

HDI NEWSLETTER

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Dear Partners,

In this edition of our newsletter, we share some updates that highlight the transformative power of collaboration and proactive policymaking, reflecting our commitment to fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

We're excited to share inspiring stories that highlight the collective efforts of individuals and organizations dedicated to breaking barriers and driving positive change. We explore the initiatives taken to redefine policies within Gender Promotion Technical Groups, aiming for a more comprehensive understanding of gender-related issues.

We also spotlight the incredible partnerships forged with women church leaders, acknowledging them as influential agents of positive change, and working with them to amplify our impact, foster understanding, tolerance, and acceptance within communities.

We also share details from our knowledge transfer where we explored the strategies employed to enhance organizational capacity and foster innovation and growth.

We also share the details of our engaging conversations with District leaders on combating sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse. In these stories and more, we invite you to reflect on how, together, we can continue to drive change.

Thank you for being part of our journey. Let's empower change and shape a tomorrow where everyone, regardless of gender, background, or circumstance, can flourish.



DIALOGUE WITH WOMEN CHURCH LEADERS ON PREVENTION OF GBV AND UNSAFE ABORTION

This August, we participated in the Anglican Pastors' and Bishops' Wives Conference, where we addressed over 700 women from the Anglican community on different topics including the prevention of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and unsafe abortions.

The conference provided a platform for open discussions on these complex issues including maternal mortality, teenage pregnancies, substance abuse, child stunting, and poverty,

among others and their impact on the holistic development of families and communities and the targeted interventions.

Additionally, the conference sought to equip the church leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary to facilitate improved communication between parents and children, provide counseling services, and promote prevention programs within their churches and communities.

As trusted leaders in their communities with influence extending beyond the church, the leaders sought to use their immense potential as agents of positive change, foster collaboration among women leaders, share best practices, resources, and support networks for effective community engagement and policy advocacy.

During the conference, Theobald Mporanyi, representing HDI, addressed various crucial Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) topics, including the Ministerial Order on Safe Abortion and Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

He emphasized the interconnection between these issues and the broader struggle for gender equality and human rights for all. Mporanyi reminded the leaders that the Ministerial Order on Abortion aimed to ensure that women and girls have access to safe medical procedures, reducing the risk of complications or death associated with untrained providers.

He also highlighted the far-reaching consequences of GBV on families and the Rwandan community, emphasizing the pivotal role women church leaders play in advancing efforts to combat it.



Women church leaders play a pivotal role as catalysts for change, wielding the influence to empower individuals within communities to identify, report, and prevent instances of GBV. This can only be effective if we all work together to create safe spaces for survivors, offer support, and challenge harmful cultural norms and stereotypes.

- Theobald Mporanyi

During the insightful discussions, Dr. Madeline Mukeshimana from UNFPA-Rwanda raised a deeply concerning issue plaguing society: the prevalence of violence driven by distorted beliefs and its profound repercussions. She shared a distressing example of adults living with HIV who mistakenly believe that engaging in sexual intercourse with a minor will cure them of their illness.

Dr. Mukeshimana highlighted the significant challenges these convictions pose for young women, including suicidal thoughts, an elevated risk of contracting HIV, unintended pregnancies, and unsafe abortions.

She stressed the urgent need to address these misguided beliefs and suggested various strategies for confronting such situations, whether on a personal level, when dealing with a child, or when providing support to someone in need.

In her concluding remarks, she issued a passionate call to action, urging all the participants to unite in efforts to educate, raise awareness, and eradicate these harmful beliefs. She emphasized that this is the best way to lay the foundation for a safer, more empathetic society that nurtures the well-being of all its members.



On the sidelines of the conference, the women church leaders actively engaged with the HDI family planning stand, where they asked questions around the different traditional and modern family planning methods. They demonstrated a genuine interest in understanding family planning raising questions about various aspects including the accessibility and affordability. By asking crucial questions, these women church leaders not only enhanced their own understanding but also significantly contributed to the broader discourse on family planning, highlighting the importance of informed discussions and collaborative efforts in ensuring that family planning services are accessible and affordable for everyone.



STRENGTHENING KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PROCESSES AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

In August, we organized a transformative three-day workshop to initiate the development and implementation of a Knowledge Transfer and Succession Plan. This initiative aligns with Strategic Objective 3 of HDI's Strategic Plan 2018-2024: 'To Pursue Institutional Growth.'

The workshop aimed to strategize optimal methods for identifying and nurturing individuals within our organization, preparing them to assume pivotal roles when the need arises. Our team collaborated closely with a seasoned consultant during this workshop to craft a comprehensive and easy-to-implement succession plan.

This plan has been designed to ensure a seamless leadership transition, minimize disruptions, and uphold HDI's unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional services to the rights holders we serve.

Throughout the three days, workshop participants engaged in dynamic sessions, digging into HDI's journey from its inception.

This workshop provided an exciting opportunity for staff members to gain valuable insights into HDI's evolution, showcasing its transformative growth and highlighting pivotal milestones that have shaped its journey.

Participants explored fundamental concepts and benefits of knowledge transfer and succession planning.

This deep dive provided invaluable insights into why these processes are fundamental to our organization's sustainability and success. In addition to theoretical discussions, participants actively engaged in lively

conversations about methods for identifying key individuals possessing invaluable institutional knowledge.

They explored effective strategies to engage these knowledge holders, ranging from mentoring and documentation to on-the-job training.

To enrich the learning experience, the consultant thoughtfully designed the workshop to be interactive and engaging.

Participants had the opportunity to apply their newfound knowledge through group activities and real-world case studies, ensuring practical takeaways from the workshop.

At the workshop's conclusion, participants collaborated to contribute to a comprehensive succession plan. Guided by the consultant, they identified potential successors, assessed their skills, and formulated personal development plans.

An Ongoing Process

The process to develop our knowledge transfer strategy and succession plan involve three interconnected stages, including co-creating the transition process and developing the knowledge transfer strategy and succession plan with key HDI internal stakeholders.

Additionally, internal and external assessments of HDI's context are being conducted through engagements with key internal and external stakeholders to gather their perspectives. Another integral part of the process is

the development of transition planning and succession management policies for management, staff, and the board. This involves institutionalizing the implementation of the knowledge transfer strategy and succession plan through organizational policies, ensuring a sustainable and seamless transition process.

Today, internal knowledge transfer processes are already rolling so far, we have created a centralized digital repository where employees can access HDI information.



We have also started pairing experienced and new employees to create mentorship collaborations where experienced employees provide one-on-one knowledge transfer, sharing their expertise and insights with newer team members.

We are also utilizing tools that allow real-time collaboration, document sharing, and communication to enhance team collaboration and knowledge sharing.



ENGAGING LOCAL LEADERS ON COMBATING SEXUAL HARASSMENT EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

In collaboration with Rwanda Men's Resource Center (RWAMREC) and African Youth and Adolescents Network (AfriYAN), this August, we embarked on a transformative journey to empower Gatsibo District officials and members of security organs with the essential knowledge and tools they

need to combat Sexual Harassment, Exploitation, and Abuse and address Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Over the course of two days, discussed a wide range of topics, including the root causes of GBV, the psychological impact on survivors, and the legal framework surrounding GBV in Rwanda.

The training hoped to shed light on the foundations of inequality and injustice, to illuminate the path towards safer, more equitable communities, and to equip those on the frontlines of safeguarding society with the wisdom and expertise required to protect the vulnerable, amplify the voices of the survivors, and create a world where every individual's rights and dignity are upheld, regardless of gender or age.

Participants were encouraged to recognize the warning signs and understand the impact these vices can have on individuals and the community as a whole. The training also emphasized the importance of establishing clear policies and procedures to handle complaints and support survivors. Experts provided guidance on creating safe reporting mechanisms and ensuring confidentiality, a crucial step in encouraging individuals to come forward with their experiences.

The interactive exercises allowed participants to practice responding to hypothetical scenarios, enabling them to develop effective strategies for addressing harassment and exploitation within their respective domains.

The initiative also emphasized the significance of collaboration among local leaders, law enforcement, and support organizations to create a network of resources to assist survivors and hold perpetrators accountable.

One of the most impactful sessions revolved around the country's progressive policies and laws aimed at eradicating GBV. Participants learned about Rwanda's legal framework, and how to effectively implement these laws in their communities.

The training also highlighted the vital role of security organs in safeguarding the rights and well-being of all citizens, emphasizing their responsibility in addressing GBV cases promptly and sensitively.

The Facilitators led sessions where Sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse were carefully examined. Through role-playing exercises and open discussions, participants gained a deeper understanding of the particulars around these issues and explored strategies to prevent and respond to them effectively.

At the core of our training program, the participants were encouraged to view GBV through a human rights lens, understanding that every individual has the right to live free from violence and discrimination. This perspective fostered a sense of responsibility among attendees to protect and promote these rights within their communities.

The participants looked at effective ways to promote child rights including comprehensive education programs that empower children with knowledge about their rights and help them recognize abusive situations. It also involves fostering open communication between children and trusted adults, enabling them to report any form of harassment or abuse without fear.

They discussed the child rights legal frameworks in place and how they protect children, hold perpetrators accountable and provide rehabilitation for survivors. They discussed the importance of promoting positive masculinity as a powerful tool in dismantling the harmful structures that perpetuate sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse, leading to safer and more equitable communities for all.

They discussed methods where men and boys embody values of respect, boundaries, and consent, and be active allies in challenging and preventing harassment and abuse.

The participants discussed how men can embrace positive masculinity and serve as role models, helping to create a culture where survivors feel supported, believed, and empowered to come forward.

Throughout the training, we emphasized the importance of inclusivity, encouraging active participation from all genders and age groups. AfriYAN's involvement added a dynamic youth perspective, inspiring young advocates to play a vital role in challenging social norms and fostering change.

As the program concluded, we witnessed a profound transformation in the attitudes and behaviors of our participants. They had become champions of gender equality and GBV prevention, ready to take their newfound knowledge and skills back to their communities.



EMPOWERING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS WITH THE TOOLS TO NAVIGATE SAFE SEX CHOICES

We concluded August by honoring an invitation to engage with first-year students at the Rwanda Institute for Conservation Agriculture (RICA) about sexual reproductive health and rights. The purpose of this session was to arm the next generation of innovators with the knowledge and tools

required to make informed decisions about their sexual health. The session covered a wide range of topics, spanning from safe sex practices to contraception, legal protections, and the crucial subject of consent.

The collaboration between HDI, with its extensive expertise in health and rights, and RICA's unwavering commitment to holistic education, created a perfect platform for students to participate in an open and informative dialogue. Throughout the session, HDI facilitators placed a strong emphasis on the importance of safe sex practices.

The facilitators addressed the students' questions and addressed their concerns about the variety of contraceptive methods available to them, including condoms, birth control pills, intrauterine devices (IUDs), and more.

Understanding their options and how each method is used provides the students with the tools they need to make informed decisions that align with their individual circumstances, ensuring their ability to engage in consensual and protected sexual activity. Beyond raising awareness about safe sex practices,

the session looked at the legal framework designed to safeguard individuals' sexual reproductive health. The facilitators provided the students with comprehensive information about their rights and protections under the law, covering issues related to sexual harassment, assault, and consent. This segment aimed to empower students, enabling them to know their rights and those of others and establish personal boundaries in their daily lives.

The collaboration between HDI and RICA was a statement to the pivotal role of comprehensive sexual reproductive health education in shaping a healthier and more enlightened society.

As these young adults embark on the next phase of their education, they carry with them the knowledge required to promote a culture founded on respect, responsibility, and empowerment within their communities.



STRENGTHENING CSO PARTICIPATION IN GENDER TECHNICAL GROUPS

This August, we partnered with Rwanda Men's Resource Centre (RWAMREC) and African Youth and Adolescents Network (AfriYAN) Rwanda, to convene a meeting of over 20 participants drawn from youth and women-led Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to increase their participation in different gender promotion technical working groups in Rwanda. The participants included 10 from youth-led partner CSOs, 5 from women-led CSOs and 5 from partner marginalized groups and Faith-based organizations working on gender promotion and GBV prevention.

The consultative meeting, convened under the Generation Gender Program, aimed to increase the number of youth and women-led Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) participating in the reframing of gender-related public policy within child development, gender promotion and Gender-Based Violence prevention and response, gender equality, and women's empowerment technical working group sub-clusters.

Opening the meeting, the Director-General of Gender Promotion and Women Empowerment at the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, Silas Ngayaboshya touched

on the value of collaboration between CSOs and government institutions in effectively addressing gender-related issues. He explained that the collaboration between these two entities harnesses a diverse range of expertise, resources, and perspectives, creating an opportunity for positive change.

He reminded that CSOs often possess grassroots insights and an in-depth understanding of the specific needs and challenges faced by women and young people while the government has the resources necessary to implement policies and enforce laws that can promote gender equality.



Together, both the government and CSOs can continue to further improve strategies and legislation that not only protect the rights of all individuals but also work toward eliminating gender disparities. This collaboration is vital for building a more equitable and inclusive society where everyone can fully participate and thrive.

- Silas Ngayaboshya, Director-General of Gender Promotion and Women Empowerment at the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion

The participants also shared noteworthy practices and success stories from organizations that have effectively enhanced the participation of women and youth, offering insights into the strategies and approaches that have yielded results.

They touched on capacity building with participants raising the need for more training and mentorship programs designed to equip women and youth with the skills and knowledge needed for effective engagement in technical discussions.

Furthermore, participants explored avenues for networking and collaboration among organizations and individuals sharing common goals, aiming to amplify the impact of efforts to enhance participation. They discussed effective communication strategies for reaching out to women and youth-led organizations and raising awareness about the significance of their involvement in gender-related technical groups.

To conclude the meeting, participants discussed strategies of how they can translate the ideas they had discussed into action and to ensure accountability and effectiveness in their collective efforts.





HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF YOUNG LEGAL PROFESSIONALS ON SRHR ADVOCACY

To harness the immense potential of these budding advocates, we collaborated with the Certa Foundation and Wellspring Foundation to organize a specialized training program focused on advocacy for SRHR and human rights.

This program was meticulously designed to equip young legal professionals with the knowledge and skills required to become effective champions of SRHR and human rights.

The training provided participants with a comprehensive understanding of SRHR, encompassing its legal, ethical, and public health dimensions. This knowledge empowers young professionals to engage in informed and impactful discussions and advocacy efforts.

Our expert facilitators guided participants in navigating both national and international legal frameworks related to SRHR, including key conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action.

Furthermore, our facilitators went beyond simply imparting facts; they trained these young professionals in the art of developing effective advocacy strategies. This encompassed drafting compelling legal arguments, engaging with policymakers, and fostering collaborations with civil society organizations. We also addressed the crucial skill of communicating complex legal and human rights concepts to diverse audiences, including the media, lawmakers, and the

public. Sensitivity in SRHR advocacy was emphasized, highlighting the importance of approaching these issues with empathy, cultural sensitivity, and a profound respect for human dignity.

Our facilitators also provided guidance on building professional networks and collaborating with like-minded organizations and individuals. This not only opens doors to connect with experienced advocates but also lays the foundation for enduring partnerships.

To reinforce their learning, participants were exposed to real-life cases and engaged in advocacy exercises, allowing them to apply their newfound knowledge in practical scenarios. This hands-on experience aimed to enhance their confidence and competence in advocacy work.

Armed with knowledge and skills, these empowered young advocates have committed to speaking up for marginalized and vulnerable populations, raising awareness about SRHR issues, combating stigma, and fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

STAKEHOLDERS SPEAK:

COMBATING SEXUAL HARASSMENT, EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE



Participating in this workshop has enlightened me about my potential to champion change in addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Sexual Harassment Exploitation and Abuse within my community. It has ignited my commitment to inspire others to recognize their roles in safeguarding the well-being of children and women. I am leaving this room as a leader that's dedicated to tirelessly advocating for this cause, fostering a community where everyone is actively engaged in promoting safety and equality.

- **Beatrice Mukashema**, National Women's Council



The knowledge I have gained from this training has been incredibly valuable and it has significantly expanded my understanding of various topics that were previously unclear to me. In my capacity as a youth leader, I plan on putting my focus on promoting collaboration and knowledge-sharing regarding the prevention and reporting of Sexual Harassment Exploitation and Abuse (SHEA) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV). I will emphasize the importance of mutual respect, fostering an atmosphere where everyone's voices are heard and valued.

- **Eugene Mugabo**, Youth Leader

HDI WISHES TO THANK OUR PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

- AMPLIFYCHANGE
- BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH IMPERATIVE
- CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE
- CRICKET BUILDS HOPE
- DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO RWANDA
- EAHP
- EQUIMUNDO
- FEMNET
- FOSI/OSIEA
- GIZ
- GLIHD
- GLOBAL HEALTH CORPS
- IMBUTO FOUNDATION
- IMRO
- IPPF-Asociación Profamilia
- JHPIEGO/MCGL
- MINISTRY OF GENDER AND FAMILY PROMOTION
- MINISTRY OF HEALTH
- MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
- MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT
- NORWEGIAN PEOPLE'S AID
- PARLIAMENT OF RWANDA
- PLAN INTERNATIONAL RWANDA
- PSA
- RNGOF
- RWANDA CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM
- RWANDA SOCIETY OF OBSTETRICIANS AND GYNECOLOGISTS
- RWANDA BIOMEDICAL CENTER
- RWANDA EDUCATION BOARD
- RWANDA GOVERNANCE BOARD
- RWAMREC
- SFH
- SISTERLOVE INC.
- SOCIETY FOR FAMILY HEALTH
- STEPHEN LEWIS FOUNDATION
- STOP TB PARTNERSHIP
- THE CENTER FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS
- THE DAVID AND LUCILE PACKARD FOUNDATION
- THE EMBASSY OF SWEDEN
- THE EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF NETHERLANDS
- THE GLOBAL FUND
- THE NEWTIMES
- UHAI-EASHRI
- UNAIDS
- UNFPA
- UNICEF
- VSO
- WELLSPRING PHILANTHROPIC FUND
- WEMOS
- WHO
- WOMEN'S LINK WORLDWIDE

