

Rwanda has emerged as East Africa's top performer in the 2025 Chandler Good Government Index (CGGI), a global assessment of government capabilities, but the report's omission of several fragile states in the region has raised concerns over data gaps and the visibility of vulnerable countries.

The CGGI, published by the Chandler Institute of Governance, evaluates 120 countries across seven pillars of governance, including leadership, financial stewardship, and institutional strength. Rwanda ranked 59th globally, tied with Armenia, and was recognized as the world's best-performing low-income country. Tanzania followed at 78th, rising four spots from its 2021 ranking, while Kenya and Uganda ranked 94th and 98th, respectively.

"Good governance isn't just about celebrating success," said Rukundo Moses a regional policy analyst in Rwanda. "It's about identifying where help is needed most and making sure those voices are heard."

The report included only 28 African nations, leaving out countries like Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and Somalia. Experts say this underscores the persistent challenge of collecting reliable data in conflict-affected or transitional states, many of which are among the continent's most in need of governance reform and international support.

South Sudan and Somalia, grappling with prolonged instability, have historically ranked low in governance metrics. Burundi and DR Congo, while making progress in peacebuilding and institutional development, still face hurdles in transparency and fiscal management key areas in the CGGI methodology.

Dinesh Naidu, Director of Knowledge at the Chandler Institute, highlighted Africa's mixed but forward-looking picture at the regional launch in Pretoria, South Africa. "As a region, Africa still has significant work to do in improving the quality of governance," he said. "However, the recent progress recorded suggests an upward trajectory. Even in a challenging global environment, high-performance African countries are making governance advances that can inspire peers across the continent."

Mauritius ranked highest in Africa at 51st, followed by Rwanda, Botswana (61st), Morocco (75th), and South Africa (77th). Botswana has improved its judiciary through digital reforms, Morocco has strengthened data transparency and digital infrastructure, and South Africa continues to demonstrate strengths in robust laws

and institutions despite fiscal pressures.

Across Africa, the average governance score remains the lowest among all regions, with financial stewardship continuing to be a major concern amid rising debt burdens. Yet the continent's young population — 70% under age 30 — presents opportunities for governments to unlock growth through jobs, education, and inclusive governance.

“The Chandler Good Government Index is about recognizing progress, fostering peer-to-peer learning, and inspiring improvements,” Naidu said. “It provides governments with practical benchmarks to strengthen institutions and improve service delivery, even in challenging contexts.”

The CGGI, now in its fifth year, serves as a diagnostic tool for governments to track progress, identify gaps, and adopt good practices from peers. While wealth is not a prerequisite for effective governance, Rwanda's strong performance demonstrates the potential for low-income countries to achieve institutional resilience and innovation.