

# TOPIC: Rwanda's Fight Against Corruption: Legal Framework, Effective Sanctions and a Model for Good Governance in Africa

## INTRODUCTION

Corruption constitutes one of the major challenges faced by contemporary States in terms of governance, economic development, and the consolidation of the rule of law. It undermines transparency, weakens public institutions, reduces the effectiveness of public policies, and erodes citizens' trust in public administration. In the African context, this phenomenon has long been a major obstacle to growth and political stability.

However, over the past two decades, Rwanda has distinguished itself as a remarkable example of progress in the fight against corruption, thanks to a combination of political commitment, institutional reforms, and a rigorous legal framework. This transformation is rooted in the national reconstruction effort following the tragic events of 1994, during which the promotion of good governance and public integrity was established as a strategic priority.

The Rwandan anti-corruption legal framework is based on a coherent set of constitutional, legislative, and regulatory norms aimed at preventing, detecting, and sanctioning acts of corruption. The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda enshrines the principles of good governance, accountability, and transparency in the management of public affairs. It notably provides for the existence of independent institutions responsible for promoting integrity and combating abuses of power.



Within this framework, Law No. 54/2018 of 13 August 2018 on fighting against corruption constitutes the central instrument of the legal system, defining corruption-related offenses, prevention mechanisms, and applicable sanctions. This law requires all public and private institutions operating in Rwanda to establish mechanisms for preventing and reporting corrupt practices.

Furthermore, Rwanda has adopted a national anti-corruption policy based on the principle of "zero tolerance," aimed at establishing a culture of integrity within the public service and society.

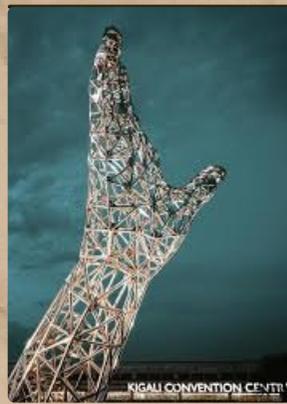
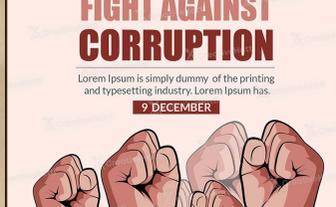
This policy, implemented under the authority of the Office of the Ombudsman, seeks to strengthen transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in the fight against corruption.

The Office of the Ombudsman, a constitutionally independent institution, plays a central role in preventing and investigating acts of corruption, notably through the verification of asset declarations by public officials, public awareness campaigns, and the coordination of anti-corruption strategies.

Rwanda's efforts have produced significant results. The country has recorded a notable reduction in administrative corruption and has established an environment of low impunity, where acts of corruption are detected, prosecuted, and effectively sanctioned. This approach is based on two complementary pillars: prevention and sanction, supported by sustained political will and strengthened institutional capacity.

Beyond legal reforms, Rwanda has also emphasized transforming social norms and perceptions related to corruption, considered a threat to national development and stability. This comprehensive approach, combining legal, institutional, and societal measures, has helped position Rwanda among the most successful African countries in terms of governance and anti-corruption performance.

Thus, the Rwandan experience demonstrates that the establishment of a solid legal framework, accompanied by effective institutions and sustained political commitment, can produce tangible results in the fight against corruption. It now serves as a reference for many African States engaged in governance reforms.



Accordingly, this study aims to examine the legal framework for combating corruption in Rwanda as well as the effectiveness of the sanctions provided, in order to highlight the factors that have enabled the country to achieve significant results and to consolidate its status as a regional model of good governance.

## RWANDA: AN AFRICAN MODEL IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

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he fight against corruption in Rwanda is part of a broader dynamic of State reconstruction and consolidation of good governance. Since the early 2000s, the country has adopted a structured approach based on strong political commitment, a rigorous legal framework, and specialized institutions tasked with preventing and sanctioning acts of corruption. This integrated strategy has enabled Rwanda to position itself as a reference in Africa in terms of governance and public integrity.

### Chapter I: Political Commitment and the National Vision of Zero Tolerance

#### Section 1: The Fight Against Corruption as a Pillar of National Reconstruction

In the aftermath of the tragic events of 1994, Rwandan authorities identified corruption as a factor likely to compromise political stability, economic development, and social cohesion. The fight against this phenomenon was therefore integrated into national reconstruction and development policies.

The national anti-corruption policy, adopted within the framework of Vision 2020, aims to establish a culture of integrity, transparency, and accountability in the management of public affairs. It emphasizes prevention, awareness-raising, and the participation of all stakeholders (public institutions, the private sector, and civil society) in combating corruption.

This approach is based on the principle of "zero tolerance," according to which no act of corruption, regardless of its magnitude, should go unpunished. It also relies on the promotion of ethical and civic values intended to strengthen citizens' trust in public institutions

The results of this strategy are reflected in a notable improvement in governance indicators and a reduction in administrative corruption, which has shifted from a relatively widespread practice to behavior that is socially and legally sanctioned.

#### Section 2: Political Leadership and the Affirmation of Integrity-Based Governance

The effectiveness of the fight against corruption in Rwanda largely depends on consistent and committed political leadership. The highest authorities of the State have made good governance and public integrity national priorities, considering corruption as a threat to the country's stability and development.

This political will has led to the creation of independent institutions responsible for promoting transparency and sanctioning abuses, as well as the adoption of reforms aimed at strengthening discipline within the public administration.

The fight against corruption has also been integrated into performance evaluation mechanisms of public institutions, notably through performance contracts and results-based management systems, thereby enhancing accountability among leaders and public officials.

Furthermore, public communication regarding sanctions imposed on officials found guilty of corruption has reinforced the perception of a low-impunity environment, deterring unlawful behavior and consolidating citizens' trust.

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## Chapter II: A Robust and Modern Anti-Corruption Legal Framework

### Section 1: Constitutional and Legislative Foundations

The Rwandan legal framework for combating corruption is based on a coherent set of constitutional and legislative norms aimed at preventing, detecting, and sanctioning corrupt practices.

The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda enshrines the principles of good governance, accountability, and transparency in the management of public resources. It also provides for the existence of independent bodies tasked with ensuring integrity and ethical conduct in public life.

The cornerstone of this system is Law No. 54/2018 of 13 August 2018 on fighting against corruption, which defines corruption offenses, establishes prevention mechanisms, and specifies the sanctions applicable to perpetrators of corrupt acts. This law requires all public and private institutions operating in Rwanda to implement internal mechanisms for preventing and reporting corruption.

in addition, other legislative instruments govern specific areas such as:

- asset declaration by public officials
- public financial management
- public procurement
- anti-money laundering measures

These legal instruments contribute to strengthening transparency and reducing opportunities for corruption in sensitive sectors.

### Section 2: Integration of International and Regional Standards

Rwanda has also incorporated several international and regional anti-corruption instruments into its domestic legal order, including:

- the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)
- the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption
- regional commitments within the East African Community

This integration reflects Rwanda's determination to align its legal framework with international standards and to actively participate in global anti-corruption efforts.



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Moreover, the country has established institutional coordination mechanisms among the various authorities responsible for combating corruption, including the Office of the Ombudsman, the National Public Prosecution Authority, the National Police, and financial oversight bodies.

This coordinated approach has enhanced the effectiveness of prevention and enforcement actions while promoting coherence in public policies in this field.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INSTITUTIONS AND SANCTIONS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION IN RWANDA

Beyond the adoption of a solid legal framework, Rwanda has established a set of specialized institutions and operational mechanisms designed to ensure the effectiveness of the fight against corruption. This pragmatic approach, based on prevention, detection, and sanction, has significantly reduced impunity and strengthened citizens' confidence in public institutions. The effectiveness of the Rwandan system thus lies in the synergy between independent institutions, oversight mechanisms, and effective sanctions.

### Chapter I: Specialized Institutions at the Core of the Anti-Corruption Effort

#### Section 1: The Central Role of the Office of the Ombudsman

The Office of the Ombudsman constitutes the key institution of Rwanda's anti-corruption framework. Created in 2003 and governed by national legislation relating to the prevention and repression of corruption, this independent body is responsible for coordinating public policies in this field and ensuring their implementation.

Its main functions include:

- prevention and investigation of acts of corruption
- verification of asset declarations of public officials
- public awareness-raising
- formulation of recommendations to the Government
- coordination with national and international institutions

This institution plays a decisive role in promoting transparency and public accountability, contributing to the establishment of a climate of integrity within public administration. Furthermore, the Office of the Ombudsman works closely with other oversight bodies to identify high-risk sectors and propose appropriate corrective measures.

Section 2: Coordination with Judicial and Oversight Bodies

The effectiveness of the fight against corruption in Rwanda also relies on cooperation among the various institutions responsible for law enforcement. These notably include:

- the National Public Prosecution Authority
- the Rwanda Investigation Bureau
- the Rwanda National Police
- the Office of the Auditor General
- the Rwanda Public Procurement Authority

These institutions are respectively involved in the investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of corruption offenses, as well as in overseeing public financial management and public procurement.

Coordination among these bodies is ensured through institutional consultation mechanisms and through the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council, which facilitates the exchange of information and the development of joint strategies.

This collaborative approach prevents fragmentation of actions and strengthens the effectiveness of judicial proceedings.

Chapter II: Prevention and Enforcement Mechanisms

Rwanda has developed preventive mechanisms aimed at reducing opportunities for corruption even before offenses are committed. These mechanisms include:

- mandatory asset declaration by public officials
- adoption of codes of conduct and ethical rules
- transparency in public procurement management
- digitalization of administrative procedures
- citizen participation in monitoring public action

These measures aim to establish an environment in which acts of corruption become more difficult to commit and easier to detect.

The public procurement system has thus been reformed to ensure transparency and fair competition, contributing to the reduction of risks of fraud and abuse.

In addition, national awareness campaigns encourage citizens to report acts of corruption and to actively participate in promoting integrity.

Section 2: Effectiveness of Sanctions and Reduction of Impunity

The credibility of Rwanda’s anti-corruption system also rests on the effective enforcement of sanctions provided by law. National legislation establishes criminal, administrative, and disciplinary sanctions against perpetrators of corruption, regardless of their hierarchical position.

Judicial proceedings initiated against public officials at various levels of administration demonstrate the authorities’ determination to combat impunity and ensure equality before the law.

Rwanda’s strategy is based on two complementary pillars:

- prevention of acts of corruption
- rapid and visible sanction of offenses

This combination has contributed to transforming social perceptions of corruption, which is now regarded as unacceptable behavior subject to severe punishment. The publicity of sanctions imposed on individuals found guilty also plays an important deterrent role and reinforces citizens’ confidence in the judicial system.



III. CONSOLIDATION OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND RWANDA’S REGIONAL LEADERSHIP IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

The significant progress achieved by Rwanda in combating corruption now constitutes a solid foundation for the consolidation of an integrity-based and sustainable governance system. After establishing a robust legal framework and effective institutions, the challenge now lies in preserving these achievements and strengthening Rwanda’s role as a regional model. This phase of consolidation is based on the continued promotion of a culture of integrity and the sharing of best practices across Africa.

Chapter I: Maintaining a Culture of Integrity and Public Accountability  
Section 1: Citizen Participation and Awareness-Raising

The success of the fight against corruption in Rwanda also relies on the active involvement of citizens in promoting transparency and public accountability. Rwandan authorities have implemented awareness programs aimed at informing the population about the harmful consequences of corruption and encouraging the reporting of illicit practices.

National campaigns, community initiatives, and educational programs have contributed to transforming social attitudes toward corruption, which is now perceived as an obstacle to development and social justice.

This citizen mobilization is supported by institutional mechanisms that allow individuals to report acts of corruption and participate in monitoring public action. It constitutes an essential element of Rwanda’s strategy, which considers the population as the first line of defense against corruption.

Moreover, the authorities have sought to change social norms by emphasizing the negative effects of corruption on communities and national cohesion, thereby contributing to the establishment of a sustainable culture of integrity.

Chapter II: Rwanda as a Reference for African States

Section 1: Exportable Best Practices

Rwanda’s experience in combating corruption is now considered a source of inspiration for many African countries engaged in governance reforms.

Several factors explain this success, including:

- consistent political will
- institutional coordination
- an integrated approach combining prevention and sanctions
- the use of technology to enhance transparency
- societal mobilization

This comprehensive strategy has enabled Rwanda to significantly reduce administrative corruption and improve the quality of public services, thereby contributing to economic growth and social stability.

The country has thus demonstrated that a coherent and determined approach can produce tangible results, even in post-conflict contexts.

Section 2: Future Perspectives and Regional Cooperation

Building on its achievements, Rwanda is playing an increasingly important role in promoting good governance within regional and international organizations. Cooperation with neighboring States and international partners makes it possible to share best practices and strengthen collective capacities to combat corruption.



This dynamic contributes to the emergence of a regional environment based on integrity, transparency, and accountability, which are essential elements for attracting investment and promoting sustainable development.

Rwanda thus appears not only as a national example of success, but also as a key actor in the dissemination of good governance standards in Africa.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The fight against corruption today constitutes one of the essential foundations for the consolidation of the rule of law and sustainable development. In this regard, Rwanda’s experience remarkably illustrates the capacity of a State to profoundly transform its institutions and governance practices through strong political will, a rigorous legal framework, and effective institutional mechanisms.

Over the past two decades, Rwanda has implemented a comprehensive strategy based on prevention, repression, and the transformation of social norms, making it possible to significantly reduce administrative corruption and strengthen citizens’ trust in public institutions. The adoption of Law No. 54/2018 on fighting against corruption, the implementation of the national zero-tolerance policy, and the central role of the Office of the Ombudsman demonstrate the authorities’ consistent commitment to transparency and integrity