

HDI NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2024



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Dear Partners,

Welcome to our August Newsletter!

In this month's edition, we share highlights from our ongoing efforts to strengthen patient rights advocacy among health association leaders and lawyers, equipping them with essential tools to champion patient rights effectively.

We also share some snippets from our celebration of the installation of a new water well in Bugesera District, promoting sanitation and hygiene to enhance community health outcomes. Additionally, we explore how harnessing the power of learning through play is making sexual and reproductive health education more engaging and accessible to young people.

And last but not least, we share some of the highlights from our work addressing misconceptions to improve access to safe abortion. Lastly, we highlight our targeted awareness campaign on Mpox, which seeks to educate key populations about prevention while reducing stigma and improving health outcomes.

We hope that you enjoy this and more highlights. Thank you for your continued partnership in making a difference in the health and rights for all.



STRENGTHENING PATIENT RIGHTS ADVOCACY AMONG HEALTH ASSOCIATION LEADERS AND LAWYERS

In our continued efforts to advocate for patient and health service user rights, this August we organized a four-day workshop that brought together over 30 leaders from various Health Professional Associations and 30 lawyers. The workshop was designed to deepen participants' understanding of the legal frameworks that protect patient rights, improve their ability to litigate cases involving violations of these rights and promote patient-centered legal practices. The workshop was divided into two phases. During the first two days, the focus was on enhancing the capacity of Health Professional Associations.



Here, our Executive Director, Dr. Aflodis Kagaba, emphasized the importance of ensuring that both healthcare providers and patients understand their respective rights and responsibilities. “We have made it our duty to ensure that patient rights are respected and that healthcare providers understand their responsibilities. Patient rights cannot be fully observed unless both parties are aware of what they need to know.” he said.

The workshop began with an in-depth exploration of the ethical principles guiding the medical profession and a review of both national and international legal frameworks governing patient rights. Key topics discussed included patient safety, confidentiality, and the legal implications of medical errors. These discussions were aimed at equipping participants with

the necessary knowledge to uphold high standards of care while maintaining legal compliance.

A notable discussion, led by Christian Garuka, a lawyer, centered around the shared responsibility between Doctors and Pharmacists in explaining prescription details to patients. Many participants argued that due to a shortage of clinical pharmacists, doctors should assume full responsibility for providing this information. Other challenges raised included the absence of consent forms in many health centers, which undermines patient confidentiality, and the lack of clear channels for disseminating laws such as the Medical Liability Law, resulting in a gap in legal awareness among healthcare providers.

Recommendations arising from these discussions included the need for a system to effectively disseminate legal information to both healthcare professionals and the public. Additionally, participants suggested integrating legal education into medical school curricula to better prepare future doctors with a strong understanding of the legal frameworks that govern their profession. “There is an evident gap in knowledge of the Medical Liability Law. There’s a need to embark on disseminating laws and putting in place a system to effectively inform both the public and medical practitioners.

Additionally, medical schools should incorporate legal education, specifically focusing on its relevance to health and medical practices.” The importance of documenting medical procedures was also emphasized.

Participants noted that thorough record-keeping not only protects healthcare providers from legal risks but also ensures that patient safety remains the priority. Munyangango Mary from Kacyiru Hospital remarked, “Doctors should document all procedures performed on patients to protect themselves legally, but this should not overshadow their primary duty to prioritize the well-being and care of patients.”



“

Most lawsuits filed against health professionals are not about technical skills but about soft skills. Healthcare is an art, and a good provider communicates clearly, helping patients understand their condition and the care they'll receive in the simplest language possible. When patients are informed and involved in their care, they're more understanding if complications arise.

- Rtd.Col. Dr. Afrika Gasana Guido
Chairperson Rwanda Medical and Dental Council (RMDC)

DIALOGUE AMONG ADVOCATES

The second half of the workshop shifted its focus to lawyers, with the goal of enhancing their understanding of legal frameworks related to patient rights. Joyce Mukakamali, Project Development Officer at the Rwanda Bar Association, opened this session by highlighting the importance of equipping legal professionals with the tools necessary for effective advocacy.

“Our goal is to equip you with the tools needed for effective advocacy, ensuring that your clients’ rights are upheld and justice is served,” she said.

The legal session also addressed complex issues around patient consent, particularly concerning vulnerable groups such as separated minors, street children, and illiterate patients. Participants raised concerns about who should provide consent for these individuals and how the law handles situations where a critically ill patient refuses treatment. The discussion also delved into the Law on Medical Professional Liability Insurance, with particular emphasis on Article 11, which requires a guardian’s consent before treating a minor.



However, gaps in the law were noted, particularly in cases where a minor’s guardians or parents disagree on treatment or where separated minors and street children are involved. Further discussions explored challenges faced by patients unable to pay hospital bills, the lack of communication around financial difficulties, and the inadequate medical care provided in prisons and rehabilitation centers. Public health specialist Theobald Mporanyi led a session on abortion values clarification and attitude transformation, encouraging legal professionals to critically examine their personal beliefs surrounding safe abortion.



He urged them to ensure that their conduct aligns with human rights principles and legal frameworks. During this session, participants engaged in a lively debate about patient rights, particularly in relation to safe abortion.

Throughout the workshop, key recommendations emerged, including advocating for patients who cannot afford hospital bills, prioritizing communication regarding financial challenges before treatment, and improving healthcare services in prisons and rehabilitation centers. Participants also called for joint dialogues between

healthcare professionals and lawyers to foster mutual understanding and collaboration in upholding patient rights.

The workshop concluded with a call to action for continued collaboration between legal and healthcare professionals, emphasizing the need for stronger advocacy for patient rights and better-informed healthcare centers. This event marked a crucial step in bridging the gap between the legal and healthcare sectors, aiming to ensure the protection of patient rights across all levels of care.



PROVIDING WATER TO THE COMMUNITY IN BUGESERA DISTRICT

This August, we were excited to partner with the Angel Family Fund to switch on the taps supplying fresh, clean water to residents of Rweru Sector, Bugesera District for the first time in eight years. Located at Ecole Primaire Nzangwa, this solar-powered water well not only serves the school, but also supports two other water collection points that were but also supports



two other water collection points that were set up in the nearby village, ensuring access to clean water for the broader community of over 300 households. Robert Angel of the Angel Family Fund and a resident of Cyeru celebrate shortly after the water taps were switched on for the first time.

The water well, a collaboration effort between our organisation and the Angel Family Fund, is a huge leap forward in tackling different challenges including sanitation issues, waterborne diseases, and malnutrition. Residents of a nearby village fetch water at one of the collection points connected to the newly established well. During his opening remarks, our Executive

Director, Dr Aflodis Kagaba, emphasised the importance of the ongoing partnership with the Angel Family Fund and the significance of the location of the water well. "The Angel Family Fund has been a crucial partner in our mission, exemplified by the construction of this nearly Rwf60 million water well.

I am glad that this project is in the district where HDI-Rwanda first began its activities almost two decades ago. This well not only honours our organisation's history, but also reflects our belief that access to clean water is fundamental for community growth and prosperity." he said.

BENEFICIARIES SHARE THEIR VIEWS

Joseline Uwimana, a resident of Rweru Sector, shared her relief and optimism about the new water well, saying that she and her children have been spared the burden of walking long distances searching for clean water.

Getting access to water has been a struggle. Even when we would manage to reach water sources, the water would be dirty and unusable. My children developed health issues because of that. It is a relief to know that my children can drink clean water and get to school on time.



Fillette Uwase, a student at Ecole Primaire Nzangwa, expressed her joy about the new water well's impact on her daily life since she is now going to have time to do her homework and play with other children.



I have been waking up at 4am to fetch water before school. I would get to school late. Now, with the water well close to our homes and school, I can manage my time better.



In his remarks, the Executive Secretary of Nemba Cell, Innocent Uwiragiye, highlighted the broader benefits of the project.

“ We are very happy, having clean water means we can now provide food for the students at school without delays; this new water well will significantly improve the quality of life for our community, and we are grateful for this support.

Innocent Uwiragiye

Executive Secretary of Nemba Cell



Robert Angel, the Founder of Angel Family Fund, shared his personal connection to the project, emphasizing the importance of having clean water and how honored he is to be a part of the project.

“My family and I have been coming to Rwanda for 16 years, and this country holds a special place in our hearts. Seeing the faces of the children and their families and understanding what fresh water will mean to them—not just in terms of hygiene but also in preventing illness—is

profoundly moving. We are honoured to be part of this journey and look forward to continuing our support for the people of Rwanda,” he declared.

Following the water well inauguration, the next steps involve implementing comprehensive programmes to drive behaviour change and promote hygiene. Key areas include handwashing, safe water storage, proper latrine use, food hygiene, personal hygiene, as well community engagement in protecting the water sources.



HARNESSING THE POWER OF LEARNING THROUGH PLAY TO PROVIDE SRH EDUCATION

In August, we partnered with Cricket Builds Hope (CBH) to host four-week inclusive cricket camps in Gahanga Sector in which we provided safe and fun age appropriate sexual and reproductive health content embedded in cricket sessions. The camp aimed to raise awareness of SRH among adolescents while also offering English lessons to improve their communication skills. Drawing on lessons from previous camps, this edition was open to boys and girls aged 7 to 18, regardless of their cricketing

ability, ensuring broad participation. Over the four weeks, 2,108 adolescents—980 girls and 1,128 boys—took part, with most participants falling in the 7–11 age group. To encourage responsibility and teamwork, participants were organized into groups of 10, with older children assuming leadership roles. Fridays were reserved for more structured cricket games, allowing participants to deepen their understanding of the sport while exploring their creative talents through various activities.



Mornings focused on younger children, blending fun and learning as they grasped the basics of cricket alongside English lessons. Afternoons catered to older adolescents, honing their cricketing skills while offering SRH education on key topics, including puberty and the menstrual cycle, pregnancy, consent, communication in relationships, gender equality with an emphasis on positive masculinity, contraception, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). By splitting the camp into two shifts—morning and afternoon—we ensured that all participants received focused, age-

appropriate sessions in a safe, supportive environment. In addition to the cricket and SRH lessons, we prioritized academic support by offering English language lessons Monday through Thursday.

Fridays were reserved for more structured cricket games, allowing participants to deepen their understanding of the sport while exploring their creative talents through various activities. Lead English Teacher Justin Mugabo credited the success of the camp to the unwavering support of parents.



“This wouldn’t have been possible without parents ensuring their children attended every day, and for that, we’re incredibly grateful,” he noted. Our ASRH Facilitator Jeannette Niyomugabo emphasized the critical role these lessons play in mitigating risks like teenage pregnancy.

“Educated adolescents are our frontline defense against teenage pregnancy. The knowledge they gain here is transformative, and we believe these young people will become ambassadors in their communities, sharing what they’ve learned with peers who couldn’t attend.”

The camp concluded with a celebratory event attended by over 500 adolescents and 150 parents, alongside local leaders and partners.

The adolescents demonstrated their cricketing skills and showcased what they had learned through debates, traditional dance, singing, acrobatics, and SRH role-playing. We also partnered with a local health center to offer free HIV testing to parents, with 40 parents taking advantage of the service.



REFRAMING BELIEFS TO ENHANCE SAFE ABORTION CARE SERVICE DELIVERY

This August, we partnered with RBC to engage key opinion leaders, religious leaders, local authorities, and security officials in Karongi and Rusizi districts in discussions on Maternal and Newborn Health (MNH), Comprehensive Abortion

Care (CAC), and Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ASRH&R). A significant part of these discussions was the Values Clarification and Attitude Transformation (VCAT) sessions.

UNPACKING VCAT

VCAT is an evidence-based approach designed to challenge deeply ingrained attitudes and beliefs surrounding sensitive issues like abortion and adolescent SRH.

Through interactive sessions, participants were encouraged to examine their personal values and how they might affect decision-making and service provision related to SRHR.

They were challenged to examine their attitudes, values, realities and choices, all which are crucial in unpacking the stigma surrounding comprehensive abortion care. Religious and local leaders, alongside security officials, were guided to reflect on how their roles can either support or hinder access to these essential services. Discussions were also held around the legal framework governing safe abortion in Rwanda, with an emphasis on balancing cultural and religious beliefs with the legal right to safe and comprehensive abortion services.

Beyond abortion, the VCAT sessions also addressed broader patient rights, including adolescents' right to SRHR information and services. Participants explored how negative attitudes and biases often result in barriers to accessing services for young people and other marginalized groups.

We discussed how the enforcement of patient rights, particularly in the context of sexual and reproductive health, can promote dignity and equitable access for all.

PRIORITIZING MATERNAL AND NEWBORN HEALTH

Our discussions also highlighted the importance of improving access to quality antenatal care, skilled birth attendance, and postnatal services. Emphasis was placed on addressing barriers such as geographical challenges, limited healthcare infrastructure, and socio-cultural factors that impede women's access to timely and adequate care such as deeply rooted gender norms that prioritize women's household responsibilities over their health, leading to delayed care-seeking behaviors.



Others include stigma around discussing reproductive health, especially among adolescents and unmarried women, which can also prevent them from accessing the necessary maternal care.

Additionally, decision-making power often rests with male family members, which can also delay a woman's ability to seek urgent medical attention during pregnancy or childbirth.

The discussions, coupled with the VCAT methodology, helped foster greater understanding of the need for compassionate, rights-based approaches to SRHR.

Stakeholders left with actionable insights on how they can transform their attitudes and practices to better support the implementation of Rwanda's legal and policy commitments to SRHR, with a special focus on adolescent health, patient rights, and comprehensive abortion care.

Courtesy Visits with Our Partners



This August, we were happy to host Justice Dr. Aimé Muyoboke Karimunda, Rector of the Institute of Legal Practice and Development (ILPD), along with Dr. Yves Sezirahiga, Vice-Rector in Charge of Academic and Research Affairs. Our discussions explored potential partnerships focused on advancing health and human rights.



We had the pleasure of hosting Marieke van der Plas, the Executive Director of Rutgers International. Our conversations explored the state of SRHR within the Rwandan context as well as our ongoing advocacy efforts, highlighting the importance of regional collaboration in identifying and addressing the key gaps and opportunities in SRHR across the region.

STAKEHOLDERS SPEAK:

HDI Rwanda @HDIRwan... · 12 Aug

This #InternationalYouthDay2024, we're happy to highlight our partnership with @Root_Foundation in Batsinda Cell, @SectorKinyinya, where we introduced adolescents and young people to the power of leveraging digital tools to access sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information [Show more](#)



UWIMBABAZI عيسى @UWIMBAB74011545

Replying to @HDIRwanda @Root_Foundation and @SectorKinyinya

Wow, it's amazing to see so many youths gathering to learn and be educated about #SRHR. This proactive approach is crucial for reducing unwanted pregnancies and the act of testing for STDs like #HIV is vital. Let's work together to promote and protect our new generations

Post your reply

NIWEMWIZA Ann... @Annemwiza

Buri gihe iyo bavuze uburenganzira bw'umurwayi hari akabazo kanyikaraga mu bwonko. Kuki bavuga ngo umurwayi afite uburenganzira bwo kwanga kuvurwa? ese aba yaje kwa muganga kugira ate? hanyuma se ubwo kubimwemerera ntibisa no kubona uwiyahura ukamwihorera akiyambura ubuzima motif ngo yabishisemo? Ahubwo se aramutse wenda asanganywe uburwayi bwo mu mutwe ariko bitazwi cg se akanakigira ako kanya mu buryo bumwe cg ubundi ubwo icyemezo cy'e kigashingirwaho nta byaba byirengagijwe nkana? Kugeza ubu sindumva icyo iyi ngingo imara mu burenganzira bw'umurwayi. Harya ubwo uwamuvura ku ngufu we ahanishwa iki? Mwumve ko niteguye kwiga, nimuze mumpugure mutamputaza babyeyi dore sindafata ka Lanshi ka mu gitondo

HDI Rwanda @HDIRwanda · 28 Aug

Twagize ibiganiri byiza kandi birimo impaka nyinshi ziteye amatsiko hagati y'abaganga n'abanyamategeko ku byerekeye uburenganzira bw'umurwayi.

HDI Rwanda @HDIRwan... · 14 Aug

Iyo amashereka atinze kuboneka, ubigenza ute? Jeannine, umubyeyi w'abana batatu, aratanga inama.



2 13 43 31.9K

You reposted

Mutuyimana Emilienne @Emmilymut1

Replying to @HDIRwanda

Gushyira umwana ku ibere mu isaha ya mbere nyuma yo kubyara, bituma umubyeyi ahembeera kdi na nyababyeyi ikegerana vuba, bityo bikagabanya kuva k'umubyeyi. Konsa kenshi kdi ugaha umwana ibere rimwe akarihumuza aho kuyahinduranya ni ingenzi cyane!

11:22 AM · 15 Aug 24 · 253 Views

Andrew Gasozi Ntwali @AndrewGasoziNtw

Thank you @HDIRwanda for exploring more avenues including academia to build awareness about #Health & #HumanRights

HDI Rwanda @HDIRwanda · 29 Aug

This afternoon, we were happy to host Justice Dr. Aimé Muyobohe Karimunda, Rector of the Institute of Legal Practice and Development (ILPD) (@LegalPracticeRW), along with Dr. Yves Sezirahiga, Vice-Rector...



HDI WISHES TO THANK OUR PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

- AMPLIFYCHANGE
- ANGEL FAMILY FUND
- BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH IMPERATIVE
- CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE
- CRICKET BUILDS HOPE
- DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO RWANDA
- EAHP
- EQUIMUNDO
- EXPERTISE FRANCE
- FEMNET
- FOSI/OSIEA
- FP2030
- GIZ
- GLIHD
- GLOBAL HEALTH CORPS
- IMBUTO FOUNDATION
- IMRO
- IPPF
- JHPIEGO/MCGL
- MEDECIN DU MONDE
- MEDICAL DOCTORS FOR CHOICE
- MEDICAL STUDENTS FOR CHOICE
- MINISTRY OF GENDER AND FAMILY PROMOTION
- MINISTRY OF HEALTH
- MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
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