Rwandan policymakers and development partners are stepping up efforts to encourage a more balanced division of household responsibilities, saying the country’s economic ambitions depend in part on what happens inside the home.

At a recent meeting bringing together UN Women and local social affairs officials, participants stressed that unpaid care and domestic tasks were long treated as invisible labor yet are central to both family stability and national productivity.

Rwanda’s updated family law, adopted in 2024, formally acknowledges the role of unpaid work in sustaining households. The law covers a wide range of responsibilities, from childcare and elder care to cooking and cleaning duties that often fall disproportionately on one partner.

Officials say that imbalance can limit opportunities, particularly for women, by restricting their ability to engage in paid employment or other economic activities.

Gender and Family Promotion Minister Consolée Uwimana said the country’s push for gender equality must extend beyond public life into everyday family dynamics.

“A household functions best when responsibilities are shared,” she said, noting that recognizing domestic work as valuable is a step toward stronger economic outcomes.

Advocates argue that when men take a more active role at home, it not only reduces pressure on women but also creates space for broader participation in the workforce. Over time, that shift can translate into gains for the wider economy.

While cultural expectations have traditionally shaped how roles are divided, officials say perceptions are beginning to change as more families experience the benefits of cooperation.

Efforts to expand access to basic services including water, electricity and education are also seen as part of the solution, helping to ease the daily workload in many households.

Tikikele Tadele Alemu, representing UN Women in Rwanda, said addressing unpaid labor is essential to inclusive development. Strengthening women’s economic position, she added, goes hand in hand with reducing the demands placed on them at home.

For some families, the shift is already making a difference. In Gasabo district, resident Yvonne Uwamurera said sharing responsibilities with her partner has improved both their relationship and their quality of life.

“When everything is left to one person, it creates stress,” she said. “But when you work together, it becomes easier to move forward as a family.”