

HDI NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2024



WHAT'S INSIDE

Raising awareness on GBV and Family Planning among female street vendors

Page 3 - 6

Enhancing Organizational Capacity through a Gender Transformative Approach

page 7 - 9

Engaging Local leaders and law enforcement on harm reduction for people who use drugs

page 10 - 12

Empowering Healthcare Providers to Champion Patient Rights

page 13 - 14

Empowering Adolescents on SRH through Edutainment

page 15 - 17

Dear Partners,

Dear Partner,

Welcome to our February newsletter!

We are delighted to share with you some of our impactful initiatives this past month.

We kickstart with a spotlight on the crucial efforts towards raising awareness on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Family Planning among female street vendors.

We also share some details about our engagement with local leaders on our new project on harm reduction for people who use drugs, addressing challenges that this demographic faces using a human rights based approach.

Furthermore, we have an update about the empowerment of healthcare providers to champion patient rights, emphasizing the crucial role they play in ensuring equitable access to quality healthcare for all.

Last but not least, we highlight the importance of innovative and engaging approaches in empowering adolescents on sexual and reproductive health.

As you navigate through these pages, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to you, dear partner, for your continued support and commitment to our shared vision of a better tomorrow.

Communication Team.



RAISING AWARENESS ON GBV AND FAMILY PLANNING AMONG FEMALE STREET VENDORS

In February, our long term partnership with the Kicukiro district led to a crucial dialogue engaging over 150 female street vendors. The objective was twofold: to address Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and to foster awareness and access to family planning resources.

Family planning challenges

The family planning session aimed to empower female street vendors by providing information and resources to make informed choices about contraception and family size.

This initiative aimed to support them in managing both their personal and professional lives effectively, ultimately leading to an increasing uptake of family planning methods among this demographic.

During our interactive sessions, participants engaged in candid discussions, shedding light on significant challenges they encounter with certain family planning methods. These discussions revealed concerns about potential side effects, such as heavy bleeding and hormonal changes, which participants fear may accompany these methods.

Some of the women acknowledged that these fears frequently serve as obstacles, leading to hesitation and reluctance to pursue any method of family planning.

Response to family planning

In response, we seized the opportunity to address prevalent misconceptions and myths surrounding family planning, providing evidence-based information to counter misinformation.

This involved debunking common myths related to the safety and efficiency of contraceptives, as well as addressing cultural and religious misconceptions that may hamper individuals from accessing family planning services. On the side effects, we recognized the diversity of family planning methods available, acknowledging that different options suit different individuals and health needs. We offered detailed explanations of various contraception methods, including hormonal contraceptives like birth control pills, and injections, as well as non-hormonal options such as condoms, intrauterine devices (IUDs), and fertility awareness methods.

In addition to disseminating information, we provided details about access to family planning information and services.

This included promoting the availability of contraceptive methods through community health workers, clinics, and pharmacies, as well as highlighting government-sponsored programs and initiatives aimed at increasing access to family planning services particularly in underserved communities. These include integrating contraceptive services within other health services, such as maternal and child health programs, to ensure a holistic approach to reproductive healthcare.

Gender Based Violence

Female street vendors often encounter various forms of GBV in their work environments. This includes verbal harassment, intimidation, and physical assault from customers, fellow vendors, or local security organs. Additionally, the informal nature of street vending and the lack of legal protections make it challenging for women to report incidents of GBV or pursue justice. This session holds significant importance as it addresses some of these pressing issues, providing the female street vendors with crucial information about GBV and empowering them to protect themselves

from abuse both in their personal lives and within their work settings. During this session, the women raised a concerning lack of awareness surrounding GBV and the resources accessible for reporting, consequently rendering them more vulnerable to violence, including intimate partner violence.

This lack of awareness not only perpetuates the cycle of abuse but also highlights the urgent need for education and more outreach initiatives. They highlighted challenges related to legal marital status, with some expressing that individuals in cohabiting relationships are often overlooked or disregarded by authorities when reporting instances of abuse.

They also noted that this attitude from authorities complicated the process of child registration. In response, we provided the women with information about the various forms of GBV, including physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse empowering them to recognize, prevent, and seek assistance in cases of harassment or assault and promoting their safety.



We also took them through the process of recognizing signs of abuse and understanding the dynamics of power and control in abusive relationships which can manifest in various ways, such as manipulation, intimidation, isolation, or coercion. By understanding these dynamics, we aimed to empower the women with knowledge and awareness to recognize and address abuse when they encounter it, whether personally or when supporting others.

We provided information about available resources for GBV survivors such as HDI Rwanda (hotline: 3530) and Isange One Stop Center (hotline: 3512), ensuring that survivors of GBV have immediate access to professional counseling services to address emotional trauma and legal aid advice

to navigate the complexities of seeking justice. Throughout our dialogue, it became evident that there is a pressing need to plan more conversations surrounding gender-based violence (GBV) and family planning, especially for underserved demographics of women, such as domestic workers.

Our engagement with female street vendors highlights the interconnected relationship between family planning and GBV within the community. By addressing barriers to accessing contraception and providing information on resources for survivors of GBV, we are not only promoting reproductive health rights but also fostering a culture of empowerment.



ENHANCING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY THROUGH A GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH

Enhancing Organizational Capacity through a Gender Transformative Approach In February, members of the Gender Generation Coalition convened for a transformative three-day training centered on the Gender Transformative Approach (GTA). This interactive workshop aimed to empower coalition members by critically examining and addressing the root causes of gender-based inequality. It provided a platform to design interventions that challenge these inequalities, fostering more inclusive, and sustainable communities.



The training equipped coalition organization members with essential skills to integrate GTA principles effectively into interventions. Facilitators focused on fostering an understanding of gender dynamics, empowering participants to challenge traditional gender norms, and promote equitable opportunities for all genders. Participants explored practical strategies and tools to incorporate GTA into projects, including gender analysis techniques. They learned to conduct comprehensive gender analyses to

identify existing inequalities, power dynamics, and gender norms within target communities. Additionally, the training emphasized engaging the communities that they serve—including women, men, and gender-diverse individuals—in decision-making processes to create inclusive and sustainable interventions. It highlighted the importance of integrating gender considerations into program design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Participants examined harmful gender norms perpetuating inequality, discrimination, and violence. Strategies discussed included challenging stereotypes and promoting more inclusive and equitable attitudes and behaviors to transform cultural beliefs and practices reinforcing gender inequality.

The training emphasized the crucial role of involving men and boys in gender equality discussions and initiatives to foster collaboration.

The facilitators highlighted the value of encouraging men and boys to actively support gender equality as allies and advocates to challenge traditional masculinity that perpetuate harmful gender norms.

The participants discussed systems and privileges that perpetuate unequal power dynamics. Here, they highlighted how power can be redistributed to ensure equal opportunities for women and gender diverse groups to

engage in decision-making processes and leadership roles. Recognizing gender as non-binary, the facilitators emphasized creating inclusive environments where all gender and sexual diversities are respected, valued, and supported.

This involved challenging traditional beliefs of gender and celebrating individual differences.

As coalition members returned to their respective organizations, they are better equipped to foster positive change by challenging stereotypes, promoting inclusion, and advocating for equal opportunities for all.

They pledged to continue applying the principles of the Gender Transformative Approach, to further advance the coalition and organisations' mission of creating a more equitable and just society for all.



ENGAGING LOCAL LEADERS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT ON HARM REDUCTION FOR PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

We convened a crucial dialogue with local authorities, law enforcement, and healthcare providers from Nyarugenge district, introducing the 'Tubiteho Project', a new human rights-centered initiative aimed at enhancing the well-being of individuals who use drugs (PWUDs). During the introductory remarks, Elvis Benimana, the Project Lead, articulated the primary objective of the Tubiteho Project: to

establish a supportive and conducive environment facilitating the availability and accessibility of high-quality harm reduction services for people who use drugs. He emphasized the necessity of creating structures and systems to effectively provide such services while empowering PWUDs through enhanced understanding of their rights and familiarization with harm reduction approaches.



Benimana highlighted the integration of peer support, wherein individuals with lived experiences of drug use offer mentorship and solidarity, as a crucial aspect of the project. Additionally, the project plans to provide a minimum package of harm reduction services tailored specifically for PWUDs in selected pilot health facilities to meet their diverse needs.

Additionally, he told the participants that the project aims to conduct training sessions for various stakeholders to enhance their understanding of substance use challenges, reduce stigma, and improve their ability to provide effective support and care. It also seeks to enhance the quality of data

regarding the status of PWUDs and interventions targeting them. The project's implementation across Nyarugenge, Gasabo, and Rubavu districts is based on data indicating high numbers of drug users, primarily in high-risk transmission areas for HIV and Hepatitis B and C infections.

Providing context to the issue, Sulemani Muhirwa, our Program Officer in Charge of Key Populations, led participants through an exploration of the underlying factors contributing to drug use, including biological, psychological, and social among others.

Muhirwa aimed to humanize the experiences of people who use drugs, affirming their dignity and worth as individuals deserving of compassion and assistance.

By framing substance use disorders as conditions rather than moral failings, Muhirwa sought to challenge discriminatory attitudes and foster a more supportive and inclusive community environment for individuals affected by drug use. The participants praised the project's comprehensive approach, which integrated a variety of programs aimed at tackling stigma and discrimination, implementing policy reforms, improving

information systems, and facilitating access to high quality harm reduction services.

In February, our partners, Ihorere Munyarwanda (IMRO) and Strive Foundation, also conducted parallel activities focused on harm reduction in Gasabo and Rubavu districts. These activities will

By promoting harm reduction, empowering individuals, and fostering understanding within the community, we aim to create lasting positive change and improve the overall well-being of those affected by substance use.



“

Although our role is law enforcement, I appreciate the emphasis your project places on prioritizing the health and well-being of individuals involved in drug use. This approach may not only reduce the negative impact of drug use on individuals but also ease the burden on healthcare and criminal justice systems.

- Patrick Ndirima,
Security Coordinator, Nyarugenge District
Dialogue with Local Leaders and Law
Enforcement on Harm Reduction for People Who Use Drugs



EMPOWERING HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS TO CHAMPION PATIENT RIGHTS

Excited to share that in February, our team engaged in a dialogue with healthcare providers at Masaka Hospital focusing on Patient Rights. This initiative, delivered in partnership with Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) and the Belgium Embassy aims to equip healthcare providers with the information that they need to commit to promoting patient-centered care, preventing abuse and neglect, building trust, and ensuring legal and ethical compliance within the healthcare system, ultimately leading to enhanced health outcomes. The patient-centered sessions explored crucial topics such as informed consent, confidentiality, access to quality care, active participation in decision-making, and the fundamental right to be treated without discrimination, ensuring that they are not only recognized but actively championed in every aspect of healthcare provision.



The interactive session addressed challenges stemming from cultural and religious beliefs, which often pose obstacles to patients exercising their rights, particularly regarding access to comprehensive abortion care. Our discussions explored innovative strategies, best practices, and ethical frameworks that safeguard and promote the rights of patients throughout their healthcare journey. We discussed how understanding and respecting patient rights can lead to better relationships between healthcare providers and their patients as patients are more likely to trust their healthcare providers if they feel their rights are respected. The Facilitators reminded the healthcare providers that adhering to patient rights including ensuring informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality gives

healthcare providers an opportunity to mitigate potential legal liabilities, reduce the risk of malpractice claims and legal disputes. The Facilitators also emphasised the value of respecting patient rights which they said contributes to higher levels of patient satisfaction. They explained that satisfied patients are more likely to adhere to treatment plans, follow-up appointments, and recommendations, ultimately leading to better health outcomes.

Overall, the engagement with Masaka Hospital highlighted the transformative potential of prioritizing patient rights in healthcare delivery and its contribution to enhancing health outcomes.



EMPOWERING ADOLESCENTS ON SRH THROUGH EDUTAINMENT

We are thrilled to provide an update on the ongoing Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (ASRHR) program, a dynamic collaboration between HDI and Cricket Build Hope. Our collective mission is to equip adolescents with comprehensive SRHR knowledge, empowering them to make informed decisions concerning their sexuality and overall well-being. Central to our approach is innovation, reflected in an

edutainment model that integrates SRHR messages into cricket games, transforming learning into an engaging and interactive experience.

Through this innovative fusion of education and entertainment, we aim to dismantle barriers, ignite dialogues, and catalyze positive change in adolescent SRHR outcomes.



SO, WHAT PRECISELY DOES OUR PROGRAM INVOLVE?

At Groupe Scolaire Rwabutenge, where we are implementing this five cohort model, students undergo training on various topics, including gender equality. During these sessions, adolescents explore concepts of identity and self-expression within the framework of gender roles and expectations.

Discussions are focused on comprehending the diversity of gender experiences and challenging harmful norms and stereotypes.

Practical skills such as effective communication, consent, and conflict resolution are emphasized to empower adolescents to navigate relationships and advocate for their rights and the rights of others.

Another crucial aspect of our program is addressing puberty, including candid conversations about the menstrual cycle, aimed at helping both boys and girls to understand and embrace this natural and essential aspect of reproductive health.



Additionally, adolescents participate in sessions on anti-sexual harassment, where they are equipped with the knowledge and tools to identify, prevent, and address instances of sexual harassment. These sessions also aim to foster a culture of respect and safety, empowering adolescents to contribute to creating a safer and more inclusive environment.

Our program also provides comprehensive guidance on contraception, HIV/AIDS, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), empowering adolescents to make

informed choices about their sexual health and well-being. This ASRHR program is an opportunity for us to witness firsthand the transformative power of fusing education with entertainment.

Through cricket games infused with SRHR messages, we are not merely imparting knowledge; we are fostering understanding, and empowerment among adolescents, paving the way for healthier and more informed communities.

STAKEHOLDERS SPEAK:



Giscard MWIZERWA @g... · 23/02/2024 ...
Gender equity and equality is the to sustainable development. The humans rights need to respected regardless gender, sexual and reproductive health rights. @GenderMonitorRw @RwandaGender @maxkinginstitut



Samuel Habimana, BA, ... · 22/02/2024 ...
Thank you for coming!



HDI Rwanda @HDIRw... · 22/02/2024 ...
Delighted to honor an invite from the @BureraDistrict-based University of Global Health Equity (@ughe.org) to facilitate a dialogue on Positive #Masculinity and its transformative impact on gender #equality.

Addressing the students of the Gender, Sexual and Reproductive Health... [Show more](#)



Philippa Decuir @pipadecuir [Follow](#) ...

Partnerships grounded in gender parity and equality are not only transformative, but also effective and sustainable. Excellent initiative!

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
- EXPERTISE FRANCE
- FEMNET
- FOSI/OSIEA
- 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
- 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
- SISTERLOVE INC.
- SOCIETY FOR FAMILY HEALTH
- STEPHEN LEWIS FOUNDATION
- STOP TB PARTNERSHIP
- STRIVE FOUNDATION RWANDA
- THE CENTER FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS
- THE DAVID AND LUCILE PACKARD FOUNDATION
- THE EMBASSY OF BELGIUM
- 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

