



Rwanda Country Case Study

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Overall approach to digital systems in Public Financial Management (PFM)

Rwandan President Paul Kagame addressed the UN General Assembly in 2022 saying, “The future is digital, and transformation is happening now”. The address touched on emerging technology, artificial intelligence, digital jobs, and investing in innovation. The objectives and agenda were described in the Vision 2020 and Vision 2050 strategies as well as the Smart Rwanda Master Plan¹ that identified key principles such as infrastructure sharing, bring your own device, ICT affordability, Security by design, open by default, etc.

Rwanda has demonstrated a commitment to nationwide digital empowerment. This is exemplified by IREMBO, a centralized eGovernment platform that provides digital services directly to citizens, and also through the digitalization of public administration, including an Integrated Financial Management Information System (iFMIS) unit

The iFMIS now covers the core PFM cycle from planning to budget preparation, budget execution, accounting and payment. It also interfaces with the national payroll system for a more integrated view of budget execution and with the central bank for payment orders. The system is deployed throughout government, including spending agencies and local government. It has more than 12,000 users over 4,000 government agencies.

The iFMIS team is now in charge of new technological challenges outside the iFMIS including a nationwide saving cooperation system for citizens called SACCO (*Saving and Credit Cooperative Society*) and a school management system called SDMS (*School Data Management System*). It is turning into an in-house centre of excellence for the whole government and not only for PFM.

A key focus for Rwanda has been on developing in-house capabilities to develop, use and maintain digital systems for PFM. The majority of Rwanda’s digital systems have been developed using open-source technologies, to avoid licensing costs and dependence on providers. In addition, there has been an increasing focus on project management skills, to ensure the development and deployment of the iFMIS tool but also for coordination between the iFMIS team, Rwanda Information Society Agency (RISA) in charge of planning and coordinating the deployment of the *ICT for Development Agenda*. and end users.

Building a fit-for-purpose FMIS team

This FMIS team was built with the following 6 key principles:

1. **Strong commitment to digitalisation at senior levels of government** results in a significant budget for the iFMIS team, a high level of autonomy, and the ability to ask for arbitrage at Ministry’s level.
2. **Permanent reinforcement and capacity building** with significant training budget including trainings with top-ranking overseas universities overseas (in the US like Carnegie Mellon, in Africa with the African Leadership University and in India, Europe...). This entails a regular review of capacities in comparison with other countries and, more specifically, digitally advanced countries (like South-Korea). The team has 30 people and is still increasing in size.

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https://www.minict.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/minict_user_upload/Documents/Policies/SMART_RWANDA_MASTERPLAN.pdf

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3. **Competitive package**, the team receives, in addition to the salary, a top up, lump sum revised every 3 years adapted to the needs of the market and calculated in US dollars.
4. **Use of external consultants only for very specific, senior profiles** helps to ensure knowledge transfer and a reliance on in-house capabilities. No part of the IFMIS is actually outsourced to a vendor, the team only looks for specific profiles.
5. **Continuous dialogue between iFMIS team and MOF directorates** enables an adaptive and iterative design and development approach. All evolution projects on the iFMIS start with a workshop, this entailed moving away from linear planning, in which specifications are fully defined up front, to adapt them to users' experiences and on-going changes in PFM processes throughout the project lifecycle. The approach is often based on proof-of-concept being tested by end-users before full-scale development.
6. **Cooperation with IT teams in charge of the end-user IT infrastructure** throughout the government structures. In Rwanda, the IT teams of all ministries (in charge of computers and networks used by the end-users) depend upon the Rwandan Information System Agency (RISA). RISA supported the deployment of the IT infrastructure required for iFMIS throughout the country.