

# HDI NEWSLETTER

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## Dear Partners,

We are excited to bring you the latest updates that reflect our shared commitment to improving health outcomes and advancing human rights.

This edition explores our ongoing efforts to enhance healthcare providers' capacity to deliver patient-centered care. We look at how equipping healthcare providers with the necessary knowledge can ensure better patient satisfaction and health outcomes.

Next, we spotlight our campaign on raising awareness of HIV prevention, treatment, and care where we work with local government and health authorities to empower communities to take proactive steps in preventing and managing HIV.

We also share updates on our work around building the capacity of duty bearers on applying a human rights-based approach ensuring equity and justice for all.

We hope that these stories inspire and reaffirm your dedication to our collective mission. Thank you for your continued partnership and support.  
Warm regards,





## ENHANCING HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS' CAPACITY TO DELIVER PATIENT-CENTERED CARE

**T**his past month, we continued our efforts to enhance patient-centered care and improve healthcare outcomes, with a series of sensitization dialogues with healthcare providers from four hospitals on patient and healthcare users' rights. These dialogues aim to educate and empower providers with the tools

necessary to uphold and advocate for patient-centered care and contribute to better healthcare outcomes. They emphasized the integration of informed consent, patient confidentiality, and the right to information into daily healthcare services.

The HDI-Rwanda Director of the Center for Health and Rights, Christopher Sengoga says that his organization is building on previous similar approaches to build patient trust and satisfaction that can, in turn, contribute to improved healthcare services.

“When patients feel respected and informed, they trust their doctors, communicate more openly, and adhere to treatment plans. Our discussions with doctors aim to enhance these principles. Of course, this will contribute to an effective healthcare system,” he said.

Sengoga explained that the awareness campaign will emphasize accountability, transparency, and patient safety within the healthcare setting.

For example, on informed consent, he explained that healthcare providers will be taken through the importance of thoroughly providing patients with prior thorough explanation to patients the medical procedures, their potential risks, and alternative treatments to patients, ensuring they understand and voluntarily agree to the proposed care.



“Regarding confidentiality, discussions highlighted the importance of protecting patient information from unauthorized access, emphasizing scenarios such as safeguarding medical records and ensuring private conversations remain confidential. He explained that the facilitators of this awareness campaign will continue to remind the healthcare providers of their duty of care, illustrated through consistently promptly addressing patient concerns, providing accurate diagnoses, and avoiding medical negligence that could harm patients.

## **SAFE ABORTION AND CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION**

The participants also discussed the Ministerial Order on Safe Abortion, outlining the conditions and procedures under which safe abortions can be performed, aiming to protect the health and rights of patients while ensuring that medical standards are upheld.

Participants raised questions around conscientious objection, a scenario where healthcare providers may not be comfortable with providing certain medical procedures, for example, safe abortion, based on moral or religious grounds.

The facilitator provided clarifications on the legal obligations of healthcare providers to inform patients of their rights and the availability of safe abortion services, ensuring that patients can make informed decisions. Participants discussed the balance between respecting the personal beliefs of healthcare providers and ensuring

that patients' access to legal medical services. Solutions proposed included establishing clear protocols that require objecting providers to refer patients to other qualified professionals without delay.

## **FEEDBACK**

The Head of Nursing and Midwifery Department, at Nyarugenge Hospital Clarisse Uwizerwa, called the dialogue a “wake-up call”.

“It’s now clear to me that we have some gaps in how we adhere to legal standards when dealing with patients. This is my wake-up call. I’m committing myself to addressing these issues immediately to ensure we provide the best and most compliant care possible.”

After training, a Pharmacist working at the Muhima hospital pharmacy, Odilla Utamuriza, admitted that she was ready to work on how much time she spends on each patient, despite how busy she may be.





*This training made me realise many aspects that I didn't fully grasp or appreciate before. In my daily routines, I sometimes found myself hurrying through processes without fully considering that perhaps patients may appreciate it if I paused and gave them more detailed information. Moving forward, I am going to try and slow down and take the time to communicate better.*

**- Odilla Utamuriza**, Pharmacist at Muhima hospital

Our sensitization dialogues with healthcare providers on patient and healthcare users' rights will continue to all hospitals all over the country.





## PROMOTING MATERNAL AND NEONATAL CARE THROUGH INFECTION PREVENTION CONTROL MATERIAL

**W**ith support from UNFPA, we embarked on a mission to distribute essential bed pads to healthcare facilities in Karongi, Rusizi, and Nyamasheke districts. A total of 108 rolls of bed pads were strategically allocated based on needs assessments conducted in collaboration with local health

facility directors. The bed pads are expected to help maintain cleanliness and hygiene in healthcare settings, absorbing fluids and preventing contamination of beds and mattresses and enhancing the comfort and well-being of patients.



The Director General of Kibuye Referral Hospital, Violette Ayingeneye expressed her appreciation for this initiative saying that proper use of bed pads reduces the risk of infections associated with moisture and bodily fluids, which is crucial for patients recovering from illnesses or undergoing medical procedures.

“For us, these bed pads are important not only because of their contribution to a more hygienic environment for our patients but also their reduction in costs that we incur when cleaning, and replacing mattresses,” he said.

His remarks were echoed by Honorine Murekatete, a Midwife at Mugonero District Hospital who highlighted how nurses and caregivers benefit from the use of bed pads as they simplify patient care routines and allow for quicker and more efficient changes and adjustments.

The bed pads provide the healthcare facilities with an opportunity to ensure that every patient, regardless of their financial or social background, has access to basic hygiene and comfort measures.



This inclusion is essential for equitable healthcare delivery. The bed pads are made from environmentally friendly materials and are contributing to sustainability efforts within healthcare facilities.

In total, 5,832 meters of bed pads were distributed across all facilities in the three districts.





## RAISING AWARENESS ON HIV PREVENTION, TREATMENT, AND CARE

**T**his May, we continued our collaboration with local authorities and health officials raising awareness on HIV in Kayonza and Kirehe Districts. Located in the Eastern Province, these districts face high HIV prevalence rates, intensified by their proximity to busy border towns with a substantial influx of truck

drivers, among whom HIV infection is high. This geographical challenge intensifies HIV transmission within these communities, highlighting the need for targeted interventions and heightened awareness campaigns to mitigate its impact.



During the outreach, our team focused on educating residents about the critical importance of HIV prevention, testing, and treatment. We provided comprehensive information on HIV transmission routes, prevention methods, and stressed the significance of regular testing and early treatment initiation.

Our engagement with local communities emphasized promoting healthy behaviors, such as the use of condoms as highly effective in preventing HIV and other STIs.

Furthermore, we highlighted the benefits of voluntary medical male circumcision, supported by scientific evidence indicating its significant role in reducing HIV transmission risk. Addressing the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV was also a key component of our campaign.

We highlighted how stigma often discourages individuals from seeking HIV testing and treatment due to fear of rejection and discrimination, and as a result, delaying diagnosis and access to necessary healthcare services.

We also prioritized educating residents about Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), an essential prevention strategy for those who have been potentially exposed to HIV and Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for those at higher risk of HIV (including sex workers and Men who have Sex with Men), emphasizing its effectiveness when taken consistently.

We also provided free HIV tests for the masses emphasizing our focus on female sex workers, adolescent young girls and women as well men who have sex with men.



These groups are specifically targeted for free HIV tests due to their heightened vulnerability to HIV infection for various reasons. Female sex workers often face risky environments and limited access to healthcare, increasing their likelihood of exposure to HIV. Adolescent girls and young women are biologically more susceptible to HIV and may lack the knowledge or resources to protect themselves effectively.

Men who have sex with men often encounter stigma and discrimination, which can deter them from seeking HIV testing and treatment.

By focusing on these populations, we aim to address disparities in healthcare access, reduce transmission rates, and ensure that those most at risk receive necessary support and resources for HIV prevention and treatment.

We also highlighted the use of HIV self-testing kits and how to use them correctly, interpret results, and where to seek support or confirmatory testing where necessary.

We distributed lubricants and free condoms and conducted hands-on demonstrations to ensure community members understood and could practice correct condom usage, fostering a culture of responsible sexual behavior and reducing the transmission of HIV.

Dr. Ruth Byukusenge, our health systems strengthening advisor, elaborated on the campaign's holistic approach, stating, "Our goal is not only to increase awareness but also to foster a community where stigma surrounding HIV becomes something of the past. We need people to feel that they can get tested anytime and anywhere, and be able to access the healthcare services they need without fear of judgment."

Besides these two districts, we have conducted successful HIV awareness campaigns in Bugesera district, collaborating with local authorities and health officials to engage the community in the fight against the virus.



## STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF DUTY BEARERS ON APPLYING HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

**T**his past month, we also facilitated a two-day workshop in Rwamagana District where we brought together duty bearers and security enforcers for a comprehensive dialogue on applying the human rights based approach.

Our dialogue sessions were designed to deepen participants' understanding of human rights principles, encouraging their adherence and promoting enhanced collaboration between local government and civil society organizations.



The dialogue covered legal frameworks, both international and national that protect human rights. This involved examining relevant treaties, conventions, and local laws, highlighting the responsibilities of duty bearers and law enforcers under these legal instruments.

They tackled fundamental concepts of human rights, exploration Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) in depth, clarifying terms and concepts to build a solid understanding among participants.

The facilitators used participatory methods including group discussions, case studies, role-playing, and real-life scenarios to foster engagement and facilitate a deeper grasp of the material.

To ensure the training led to meaningful change, participants were encouraged to reflect on their biases and attitudes, and how these might impact their professional behavior. Trainers provide strategies for addressing and overcoming prejudice, fostering a culture of respect and inclusion.

Participants learnt how to apply a human rights-based approach in their daily work, which includes integrating human rights principles such as equality, non-discrimination, participation, and accountability into their procedures and interactions with the public. Special attention was given to the respectful and fair treatment of individuals regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Participants emphasized the need to ensure equitable access to social services for women, children, persons with disabilities, sex workers, and sexual and gender diverse groups. They also discussed the importance of collaboration and accountability among local authorities, civil society organizations, and security organs to protect these groups from violence, exploitation, and abuse, and to monitor and address human rights violations effectively.

During the workshop, Mayor Radjab Mbonyumuvunyi emphasized the importance of creating an inclusive environment, reminding the participants of their collective responsibility to ensure that individuals from all backgrounds feel empowered to seek and receive essential health and rights interventions.



*We must foster an environment where anyone seeking assistance—whether for health, social services, or other forms of support—can do so without fear of discrimination, stigma, or judgment. This is the essence of ‘leaving no one behind.’*

**- Mayor Radjab Mbonyumuvunyi**

## TACKLING GBV

The session on gender based violence explored impact, effective prevention strategies, and the importance of reporting to equip participants with comprehensive knowledge and actionable steps to address GBV effectively within their communities.

Participants explored the multifaceted impacts of GBV, emphasizing its effects on individuals, families, and communities.

The Facilitator provided the participants with insight into the negative consequences on survivors’ physical, psychological, and socio-economic well-being.

On prevention strategies, the session highlighted proactive measures including promoting gender equality, challenging harmful gender norms and stereotypes, enhancing access to education and economic opportunities for women and girls, fostering supportive environments that discourage violence and empowering individuals to intervene.



Additionally, the session highlighted the crucial role of reporting in addressing GBV.

Participants explored barriers that prevent survivors from reporting incidents, such as fear of stigma, lack of trust in authorities, and socio-cultural norms that normalize or condone violence.

Strategies for improving reporting mechanisms and ensuring survivors' safety and confidentiality were discussed to encourage timely intervention and support.

The facilitator, Annonciata Mukayitete, our Senior Program Officer in charge of Gender and Inclusion, provided participants with a crucial understanding of the link between gender-based violence (GBV) and unintended pregnancies.

“Women who experience GBV often have limited ability to negotiate safe sex practices, access contraceptive methods, or seek reproductive health services due to fear, stigma, and control by abusive partners,” she explained.



She emphasized that the trauma from GBV can lead to risky behaviors and poor decision-making regarding sexual health among adolescents, significantly increasing the risk of teenage pregnancy.

She pointed out that this highlights the importance of addressing GBV not only as a human rights issue but also as a critical factor in improving reproductive health outcomes. The workshop concluded with participants requesting for future refresher sessions to support them to effectively protect and promote human rights.

## STAKEHOLDERS SPEAK:



This training made me realise many aspects that I didn't fully grasp or appreciate before. In my daily routines, I sometimes found myself hurrying through processes without fully considering that perhaps patients may appreciate it if I paused and gave them detailed information. Moving forward, I am going to try and slow down and take the time to communicate more.

**Odilla Utamuriza,**

Nurse Pharmacist, Nyarugenge Hospital

Training of Healthcare Providers on Patient Rights

## Courtesy Visits with Our Partners



We welcomed the Center for Reproductive Rights team to our offices where we reviewed our advocacy initiatives aimed at improving adolescents' access to essential SRHR information and services.



In May, we were also delighted to receive Gender Ministers from five University campuses to strategize an outreach drive focused on HIV prevention and addressing unplanned pregnancies at each of their respective campuses.



We were delighted to host a team from Swedish Embassy. Our discussions centered on our ongoing partnership. We discussed progress, exchanged insights, and identified areas for growth.



We were excited to host the FP2030ESA team at our offices where we shared updates on our collaboration around contributing to the acceleration of Rwanda's FP2030 commitments.



# 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

