

# HDI NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2024



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**Dear Partners,**

## **Welcome to our September Newsletter!**

In this edition, we share a glimpse into several impactful initiatives that highlight our commitment to making a difference.

Following the inauguration of the water well in Rweru Sector, we highlight our outreach program, where we collaborated with local residents to promote lasting healthy behaviour changes within the community.

In our ongoing efforts to combat Mpox, we also share how we engaged with over 1,500 individuals in our Mpox prevention awareness campaign, empowering people to take charge of their health. We also include highlights from our three-day workshop where we engaged law enforcement officials and local leaders in exploring ways to support individuals who use drugs.

This September, we also had an opportunity to celebrate World Contraception Day and the 21st anniversary of the Maputo Protocol, occasions that allowed us to reflect on the progress made in advancing women's health and rights.

Thank you for your unwavering support as we strive to strive for a healthier future for all.

Warm regards,





## PROMOTING EFFECTIVE WASH PRACTICES FOR DISEASE PREVENTION

**A**fter successfully inaugurating the water well in Rweru Sector, Bugesera District, we returned this September, driven by the urgent need to address a virus outbreak in the country. With handwashing and hygiene practices critical to

preventing its spread, we also aimed to promote long-term behavior change around water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) to support lasting improvements in community health.

We emphasized the importance of proper handwashing techniques, safe water storage, and hygienic latrine use as vital steps to halt the transmission of infections.

Participants were reminded that handwashing with soap and clean water, especially before meals and after using the latrine, drastically reduces the risk of gastrointestinal diseases and other infections.

We also highlighted various techniques for boiling drinking water, stressing its necessity for safe consumption, particularly during health crises.

Safe water storage methods were equally prioritized, with practical demonstrations on how to use clean containers and keep drinking water covered to prevent contamination.

Hygienic latrine use was another key discussion point, where we showcased the crucial role sanitation plays not only in protecting individual health but in preventing disease from spreading throughout the community.



Role-playing activities helped participants visualize the connection between sanitation and disease prevention, and hands-on group demonstrations on proper handwashing and safe water handling made the knowledge more practical and relatable. As the virus continued to be a concern, these skills became more relevant than ever.

This initiative deepened our connection with the community, reinforcing our commitment to empowering them with the knowledge and skills to protect their health, especially in times of heightened risk.





## RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT MPOX AMONG KEY POPULATIONS

In response to the recent outbreak of Mpox, we partnered with the RBC to engage over 1,500 individuals across different communities, to raise awareness about Mpox transmission, symptoms, and prevention strategies. Our focus on key populations was informed by the unique vulnerabilities faced by these groups and their high risk of exposure and transmission. During the awareness campaign, we explained the primary mode of Mpox transmission, including direct contact with skin lesions, bodily fluids, or respiratory droplets from an infected person.





We also provided scenarios illustrating how transmission can occur during intimate activities, such as sexual intercourse, or even through casual skin-to-skin contact.

We reminded participants that the virus could survive on surfaces and objects, such as bedding, clothing, or medical equipment, for some time, potentially leading to infection for anyone who comes into contact with contaminated items. The facilitators advised the participants to regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces to minimize the risk of

virus transmission in communal settings. We highlighted that symptoms of Mpox can include fever, chills, fatigue, headaches, muscle aches, swollen lymph nodes, and skin rashes or lesions that may start as flat areas and evolve into raised bumps.

Towards the end of September, we partnered with RBC to facilitate vaccination efforts in Kinyinya and Masaka Health Centers, emphasizing the role of vaccination in enhancing their protection against infection.





## STRENGTHENING LAW ENFORCEMENT APPROACHES TO HARM REDUCTION AMONG DRUG USERS

In September, we convened a three-day workshop for law enforcement officers and local leaders in Nyarugenge District. This workshop focused on reinforcing a human rights framework, enabling participants to cultivate a supportive environment that enhances harm reduction services for people who use drugs

(PWUDs). The Project Coordinator of Tubiteho Project, Elvis Benimana, told the participants that individuals who use drugs especially those who inject drugs face heightened health risks due to behaviors associated with their lifestyles.



He explained that this is further worsened by the fact that drug use is still criminalized in Rwanda, which further discourages individuals from seeking necessary health services out of fear of incarceration.

“Our objective is to help individuals lead healthier lives by preventing the transmission of STDs, Tuberculosis, and Hepatitis C. We also aim to provide mental health services, focusing on improving their overall quality of life,” he said.



The General Director of Isange Rehabilitation Center in Huye, Dr. Patrick Rwagatare, acknowledged the numerous health challenges faced by individuals who use drugs, noting that these difficulties contribute to high rates of relapse. He requested more collaboration to ensure that support to the people who use drugs is tailored to their needs. He also highlighted the importance of expanding such workshops to the rest of the country, stressing that collaboration among all the stakeholders is key. Reflecting on the significance of



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**This workshop has reinforced the importance of integrating people who use drugs into our society without stigmatizing them. We leave this workshop with a reminder that, like everyone else, people who use drugs also have rights and deserve stigma-free treatment,** he said.

The DASSO Coordinator in Nyarugenge district, Patrick Ndirima, noted that one of the key takeaways from the workshop was learning how to navigate cases of drug overdose, a topic he was previously unfamiliar with.

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**I am committed to sharing the knowledge I gained with my colleagues because I think it's crucial that my colleagues understand that there is a significant difference in how to approach a beginner and an addict since each requires a tailored response to ensure effective support and treatment,** he added.

Participants raised critical concerns, including the shortage of essential medications for overdose management, the lack of information on handling overdose cases, and the ongoing challenge of balancing law enforcement responsibilities with the need to protect and support those who use drugs. Another issue discussed was the limited number of rehabilitation centers tailored to harm reduction for PWUD.

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**There are limited rehabilitation centers specifically tailored to help people who use drugs. It is our wish that while we are being educated on harm reduction, more facilities are put in place to enable us to put what we have learned into practice,** said Nirere Françoise, Clinical Psychologist at Nyarugenge District Hospital.

Rwanda currently has two rehabilitation centers: Isange Rehabilitation Center in the southern province and icyizere in Kicukiro, which is associated with Ndera Neuropsychiatric Hospital.



## CELEBRATING WORLD CONTRACEPTION DAY AND MAPUTO PROTOCOL

This September, in collaboration with RBC-Rwanda, UNFPA-Rwanda, Amplify Fund, and fellow partners from the SRHR-Rwanda Coalition to join the community of Nemba Sector in Gakenke District to celebrate World Contraception Day. The theme of this year's celebration, "The Power of Informed Choice in Contraception Use," emphasized the

right of individuals to access accurate information and make informed decisions about their reproductive health. In her remarks, Dr. Aline Uwimana, Division Manager for Maternal, Child, and Community Health at RBC, addressed concerns regarding the shortage of healthcare providers in family planning services.





She presented Rwanda's innovative 4x4 reform, which seeks to quadruple the number of healthcare professionals, noting, "In the coming years, this strategy will ease the burden on our healthcare workers, enabling them to better integrate family planning services into their overall care without being overwhelmed by other responsibilities."

The Deputy Representative of UNFPA-Rwanda, Dr. Renata Tallarico, praised Rwanda's significant progress in expanding contraception access, with coverage rising from 10% to

58% in 2020. However, she highlighted ongoing challenges, particularly teenage pregnancy, which continues to require a multi-sectoral approach.

Dr. Tallarico urged parents and guardians to seek reliable sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information from healthcare facilities and foster an open, supportive environment for young people navigating critical life choices.

Representing civil society, the Executive Director of IMRO-Rwanda Aimable Mwananawe, emphasized the urgent need for accessible contraceptive information and services, especially in underserved, hard-to-reach areas.

He stressed that addressing unmet family planning needs is crucial to preventing unintended pregnancies and reducing unsafe abortions and maternal mortality.

In the lead-up to this event, we spent a week in Nyamasheke District, an area selected due to its unique demographic challenges and gaps in reproductive health services.

In partnership with RBC and UNFPA-Rwanda, we raised awareness and promoted contraceptive services, aiming to empower underserved communities with the information and resources needed to reduce unintended pregnancies and increase contraception uptake.



As Civil Society, we are proud to play a pivotal role in this movement. From urban centers to the most remote areas, we have seen the profound impact that **access to contraception** can have on a community. By giving women and men the tools to plan their futures, we are also giving them the power to build stronger, healthier societies.

**- Aimable Mwananawe**

Executive Director of IMRO - Rwanda,  
speaking at the **#WorldContraceptiveDay2024**  
in **Gakenke District**







## CELEBRATING THE 21ST ANNIVERSARY OF THE MAPUTO PROTOCOL

After World Contraception Day, we were led by our SRHR-Rwanda Coalition partner, GLIHD-Rwanda, to commemorate the 21st anniversary of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, better known as the Maputo Protocol.

Under the theme, "Celebrating 21 Years of Transformation and Recognition of Women's Rights in Africa," we gathered

with civil society, government, and key stakeholders to reflect on the remarkable strides made in advancing women's rights across the continent. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice, Théophile Mbonera, spoke on Rwanda's unwavering commitment to the principles of equality and non-discrimination, noting that these values are central to the nation's progress in safeguarding women's rights.

He remarked, "The Maputo Protocol has been instrumental in shaping Rwanda's legal framework, serving as a powerful advocacy tool for the creation of laws and policies that protect the rights of women and girls."



Dr. Tom Mulisa, Executive Director of GLIHD-Rwanda, highlighted the Protocol's transformative impact, noting how Rwanda has embraced gender equality and women's rights with determination and purpose.

"This event is an opportunity to reflect on the milestones Rwanda has achieved in promoting women's rights and gender equality, while also acknowledging the remaining challenges that need to be addressed to fully realize the promises of the Protocol," he said.

A high-level panel discussion, "Breathing Life into the Maputo Protocol," moderated by Annette Mukiga, Country Director of Kvinna till Kvinna, provided rich insights into the successes and challenges of advancing women's rights.

The Panelists, drawn from government institutions, law firms, and women's rights organizations shared innovative strategies to accelerate progress and break down persistent barriers to gender equality.



## IN OTHER NEWS.

This September, we hosted the following radio & TV shows as well as Twitter Spaces

### RADIO SHOWS



#### KISS FM

**8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024:** HOW TO SUPPORT YOURSELF OR OTHERS EXPERIENCING SUICIDAL THOUGHTS.

**15<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024:** LEARN MORE ABOUT PATIENT RIGHTS.

**22<sup>ND</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024:** RESPONDING TO FAQ ABOUT CONTRACEPTION.

**29<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024:** INTERNATIONAL SAFE ABORTION DAY.



#### ISANGO STAR

**7<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024:** NAVIGATING CONTRACEPTIVES USE AND EFFECTIVENESS

**14<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024:** TACKLING GBV AGAINST TEENAGE MOTHERS

**21<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024:** THE CRITICAL ROLE OF ACCURATE INFORMATION IN FAMILY PLANNING

**28<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024:** INTERNATIONAL SAFE ABORTION DAY.

### TWITTER SPACES



**23<sup>RD</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024:** CONTRACEPTIVE CHOICES: WHAT FACTORS SHOULD YOU CONSIDER?

**12<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024:** MENENGAGE: THE ROLE OF MEN IN COMBATING GBV

### TV SHOWS




**15<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024:** GBV: KEY STRATEGIES FOR RECOGNITION, PREVENTION, AND REPORTING

**29<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024:** PATIENT RIGHTS: CELEBRATING THE INTERNATIONAL PATIENT SAFETY DAY

# STAKEHOLDERS SPEAK:

**HDI Rwanda** @HDIRwan... · 20 Sep  
 Ahead of #WorldContraceptionDay, we are in @Nyamasheke District where we have spent a week collaborating with @RBCRWanda and @UNFPARwanda to raise awareness and promote access to contraceptive services.

Our focus on Nyamasheke district is informed by its unique demographic  
 Show more




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You reposted

**Dr. SUMAYIRE BOB** @DrbobRw  
 Replying to @HDIRwanda @Nyamasheke and 2 others  
 Keep up the good work you are doing 🍌🍌

**cpsarwanda** @cpsarwanda  
 I extend my heartfelt thanks to @HDIRwanda for inviting us to speak about suicide awareness and prevention. It was an honor to share insights and discuss ways to support those in need. A special thanks to @1023KISSFM .



10:23 PM · 08 Sep 24 · 1,324 Views

9 Reposts 34 Likes

**Right Path - Rwanda** @RightPathRwanda  
 Thank you @HDIRwanda for your dedication to promoting sexual and reproductive health among young people. Your work is making a positive impact on their lives. See you soon in our next session. #HealthEducation #SiporoNiUbuzima

**HDI Rwanda** @HDIRwanda · 22 Sep  
 This weekend, we engaged over 1,000 students at Kagarama Secondary School in a discussion on Sexual and Reproductive #Health (SRH).



**JoCare** @Jocare\_rw  
 Following

Many thanks to @medsar\_rwanda, @WHORwanda, @RBCRWanda, @Uni\_Rwanda, and @HDIRwanda for the invaluable opportunity to join the Dissemination Meeting and contribute to the conversation on enhancing adolescent access to Sexual and Reproductive Health services in Rwanda.



Hang'a Pitchfest and 5 others  
 8:26 AM · 09 Sep 24 · 1,471 Views

10 Reposts 49 Likes 1 Bookmark



# 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
- UHAI-EASHRI
- UNAIDS
- UNFPA
- UNICEF
- VSO
- WELLSPRING PHILANTHROPIC FUND
- WEMOS
- WHO
- WOMEN'S LINK WORLDWIDE

