Thirty public and private institutions in Rwanda have been awarded the “RS 560:2023 Gender Equality Seal,” a national certification recognizing organizations that have embedded gender equality principles into their operations, services, or products.

The seal, introduced in 2018 by the Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), aims to promote institutional accountability in advancing gender parity.

GMO Chief Gender Monitor Nadine Gatsinzi Umutoni said the program is a strategic initiative to ensure that gender equality is not only a national policy but also an operational reality in both public and private sectors.

“This is a journey we started in 2018,” Umutoni said. “Today, 30 institutions have met the standards to receive the Gender Equality Seal. Of these, 25 earned the gold category, two received silver, and three bronze, based on how well they integrated gender equity measures into their workplace and services.”

Institutions awarded include government agencies and private companies such as the Rwanda Energy Group (REG), which has created nursing rooms for mothers and flexible work arrangements for breastfeeding parents. REG also launched initiatives to increase the recruitment of young women in technical positions.

The New Times, one of Rwanda’s leading newspapers, has also reported a notable increase in the number of women employed after joining the Gender Equality Seal program.

The Minister of Gender and Family Promotion

The Rwanda Standards Board (RSB), which now oversees the seal’s certification process, said global markets are increasingly asking whether exported products are produced under equitable and inclusive conditions.

“International buyers often ask: Were men and women given equal opportunities in the production process? Was child labor avoided? These are critical concerns that impact whether our products are accepted abroad,” said RSB Director General Raymond Murenzi.

By certifying organizations under the Gender Equality Seal, RSB aims to strengthen the credibility of Rwandan goods in international markets. The certification also aligns with global quality standards, which now include gender and social accountability indicators.

Samuel Munyao, CEO of Silverback Tea Company, said the certification adds value to their products and simplifies trade negotiations.

“When you show buyers a document proving your commitment to gender equality, it builds trust and opens new opportunities,” Munyao said. “This seal validates the positive practices we already uphold.”

Other organizations are working toward certification, including Janiya Investment Ltd, a garment manufacturer in Muhanga District. Human resources manager Samuel Bashayija said they are implementing gender-sensitive recruitment and training programs to ensure both men and women are actively involved in factory operations.

Minister of Gender and Family Promotion Consolée Uwimana said the seal supports Rwanda’s broader development strategy, known as NST2, which prioritizes inclusive governance and socio-economic transformation.

“Institutions must ask: Are our policies and systems inclusive? Do we give equal opportunities to both men and women? Do we ensure both voices are heard equally?” she said. “Promoting gender equality is not a government job alone—it requires the commitment of all sectors.”

Previously administered by GMO in partnership with UNDP, the Gender Equality Seal program has now transitioned to RSB, which will manage certification and compliance going forward.

The government has subsidized the cost of certification to encourage more participation. Certification is free for most institutions, while large companies pay a fee of 100,000 Rwandan francs. The seal is valid for five years.

Officials say the initiative is helping Rwanda strengthen its reputation for gender equity while expanding the global market potential of its locally made products.