

The Parliamentary Committee on Governance, Gender Equality, and Women's Affairs met Rwanda's Minister of Local Government, Dr. Patrice Mugenzi to discuss challenges faced by media in the country. Members of Parliament highlighted media's role in development, yet it has not been given enough attention by the government.

The discussions on Wednesday at parliament focused on a new media policy that has been in the works for some time. This policy is expected to solve many of the sector's problems. However, it still hasn't been finalized, and there is no clear plan for when it will be released.

The lawmakers also looked at the 2023-2024 report from the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB), which showed several major issues. The Rwanda Media Barometer (RMB) 2024 report pointed out that media outlets struggle with limited funding, some journalists lack proper training, and there's a low number of women in the industry.

There's also a concern about the proper use of the Kinyarwanda language in the media.

Hon. Germaine Mukabalisa shared that the RMB report showed that only 35.8% of journalists in Rwanda are women, and gender-based violence against female journalists is a serious problem. She also pointed out that the media sector in Rwanda has not progressed as much as other sectors.

"There are many journalists working without contracts, and over the years, the media industry hasn't improved," she said.

Hon. Mvano Nsabimana Etienne also raised concerns about the lack of oversight of media outlets. Even though many new outlets have opened, he wondered why no one is following up on their progress.

Minister Dr. Mugenzi responded by explaining that the media now falls under the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB), not his Ministry. He assured the lawmakers that RGB is responsible for solving the sector's issues and promised to work on them.



*The Minister of Local Government, Dr. Patrice Mugenzi*

Though the lawmakers were still worried about the delay in the approval of the new media policy, the Minister reassured them that he would discuss the matter with the Minister in the President's office to speed things up.

The RGB's 2023 report showed that 85.7% of media outlets don't own their offices, and many journalists earn less than 200,000 Rwandan Francs per month—much too little to live on. Also, only 42.9% of media outlets provide contracts for their staff, and just 28.6% offer pensions or paid leave.

Despite these challenges, there is good news. The RMB 2024 report shows that Rwanda's media industry has made progress, reaching 76.7% of its development goal. This shows that change is happening.

With the new media policy coming soon, Rwanda's media industry is set to grow and improve. Journalists will be better supported, especially women, and the media will be able to play an even bigger role in the country's development.