

HDI NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2024



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Dear Partners,

Welcome to our October Newsletter!

This month, we are excited to update you on the impactful work we've been able to accomplish with your support.

In our ongoing Baho Neza Project implementation, we've been actively connecting with communities, delivering essential health resources and SRHR information to those who need it most. Additionally, we distributed learning materials to health centers in Karongi, Nyamasheke, and Rusizi, empowering these facilities to provide more effective, accessible health education and services.

Recognizing the power of media in shaping SRHR awareness, we hosted a comprehensive training for media professionals focused on intersectionality and another one to disseminate the FP2030 commitments. Alongside this, we convened with CSO partners in a validation meeting aimed at establishing a robust safeguarding policy against sexual harassment in the workplace. On university campuses, the Sobanukirwa Wirinde SRHR Campaign with MEDSAR has been pivotal in engaging students with empowering information on reproductive health.

Meanwhile, our collaboration with UNFPA included a VCAT training, that fostered values clarification around Comprehensive Abortion Care for enhanced understanding among UNFPA partners. To further solidify our impact, we held a two-day meeting with leaders drawn from health associations, where a diverse group of voices discussed the Bill regulating health services ---marking a critical step toward policy improvements in health governance.

Thank you for being an essential part of this journey. Together, we continue to make strides in strengthening access to SRHR and fostering a healthier, more inclusive society for all.



SAFEGUARDING AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORLD OF WORK

In October, we held a validation meeting to review our new safeguarding policy brief, designed to address existing gaps in protections for employees, with clear guidelines, accountability measures, and strong support systems for victims of harassment. The meeting gathered key stakeholders, including civil society organizations, government bodies, and advocacy groups, ensuring that diverse perspectives shaped the policy. Representatives

from the Ministry of Labour and the International Labour Organization (ILO) provided invaluable feedback, helping refine the framework to be inclusive and robust. The Director of our Center for Health and Rights, Christopher Sengoga, presented an overview of the complexities surrounding sexual harassment in the “world of work.”

He highlighted the importance of aligning Rwanda's policy framework with ILO standards, noting that ratifying such conventions commits a country to implement their principles and enforce accountability.

Sengoga explained that harassment is not limited to traditional office spaces; it can occur in any professional setting and may involve colleagues across different locations.

Our Senior Program Officer for Gender and Inclusion, Annonciata Mukayitete, emphasized the importance of the validation process in making sure the policy reflects the needs and priorities of all stakeholders involved.

"The collaborative effort behind this policy will be the foundation of its successful adoption and implementation," Mukayitete noted.

She explained that aligning the policy, titled "Towards Safeguarding Against Sexual Harassment in the World of Work in Rwanda", with ILO C190 recommendations while adapting it to local realities will strengthen its relevance and effectiveness.



Rosine Izabayo, Ihorerere Munyarwanda (IMRO-Rwanda)'s Adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) Program Manager brought attention to a critical issue: "Many women and girls hesitate to report harassment because they fear it will jeopardize their careers.

Even when their cases are addressed, they often struggle to secure new employment, as employers are reluctant to hire individuals perceived as "troublemakers." Her remarks shed light on the far-reaching impact of workplace harassment on professional growth and underscored the necessity for comprehensive safeguards against retaliation.



The Project Coordinator at Haguruka, Cyiza Yvonne emphasized the importance of every organization incorporating a safeguarding policy into all contracts, whether for staff, consultants, or any other hired personnel.

She explained that this will ensure that all individuals affiliated with the organization are held to the same standards, fostering a culture of respect and accountability.



The meeting also provided an opportunity to offer inputs that could shape the ongoing labor law review, with the goal of ensuring that any amendments align with global best practices to enhance protections against workplace harassment.

This collective validation process brings us closer to securing a policy that will be widely accepted across Rwanda's workforce, advancing a shared vision of a safe and dignified work environment for all.



ENHANCING MEDIA CAPACITY TO SHAPE SRHR THROUGH INTERSECTIONAL STORYTELLING

Young people, especially those facing intersecting vulnerabilities, often encounter substantial barriers that remain underreported. In response to this gap, we organized a two day training program designed to equip journalists with the tools to adopt an intersectional approach in their reporting, particularly regarding the barriers young people

face in accessing sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) information and services. The Project Manager at VSO, Bony Mukombozi, opened the training highlighting the importance of intersectionality in journalism, stressing that it is essential for a more inclusive approach to SRHR reporting.

He urged journalists to dig deeper and ensure that their stories reflect the multifaceted realities faced by young people with compounded vulnerabilities.



“

In our reporting on SRHR, we must go beyond surface-level narratives. Understanding the intersection of various identities and experiences allows us to capture the full picture of young people’s realities and advocate for the inclusive changes they need.

- Bony Mukombozi, Project Manager at VSO

During this media engagement, the participants explored how multiple factors—such as gender, economic status, rural vs. urban divide, disability, cultural norms and stigma—intersect to create unique challenges for young people seeking SRHR information and services.

Our Project Coordinator, Dr. Mickel-Ange Karamage, explained that using an intersectional approach to reporting helps media practitioners to highlight the multiple, interconnected challenges individual experience, deepening the impact of their stories and ensuring that these voices are fully represented.

“For example, someone with a disability, who is also HIV positive and living in poverty experiences multiple, overlapping challenges,”

Karamage said. To address their needs effectively, we must consider all these factors rather than focusing on just one area. This approach is at the heart of the Make Way and HDI-Rwanda programs. The session closed with a call to action: build a network of media professionals dedicated to telling intersectional SRHR stories, promoting inclusive, accurate reporting that brings the challenges faced by vulnerable youth into public dialogue.



Rwanda's FP2030 Commitments

This October, we also had an opportunity to organise a one day media engagement where we discussed Rwanda's Family Planning 2030 (FP2030) commitments, introducing participants to the nation's goals for advancing family planning and ensuring universal access to contraceptives and SRHR services.

The Head of the Family Planning Program at the Rwanda Biomedical Center (RBC), Joel Serucaca, outlined Rwanda's

five key family planning goals for 2030. He stressed the need to raise public awareness and foster engagement in the program. Serucaca supported the journalists to explore Rwanda's FP2030 key commitments, including increasing access to modern contraceptives, reducing unmet needs, and ensuring that vulnerable populations—especially women and young people—are at the forefront of this progress. Participants discussed the role of the media in advocating for these commitments and the importance of using intersectional approaches to amplify diverse voices and experiences in the conversation around SRHR.

“Journalists play a pivotal role in this process. Your accuracy when reporting can significantly influence public participation. It’s essential to focus on real numbers and concrete actions that benefit the population.” Serucaca said.

Serucaca also discussed the importance of expanding family planning methods to offer women and individuals more choices.

“Rwanda’s Contraceptive Prevalence Rate is currently at 64 percent. Our goal is reaching 65 percent by 2030 but to achieve this, we will need collaboration from all stakeholders including the media,” he added.

Empowering journalists for better reporting

Diane Nikuze Nkusi, a journalist at Umuringa News, emphasized the valuable insights gained from the training regarding journalists’ role in promoting family planning awareness.



She pointed out that misinformation can create significant confusion in both rural and urban communities, leading to the perpetuation of myths around family planning.

“

While it’s crucial for journalists to have accurate information, healthcare providers also need such training so that they can communicate more clearly about contraceptive options, particularly in addressing prevalent myths surrounding birth control and infertility.

- Diane Nikuze Nkusi, a journalist



Challenges

The participants raised challenges that frustrate their balanced reporting including gaps in comprehensive data, which hinder media practitioners' ability to report accurately on the real challenges these young people face. They also pointed out the delicate balance between the demand for in-depth investigative reporting and the rise of clickbait-driven journalism. The group also discussed the financial constraints faced by many media organizations, which limit resources for thorough research, travel, and interviews, pushing them to favor quicker, cheaper content instead.



FOSTERING INFORMED DECISION-MAKING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

We are happy to share that this October, we continued our “Sobanukirwa Wirinde” outreach activities in partnership with the Medical Students’ Association of Rwanda and the Swedish International Development Corporation Agency (Sida) furthering our commitment to engage university students in critical conversations about sexual and reproductive health and

rights. Building on our previous initiatives, we are addressing a broader range of topics that include STI and HIV testing, contraception, the legal framework on safe abortion, Gender Based Violence, consent, and Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH) among other topics.

These discussions are designed not only to raise awareness but also to equip students with the tools to make informed and responsible decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health.

Our focus on first-year students is especially crucial as this group is at a transitional stage in their lives, stepping into university with newfound independence and exposure to diverse social environments.

Our sessions are a good opportunity to shape young people's understanding and approach to sexual and reproductive health, empowering them to make safer choices, build healthier relationships, and foster a campus culture of respect and mutual understanding.

As our Community Health Advisor, Elvis Benimana shared, "These dialogues are essential because they address the realities that young people face as they navigate their university experience. It's not just about information; it's about creating a space where students can ask questions, challenge assumptions, and learn about the legal, social, and health aspects of their decisions."



At the University of Rwanda - Busogo Campus, we worked with Campus Gender Ministers to facilitate discussions on consent, a topic that sparked engaging debates.

Questions raised included how to communicate the withdrawal of consent, the balance between verbal and non-verbal cues, and the importance of recognizing and responding appropriately to these signals.

We also highlighted the impact of substance use—such as alcohol or drugs—on the ability to give or receive consent, stressing the importance of clarity, mutual agreement, and respect in all interactions.

As part of our outreach, we also explored the complexities of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH), particularly how power dynamics can influence interactions and decision-making.

We encouraged the students to consider how factors such as age, social status, and authority can create imbalances that may lead to exploitative situations.

Our Human Rights and Litigation Officer, Brenda Kalungi Uwayezu explored how power dynamics, such as age differences or relationships involving authority figures, can complicate the consent process, emphasizing the need for understanding and respect in all situations.

“Our discussions on SEAH not only aim to raise awareness but to also empower the students to recognize and challenge behaviors that may infringe upon their rights,” she said. She discussed how individuals in positions of power, whether due to academic roles, seniority, or even economic standing, have a responsibility to uphold ethical boundaries and foster environments where all students feel safe and respected.



Uwayezu also highlighted the legal framework on safe abortion, which specifies the conditions under which abortion is legally permitted.

We explained to students the importance of understanding this legal framework to access safe, qualified healthcare services when needed.

After the success of our sessions at the UR-Nyagatare Campus, our next stop was at the University of Rwanda - Huye Campus.



STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF HEALTH FACILITIES TO ENHANCE MATERNAL AND NEWBORN CARE

In partnership with UNFPA, this October, we successfully concluded a week-long mission across Rusizi, Karongi, and Nyamasheke districts where we delivered critical medical supplies to 15 health centers. The distributed materials include mannequins for hands-on training, pregnancy calculators, foetal dopplers, kidney dishes, adhesive plasters, and postpartum hemorrhage (PPH) management flipcharts among others.

These tools are essential to elevating maternal and neonatal care standards, with simulation corners established at each health center for practical, real-world training. While handing over the equipment, our Health Systems Strengthening Advisor, Dr. Ruth Byukusenge said that this initiative is a cornerstone in collaborative commitment to reducing preventable maternal and neonatal mortality.



“When we provide these resources, our goal is to ensure healthcare providers gain comprehensive, hands-on experience in both routine and emergency maternal care. This, in turn, strengthens resilient health systems and equips frontline workers with the essential skills needed to save lives,” she said.

The distribution is building on an ambitious mobile mentorship initiative dubbed “MobiMenta” and other existing interventions to reduce preventable maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality.

The Mobile mentorship is a capacity-building model which allows tailoring of training packages to the specific individual needs of the targeted health facilities.

This mission not only strengthens local capacity but also aligns with Rwanda’s vision of achieving zero preventable maternal and neonatal deaths, reinforcing our collective journey toward a healthier and more sustainable future for mothers and newborns across the nation.



STRENGTHENING STAKEHOLDERS' APPROACHES TO ABORTION CARE

This past month, we concluded a transformative one-week Values Clarification and Attitude Transformation (VCAT) training, designed to elevate the understanding and sensitivity of UNFPA partners toward Comprehensive Abortion Care (CAC). This initiative aimed not only to expand the support network for reproductive healthcare but also to strengthen CAC advocacy efforts. Christopher Sengoga, Director of our Center for Health and Rights, emphasized the crucial role of equipping UNFPA partners with the tools necessary to confront biases and assumptions that can hinder the provision of care



He stated, “This training is crucial as it addresses the stigma and biases that often frustrate comprehensive reproductive healthcare. Our goal is to deepen understanding of abortion care and ensure that partners support services in a non-judgmental, empathetic, and inclusive manner.”

The training fostered a reflective atmosphere, urging participants to examine their personal values and attitudes toward abortion. This self-reflection was designed not only to confront individual biases but also to recognize the broader societal pressures that often influence the quality of care delivered. Eugene Kanyamanza, RBC Advisor on Comprehensive Abortion Care (CAC), addressed the gravity of

the issue, shedding light on the continuing struggles related to unintended pregnancies, abortion, and maternal mortality in Rwanda.

He spoke about the challenges of overcoming religious influences, negative attitudes from some healthcare providers, and the stigma surrounding abortion—barriers that often compel individuals and families to keep instances of rape and incest hidden. Kanyamanza emphasized that while Rwanda’s leadership is committed to facilitating safe abortion services, it is essential to address these societal and cultural pressures to fully realize the country’s health goals.



Throughout the training, participants were engaged in interactive exercises, including role-playing and case studies, which allowed them to practice empathy, enhance their communication skills, and better understand the needs of individuals from diverse backgrounds.

These activities provided a platform for participants to cultivate a compassionate and respectful approach to handling sensitive topics in reproductive health.

By the end of the training, it was clear that the participants had gained a deeper appreciation for the significance of rights-based, inclusive healthcare environments.

Sophie Uwimanimpaye from the Rwanda Association of Midwives reflected on the training's impact, noting, "This experience has reaffirmed my commitment to providing care that respects the dignity and rights of individuals, no matter their situation. I will now approach my work with a deeper sense of responsibility and compassion."

These reflections highlight the profound impact of the training and reaffirm the importance of fostering a healthcare environment where individuals are respected, supported, and empowered to make informed decisions about their reproductive health.



ENHANCING INSTITUTIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN SRHR GOVERNANCE AND SERVICE DELIVERY

This October, we had the pleasure of participating in a week-long Peer-to-Peer Technical Assistance Exchange Program at the Reproductive Health Network Kenya (RHNK).

This initiative was designed to deepen our understanding of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) governance

frameworks, enhance financial compliance practices, and strengthen our capacity for effective Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) service delivery. A highlight of the visit was our time at RHNK's clinic and social enterprise, where we gained valuable insights into their monitoring and evaluation systems and organizational management processes.



Observing these systems in action provided us with practical ideas for refining our own approaches to tracking impact and optimizing operational efficiency.

Throughout the program, we also exchanged ideas and strategies for integrating governance protocols into daily operations, reinforcing transparency and accountability across all areas of our work. Our discussions on youth-centered programming were especially insightful, focusing on how best to align our efforts to create more responsive and impactful

SRHR initiatives for young people. Overall, the exchange provided us with a comprehensive understanding of IPPF's management structures, programmatic models, and funding avenues that could support our mission.

This enriching experience not only expanded our technical knowledge but also strengthened our collaborative network within the SRHR landscape, equipping us to drive greater impact in the communities we serve.

IN OTHER NEWS.

This October, we hosted the following radio shows.



05TH OCTOBER 2024: THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN PREVENTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

12TH OCTOBER 2024: TIPS ON HOW YOU CAN PRIORITIZE YOUR MENTAL WELLNESS

19TH OCTOBER 2024: UNDERSTANDING BREAST CANCER AND HOW TO MINIMIZE YOUR RISK

26TH OCTOBER 2024: WHEN IS IT APPROPRIATE TO INTRODUCE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT SRH TO A CHILD



06TH OCTOBER 2024: THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN PREVENTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

13TH OCTOBER 2024: TIPS ON HOW YOU CAN PRIORITIZE YOUR MENTAL WELLNESS

20TH OCTOBER 2024: UNDERSTANDING BREAST CANCER AND HOW TO MINIMIZE YOUR RISK

27TH OCTOBER 2024: WHEN IS IT APPROPRIATE TO INTRODUCE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT SRH TO A CHILD

Courtesy Visits with Our Partners



This October, we convened a meeting with our newest implementing partners, where we congratulated them on their successful proposals, and outlined the key next steps, expectations, and processes that will drive impactful results. These initiatives, supported by the Swedish International Development Corporation Agency (Sida), represent an important milestone in our collective efforts to advance Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights.


STAKEHOLDERS SPEAK:

Frida Temple
@FridaTemple

Very excited to share that UNFPA Rwandas Implementing Partners have been able to get VCAT-training ✨ This helps us reflect on our out personal attitudes and values.

HDI Rwanda @HDIRwanda · 28 Oct

We're pleased to share that, in partnership with @UNFPAWanda, we have concluded a one-week Values Clarification and Attitude Transformation (VCAT) training aimed at enhancing partners' understanding and se...



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Replying to @HDIRwanda

Nta mpamvu n'imwe ikwiye Kuba urwitwazo ngo iteze umurindi ihohotera iryo Ari ryo ryose cyane cyane irikorera abagore n'abakobwa, #hinduraimyumvire twige kubaho mu mahoro no mu bwubahane, twibuka ko ihohotera iryo Ari ryo ryose ribangamira uburenganzira bw'ibanze bwa muntu.

12:05 PM · 18 Oct 24 · 865 Views

Youth Center Ruha...
@yegoruhango

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Replying to @HDIRwanda @Kamonyi and 2 others

You did a great job.
Let's all working together raise awareness in removing all barrier faced by our Youth in receiving SRH services easily

12:49 PM · 04 Oct 24 · 201 Views

1 Repost 2 Likes

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MUTESI SCOVIA
@ScoviaMutesi

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Ibi ntibikwiye kuri buriwe Wasanga ubikora yikinira ariko nk'umuntu ukunzewe twazisanga hari abamwigana bakajya bakubita abagore mumihanda nkuko abikina bo bagakora ibyanyabyo Yabihagarika tugakora imikino idakangurira abandi urugomo

HDI Rwanda @HDIRwanda · 18 Oct

Urwenya ni rwiza.
Iyo rukoreshejwe neza, ruringisha.
Rwakoreshwa nabi, rugasenya.

Aya mashusho bamwe twita urwenya, aho ...

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
- MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT
- NORWEGIAN PEOPLE'S AID
- PARLIAMENT OF RWANDA
- PLAN INTERNATIONAL RWANDA
- PSA
- RNGOF
- ROBERT ANGEL AND FAMILY FOUNDATION
- 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
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- WOMEN'S LINK WORLDWIDE

