COUNTRY GUIDE



AFRICA

Rwanda.

Rwanda's Penal Code makes it an offense to fail to help a person in danger when help is possible without risk. Official government pages describe Umuganda, a monthly community work day held on the last Saturday of the month, and the Girinka program that gives cows to poor families. The presidency has publicly honored people who rescued others during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.

DUTY TO HELP A STRANGER
Yes

PROTECTION FOR HELPERS
None found

GIVING AND SERVICE
4 programs and laws

Is there a legal duty to help a stranger?

YES

Article 244 of Law No. 68/2018 of 30/08/2018 (offenses and penalties in general) says a person who fails to assist, or to seek assistance for, a person in danger, while able to do so and when there is no risk to themselves or others, commits an offense. The published English text sets imprisonment of one to three years and a fine of 300,000 to 500,000 Rwandan francs. The 2018 Gazette text was read, and the guide did not check later amendments.

Official Gazette no. Special of 27/09/2018 (Law No. 68/2018 determining offenses and penalties in general), Article 244 (RwandaLII (Official Gazette of the Republic of Rwanda))

Are people who help protected?

NONE FOUND

No statute was found in the sources reviewed that specifically shields people who help in good faith from liability. This does not prove none exists.

How the government promotes giving and service

Umuganda

The Ministry of Local Government says Umuganda takes place on the last Saturday of every month, with residents doing projects such as road work, drainage and clearing bushes, and it calls it a home-grown solution and a long-standing culture. The ministry reports about 24 billion Rwandan francs of output in the previous year.

MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MINALOC)

Revised Umuganda Policy

The Senate's page says the revised policy aims to strengthen monitoring, raise citizen and youth participation, improve planning, and use Umuganda to strengthen social cohesion.

PARLIAMENT OF RWANDA

Girinka (One Cow per Poor Family)

The Ministry of Agriculture says Girinka began in 2006 to alleviate poverty and improve nutrition, and that each beneficiary must pass the first female calf to another selected beneficiary. The ministry reports more than 250,000 cows distributed to vulnerable families at the time of that page.

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND ANIMAL RESOURCES (MINAGRI)

Abarinzi b'Igihango (honoring rescuers)

The presidency's page reports President Kagame hailing four recipients of the Abarinzi b'Igihango award in 2018 for courage and humanity during the 1994

genocide. The award was given by the Unity Club, an association of current and former cabinet members and spouses, so it is not a statutory state honor.

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF RWANDA

Ways to give and volunteer

Rwanda has an active tradition of community service, including the monthly Umuganda day of national work, and the government closely coordinates NGOs. The one thing to know first: legitimate NGOs register with the Rwanda Governance Board.

Check a charity before you give

The government body that registers and oversees local and international NGOs, so you can confirm an organization is approved.

Rwanda Governance Board (RGB)

Give your time

United Nations Volunteers (UNV)
The UN's volunteer program lists international and national volunteer assignments, including some in Rwanda.

In an emergency or a crisis

Rwanda Biomedical Centre call center: 114
The Rwanda Biomedical Centre's toll-free health call center, which the Rwanda Psychological Society points people to in a mental health crisis; emergency numbers are 112 and 912.

Ministry in Charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA)
The government ministry that coordinates disaster response and publishes ways to report and help.

Before you act

- Registered NGOs must operate within agreements with the government, so ask a group for its RGB registration before donating or volunteering. Be wary of unsolicited online appeals and of requests to pay a personal mobile money account. Foreign volunteers usually need the right visa or permit and should work through a registered organization.

This list does not cover local cooperatives, faith-based groups or health-center volunteers, and the Rwanda Red Cross site could not be verified. Checked 2026-10-28. Listing an organization is not an endorsement, and none of them has endorsed this site. Some official sites block automatic checks, so a link may need a second try.

One thing worth knowing

Rwanda combines an explicit criminal duty to assist a person in danger with a recurring national community work day that the government describes as a cultural tradition.

What this does not mean

It was not possible to open the statute or order that makes Umuganda compulsory, so this guide does not state participation rules or penalties. Press reports mention a fine, but that is unverified here. The legal text is the English version of a trilingual Gazette. Not legal advice. This is a plain-language summary of public sources, not legal advice, and it does not rank countries. No government named here has endorsed this site. Not reviewed by a lawyer. Statutes were read in public sources and may have changed. Last checked October 26, 2026.



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