school feeding programs, and children whom their families are classified in 1st Category of *Ubudehe program* study for free, and sometimes get lunch for free. Another thing that we are thankful of is that the Government has given us many school materials that include books and there are many teachers. But there are many schools that did not receive these materials, and sometimes they are not sufficient because of high number of students.

Sometimes the effectiveness of teaching is hindered by large class size. In some schools, you may find 70 to 90 children in one class; 5 students share one desk while normally they should be 2. Another thing is that you may find that several times teachers are distracted by their phones, busy chatting on social networks like "WhatsApp," hence find no time to teach us effectively. In other schools, punishments given to children have a form of hazardous works like cultivating and lifting heavy bricks. Another thing we found as a problem is that at school children do not have a way to be updated about the Resolutions taken in National Children's Summit; and school is the only place we can be together as children to hear feedback from the summit. Deaf children cannot understand well what they learn because many teachers don't know sign language. There are even schools that have teachers who know that language but refuse to use it because they find it hard to teach and interpret at the same time. We cannot forget that many schools don't have

proper water to drink, hence children drink rain water from tanks; but when visitors come at school, school authorities find a way to bring clean water just to impress visitors.

3.1.2. Our recommendations to the Government of Rwanda in Education

Based on all the problems explained above, we ask the government to do the following:

1. We ask the government to distribute laptops in all schools and do the follow-up on how they are used; the government should also train teachers to use them and help the school facilities with no electricity to obtain it so that these laptops can be charged.
2. We ask the government to allow all children from poor families especially those who are in the 1st category of *Ubudehe* program to have lunch at school for free in order to facilitate their effective learning.
3. We ask our government to exhaust all possible measures in order to solve the problem of “large class size” which is a big challenge to our studies.
4. We ask the government to establish a way of monitoring teacher’s conducts and eliminate totally punishments that are not in line with child rights principles in schools
5. We ask the government to establish a way of communicating us at school the resolutions taken in the National Children’s Summit.
6. We ask the government to establish a mechanism that helps deaf children to follow their studies in sign language and monitor the way the established mechanism is being implemented

3.2. HEALTH CARE

3.2.1. What we appreciate and what should be improved in health care domain

With regards to medical care, we also thank the Rwandan government for its achievements in providing medical care to citizens. The Government built health centers all over the country, and they have caring nurses who receive well the patients. In many hospitals, they provide good health care services. We also thank the government that children whom their families are in the 1st category of *Ubudehe* program receive health care services for free; the government also distributed mosquito nets all over the Country for free. However, there are still health centers

which do not provide services at noon, because many nurses go out for lunch. Some children can't get proper medical care because their families can't afford to buy health insurance; they should have got insurance for free, but they have been put into improper category of *Ubudehe* program. Additionally, some hospitals don't have sufficient essential tools, like dressing and syringe. Other hospitals stop health care services when electricity goes off because they have no electric generators. We are also frustrated that there are some hospitals and health centers that provide good services depending on social classes or being known. Our fellow children, who are deaf, find it hard to communicate with doctors and nurses. In some cases, Community Health Workers at village level don't provide good services just because of their personal problems or conflicts with neighbors. The government has instructed medical care personnel not to use mobile phones at work, but this bad practice is still viewed at some facilities. The last but not the least, some doctors refuse to give us information on the disease we have, which is our right to know any information about it.

3.2.2. Our recommendations to Government in Health Care Domain

1. We ask our government to establish a system of monitoring hospitals and their workers; and every time, nurses and doctors should be available at hospitals because illness comes at any time;
2. We ask our government to set a regular program of correcting categories of *Ubudehe* program, because financial circumstances of families change gradually. That will help those who should be changed and be put in other different categories;
3. We also ask the government to train doctors and nurses in sign language or set up interpretation program for deaf children, to facilitate the communication between them and doctors.

3.3. PROTECTION

3.3.1. What we appreciate and what should be improved with regards to protection

Our Country Rwanda has done a lot of things to protect us from any abuse. We thank our government that all over the Country, there are organizations that work in child protection and

monitor issues affecting child rights. These organizations have played a key part in teaching us our rights and how we can protect ourselves from any violation. We also commend our government for punishing anyone who is guilty of child abuse. There are also centers working in partnership with our Police that receive abused children and provide free services to victims. But because there are few of them, there are some children who don't get needed services when they are abused. Another problem is that there are many parents all over the country who still don't recognize children's rights hence they are not respected. Some of the local leaders don't understand child abuse and don't do any follow up on some child abuse cases. Till now, there are still parents who don't register their children births. There are some disabled children who are abused because of their disabilities; for instance their parents keep them at home; others are sexually assaulted because they can't talk or defend themselves. Children who live at street complain that the police officers take them in "rehabilitation centers" by force and when they reach there, they don't get proper care and protection.

3.3.2. Our recommendations with regards to protection

1. We ask the government to increase the number of centers that provide services to abused children ;
2. We ask the government to train parents and local leaders about children's rights especially about any child abuse concerning disabled children;
3. We ask the government to put much effort in educating parents to register their children

3.4. ENTERTAINMENT

3.4.1. What we appreciate and what should be improved with regards to entertainment

Entertainment is an integral part of our growth as children because it helps us to enjoy and share happiness with other children. We really thank our government and its partners because they gave us some equipment that helps us to entertain. They built us playgrounds, even though they are not enough, provided playing balls, dancing equipment, etc. We are also proud that in our Country, many parents give our fellow children time for recreation. We also thank our government that in many schools, sport has been scheduled as part of studying lessons. That's

really enjoyable. The problem we have is that on the village level and schools, sports equipment's are still scarce. There are even schools which don't have playgrounds. Consequently, children play in hazardous places like streets, roadsides and near storm water channel. Another thing is that even though our government has scheduled sport as a lesson, some schools don't respect that scheduled time. We can't forget that there are also parents who still don't understand the importance of leisure time; and some can't let their children go to play because playgrounds are far from their homes or are not in safe places

3.4.2. Our recommendations with regards to entertainment field

We ask our Government to help us in these ways:

1. To build sufficient recreation grounds for children in every village and school without playgrounds; but it should do that by also giving attention to our fellow disabled children. That will help us to have fun in un Hazardous places;
2. To establish a way of monitoring if schools allow us to use the scheduled time for sports.
3. To increase sensitization in parents so that they respect children's right regarding entertainment

3.5. CHILD PARTICIPATION

3.5.1. What we appreciate and what should be improved in child participation

We, as children, we are aware that our participation in matters concerning our lives is vital. When we give our perceptions whether on development actions, family setting, school and elsewhere, it contributes a lot in respecting our rights. That's why we thank Rwanda government because it set up the Children forums at all levels and organize National Children's Summit. We also thank our government because it gave us these spaces where we give our ideas on how our issues should be solved. There are also Organizations that work in child's rights arena. They unite us to speak up about our problems. This is shown by the fact that there are some districts which give children time to express their ideas in planning and budgeting processes. However, even though the government has established children forums, they don't function as they should, because many children get acquainted with these forums only when they are asked to vote the

representatives of their forums. Otherwise, there is no mechanism for us to meet in such forums. Another problem is that many of our fellow children don't have that opportunity to express their ideas because they live in places where these organizations defending children's right don't operate. There are also some local leaders who don't understand why it is important to let children participate, hence they don't even invite us in their meetings when discussing priorities while preparing budget.

3.5.2. Our recommendations with regards to child participation

1. We ask the government to establish a regular mechanism that allow children to meet in their forum while in holidays in which local leaders should participate and hear from our discussions;
2. We ask the government to give our local leaders specific instructions regarding how we should express our ideas;
3. We ask the government to set up for us a newspaper in which we can give our ideas through and write some children stories

3.6. NUTRITION

3.6.1. What we appreciate and what should be improved in nutrition

In Kinyarwanda there is a proverb which literally means "a child dies in his early days." There are our fellow children who get insufficient food or unbalanced diet; hence their growth is hindered. That's why we thank Rwandan Government because it brought up, in some areas, programs like "Shisha Kibondo"¹, "Gikuriro"² also called "igikoni cy'umudugudu (means kitchen of the village). It also provides milk, in other areas, to children for their growth. We also thank our Government because in villages, there are Community Health Workers who instruct parents about balanced diet and do the follow-up of children who suffer from diseases caused by malnutrition. Another thing that we are grateful of is that our country has started a program

¹ Shisha Kibondo is a program aiming at giving flour porridge to children who suffer from malnutrition

² Gikuriro is a program aiming at teaching parents how to prepare balanced diet and how to save money for their families, it is also called "igikoni cy'umudugudu" (means kitchen of the village)

which aims at taking care of babies in their first 1000 days. But we can't ignore the fact there are our fellow children who can't afford a balanced diet because of poverty. Parent's poor mentality also plays a big part in the problem of malnutrition, because some of them might have vegetables, fruits, eggs and milk but choose to sell them and get money instead of feeding their children. All those factors contribute to the deficiency in the growth of our fellow children.

3.6.2. Our recommendations with regards to nutrition

1. We ask our government to organize community sensitizations about combating malnutrition and put much effort in educating parents who lack knowledge about preparing a balanced diet;
2. We ask our government to put forth effort in helping families with stunted children and reaching on all those children with such problems.

4. CONCLUSION

We thank our fellow children who participated in making this report by giving their views. We also thank Children's Voice Today and Save the Children; organizations which helped us since the idea of writing this report came up in our mind. We are also grateful to adults' people who willingly accepted to give us information.

However, we are asking Save the Children and Children's Voice Today to help us translate this report in English and send it to The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and give a copy to government of Rwanda.

APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Chart showing number of children who provided their views

| Categories | Districts | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| | Nyarugenge | Rubavu | Nyaruguru | Gasabo | Gatsibo | Rutsiro | Rusizi | Huye | Musanze | Bugesera | |
| Children members of CVT Grassroots Groups | 158 | 15 | 70 | 45 | 95 | 30 | 40 | 40 | 120 | 30 | 643 |
| Children members of Children's Fora Committees | 6 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 22 |
| Children, "domestic work-leavers" | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Children who still perform "domestic work" | 10 | 5 | 13 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 30 | 0 | 28 | 0 | 91 |
| Street children | 8 | 0 | 8 | 7 | 0 | 2 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 52 |
| Children who live in institutions of children with disability | 45 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 45 |
| Deaf children | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 30 |
| Children who work in Tea plantations | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| Children who work in Mining sites | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Children who work as "Milk Collectors" and take it to dairies | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Children who were reunified with their families from orphanages | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 28 | 0 | 30 |
| Children headed households (CHH) | 0 | 0 | 5 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 5 |
| Children who dropped out the school | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 45 | 0 | 45 |
| Children fostered in families | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 12 |
| Other children | 20 | 10 | 33 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 77 |
| Total | 252 | 64 | 129 | 61 | 95 | 32 | 90 | 70 | 233 | 47 | 1073 |

Appendix 2: Artworks showing some of the acts of violation of children's right in our country

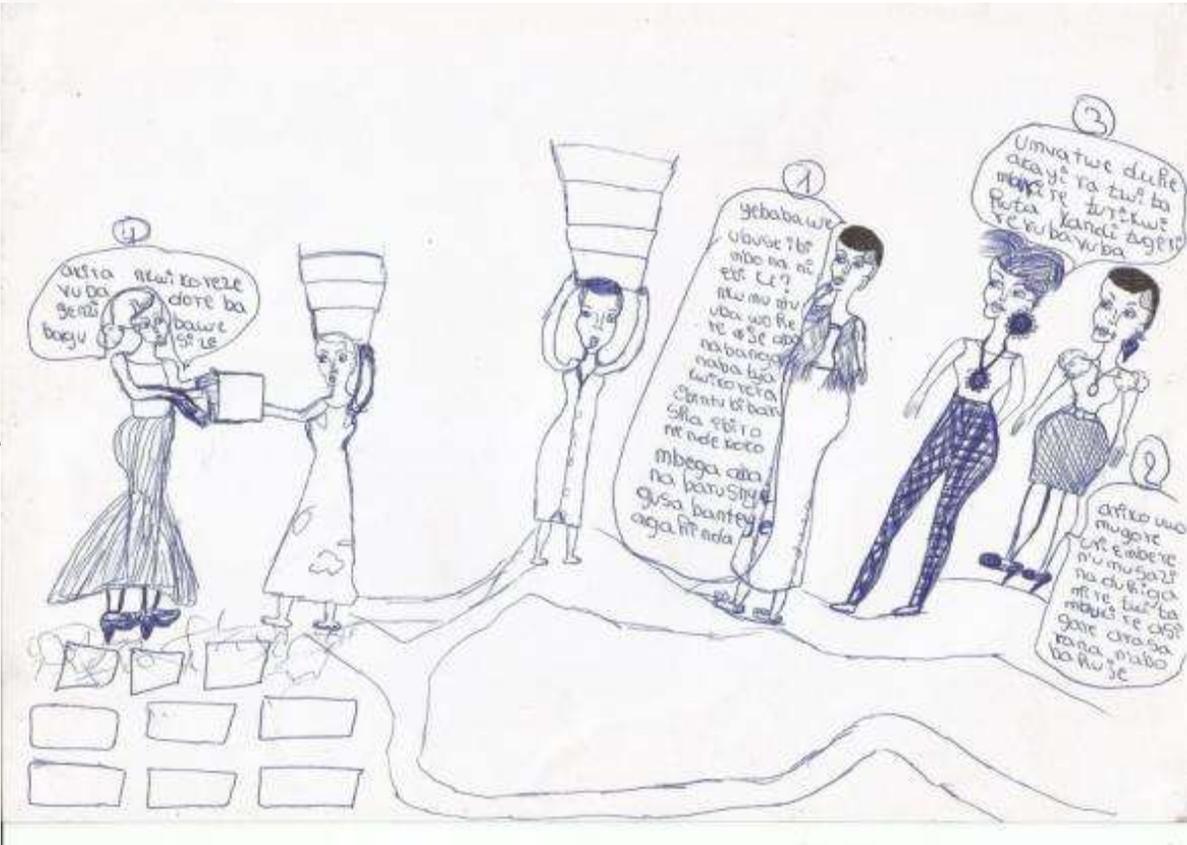
A teacher who uses physical and humiliating punishment children



Children who are used as “Domestic Workers”



Hazardous works given to children as a form of punishments



Street children



Appendix 3: Example of problems spoken out by interviewed children and what we also observed

- A young boy said: *“Before going to school, I go in the woodland to find a stone that I will seat on in the class. When I forget it, I got beaten. I struggle to learn because I’m always anxious about where I will seat. In our class, we don’t have chairs. Only children from rich families buy their own chairs. But me, I sit on the stone”*
- One child said *“We have two sibling children in our neighborhood. Their mom left them at their grandmother’s house and went to Kigali. Because their grandmother also didn’t like them, she sent them to work in the mining site and bring money to her. One day, their boss at the mining sites sacked them; when they reached home, their grandmother also kicked them out. Till now, we don’t know where they live. I just heard that they are now living at their uncle’s home.”*
- Another boy child said to me: *“I lost my mother when I was 4 years old. After my mom’s death, my father moved me to my grandmother’s house. My grandmother also immediately sent me to work in the mining site”*
- Another girl child said me: *“My teachers always kick me out of class because I come to school with no pen.”* I asked her why she doesn’t have a pen, and she replied: *“My mom died, now I live with my dad who is always drunk. I don’t even eat daily.”*