



Striving for a healthy society

Quarterly Newsletter

HIGHLIGHTS FROM JANUARY TO MARCH 2020



Building Healthcare Providers' Capacity on Addressing Barriers to Women & Young People's Access to Safe Abortion Services

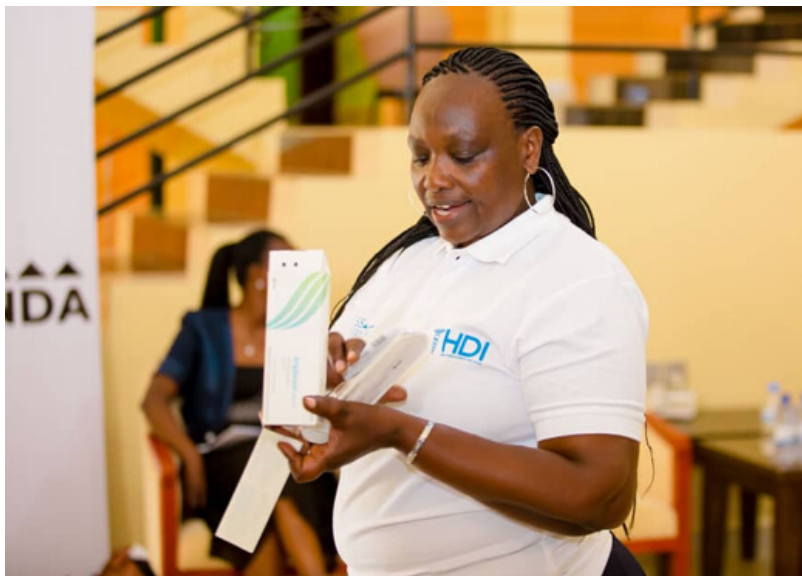
January 22nd

Stigma can deny women & young people's access to services they need in order to take care of their sexual health. It is in this regard that HDI conducted a values clarification workshop with **30** healthcare providers from 3 districts of Kigali, to address stigma and other barriers to women and young people's access to contraceptives and safe abortion services. Participants admitted to receiving many cases of women seeking post abortion care services with complications due to lack of information on abortion care provision in Rwanda, and this can only be achieved by addressing misinformation on abortion related laws. HDI is committed to continue equipping healthcare providers with accurate information on the Ministerial Order determining conditions to be satisfied by a medical doctor to perform an abortion.



February 13th

Partnering with Miss Rwanda to Advance Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights



HDI was delighted to partner with Miss Rwanda in this year's contest that brought together more than **100** girls aged between 18 and 22 across the country. This platform created an opportunity for HDI to raise awareness on strategies to reduce teenage pregnancy and increase access to contraception among adolescents. HDI staff had an interactive session with contestants at the boot camp to increase their knowledge on contraception, family planning and sensitize them on their role in the prevention of teenage pregnancy. HDI believes that when youth ambassadors are empowered with accurate information, it enhances peer to peer awareness, access to services and strengthens advocacy initiatives on SRHR related issues and beyond. During this session, contestants showed interest in learning about menstrual cycle, hygiene, and effective use of contraceptives. It was a great learning experience working with ambitious young girls and we look forward to supporting them to implement their projects considering that most of them were centered around health such as teenage pregnancy, child defilement, mental health and others.



Engaging Key Stakeholders in Nyanza, Huye and Nyaruguru Districts to Improve HIV/AIDS Service Provisions

January - March

From January to March, HDI held consultative meetings with local leaders and healthcare providers from 3 districts of Southern Province (Nyaruguru, Nyanza, and Huye). The meeting focused on the progress of HIV/AIDS project implementation, human rights & key populations. HDI appreciates the progress made by healthcare providers in providing friendly and stigma-free services to key population, furthermore local leaders involve key population into the community development initiative which boosted their confidence to address their concerns. HDI also facilitated trainings for Men having Sex with Men (MSM) and Female Sex Workers (FSWs) peer educators on HIV/AIDS and STIs prevention. In this quarter **201** people were referred for HIV testing, **148,900** condoms and **7,500** lubricants were distributed. Across the 3 districts, **220** hotspots and **68** sites were visited. From the trainings, key populations gained knowledge on the HIV & STIs prevention and family planning use.



Outreach to raise awareness among duty bearers on the Ministerial Order on Abortion

February - March



HDI organized sensitization meetings in Nyanza, Huye and Rutsiro districts with youth and women leaders (Youth Volunteers, National Youth Council Representatives and National Women's Council Representatives), local authorities, religious leaders and healthcare providers to raise awareness on provisions of the law determining offenses and penalties, Ministerial Order determining conditions to be satisfied by a medical doctor to perform an abortion, and the medical professional liability insurance law. Youth and women leaders **were keen to increase their knowledge on women's rights and portrayed commitments to disseminate information on exemptions of abortion** in different community gatherings such as evening forums with parents, community work and other special meetings with their fellows. Local authorities committed to reinforce efforts in sexual reproductive health education and also report perpetrators of child abuse. Healthcare providers acknowledged their role in providing non-judgemental safe abortion services.

What does the community think about access to safe abortion?

February - March

Women and girls in rural areas are prone to risks related to unsafe abortion that may lead to death. It is in this regard that HDI convened outreach campaigns at community level in Nyanza, Huye and Rutsiro districts with teen mothers, parents of teen mothers, and female sex workers to **raise awareness on provisions of the law determining offenses and penalties and the Ministerial Order determining conditions to be satisfied by a medical doctor to perform an abortion, family planning methods, and the law on patient rights.** Many of attendees welcomed the exemptions of abortion provision as a way of saving women's lives. During this campaign, HDI provided women with contraceptives and voluntary HIV testing and counselling. Teen mothers recommended HDI and the Ministry of Health to further conduct outreach campaigns on abortion in schools because students are highly exposed to teenage pregnancy triggering unsafe abortion.



Testimonies from the outreach campaign

February - March

I was born disabled, at 15 years I was impregnated by my uncle. He forced himself on me so many times but couldn't denounce him because of the fear of being chased away yet he was the one who provided basic needs to the family. I was too young to understand the complexity of this kind of violence but old enough to know I should be deeply ashamed of it, and so I told no one. I became used to the sexual violence. I was afraid to be condemned and judged. I had to be strong and smile all the time (In tears). This was the most severe pain I had ever experienced. If I had known about this Ministerial Order on time, I could have terminated the pregnancy.

An 18 year old Teen Mother

My daughter has been sexually abused by her stepfather at the age of 12. One year later, her behavior changed. She claimed feeling dizzy but also seemed lazy to carry out any activity or even attend school. So I decided to take her to the hospital and was told that she was pregnant of 4 months. At first she refused to tell me the man who impregnated her but I insisted then she revealed her truth in a letter that I found slid under the door. I went through a shocking moment knowing what my child went through. After 3 months, she died while giving birth. Now I am living with her son. Had we known about the legal provisions on abortion, she would have probably continued her life and realized her dreams.

A 39 Year old Parent

Participation in the Third INROADS Global Member Gathering on Interventions and Prevention of Abortion Stigma

February 10th - 14th

Inroads is a membership-based International Network hosted by Ipas which stands for prevention of abortion stigma and discrimination. On February 10 - 14, 2020, 2 HDI's staff (Christopher Sengoga and Fidele Mutoni) attended and participated in the 3rd inroads Global Member Gathering, which took place in Mombasa, Kenya at Marina English point Hotel. This 5 days meeting involved strategic planning activities for members to reduce stigma and discrimination associated to abortion in their respective country and to advance health and rights worldwide. Participating in this global gathering was **essential for the work of HDI as the team learned from other members' input and experiences in realizing women's health and rights to safe abortion and it was also an opportunity to share HDI's work.**



Did you know that Rwanda will host the 3rd MenEngage Global Symposium?

February 19th-21st



On 19th and 21st February 2020, HDI participated in a strategic meeting gathering international and local partners & members of the MenEngage Alliance in Kigali, to prepare for the 3rd MenEngage Global symposium planned to be held in Rwanda in November 2020. The purpose was to engage broader partners and begin shaping the symposium. The strategic meeting recreated a space for knowledge-sharing and collective action on engaging men & boys in an inclusive and accountable manner. **HDI as the chair of Rwanda Men Engage Network (RWAMNET) is working on 6 thematic areas that are gender justice, youth empowerment, SRHR & HIV/AIDS, GBV, child's rights & gender equality, and advocacy for LGBTI community.** Prior to this meeting, Ms Marie Ange Uwase, the Director of Center for Health and Rights at HDI represented Rwanda at Men Engage Africa - Annual General Meeting that took place in Nigeria to strengthen the governance structure to have a strong regional network, to attain gender equality for the sustainable development and to engage African participation in the 3rd MenEngage Global Symposium.

Reflecting on the progress of the project: Empower, Include and Respect

February 24th



In this quarter, HDI received Ms Angeles Mohedo a Result Oriented Monitoring (ROM) Mission expert who was in Rwanda. On February 20th, she had a field visit in Huye, Nyanza and Ruhango districts to meet district partners (Joint Action Development Forum, Director of Health and the head of CUSP health center), and some final beneficiaries of the project (A local leader, a security officer at cell level, a health care provider, etc.). The main objective of the ROM mission is to assess the progress of the project implementation in order to formulate recommendations for the way forward. She shared her recommendations on the best practices and areas of improvement in the current project titled “Empower, Include and Respect” Making human rights work for LGBTI and sex workers communities in Rwanda funded by EU and being implemented by HDI.

Texas McCombs University Learning Visit to HDI

March 10th

HDI was pleased to host 20 masters' students from University of Texas McCombs. The visit was a platform for the students to gain information about the advocacy work that HDI has been involved in and they also got an opportunity to learn about services provided at the center including the hotline, family planning counselling and HIV testing. The Executive Director had a session with the students in which he highlighted strategies that have helped HDI grow and improve the well-being of people in the areas of HDI's intervention. Among others, these included initiation of stigma-free services through HDI's center for health and rights, collaboration with strategic organizations, applying a human rights based approach and creating a safe space for adolescents and young people seeking services. As majority were business students, they also took the opportunity to ask about other initiatives in Rwanda that support health and business in general.



Convention on the Rights of the Child Committee during the 83rd Session

January 20th to February
01st



HDI submitted supplementary information on Rwanda's compliance to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in relation to sexual and reproductive health of adolescents. HDI was represented by the Head of Policy and Advocacy who attended sessions of the CRC Committee during the 83rd Session held in Geneva. With reference to its general comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence and taking note of targets 3.7 & 5.6 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommended Rwanda to: **Strengthen adolescent reproductive health education in all schools to prevent early pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and substance abuse; Ensure that all adolescents have access to confidential mental health services and counselling in primary health care, schools and communities; Improve adolescents' access to confidential and age-appropriate reproductive and sexual health services, family planning services and modern contraceptives; and Ensure access to safe abortion and post-abortion care services for adolescent girls, without the need for consent and to be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.**

HDI wishes to thank our partners and supporters:

- AmplifyChange
- Catholics for Choice
- CDC
- The Center for Reproductive Rights
- The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- Delegation of the European Union to Rwanda
- DFID
- EAHP
- The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
- The Embassy of Sweden
- FEMNET
- FOSI/OSIEA
- GIZ
- Global Health Corps
- The Global Fund
- Norwegian People's Aid
- Peace Corps
- PROMUNDO
- PSA
- PSF/Emory University
- SAAF/IPPF
- SisterLove Inc.
- Society for Family Health
- Stephen Lewis Foundation
- Stop TB Partnership
- UHAI-EASHRI
- UNAIDS
- UNFPA
- UNICEF
- WHO
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Local Government
- Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion
- Ministry of Justice
- Rwanda Bio-Medical Center
- Rwanda Education Board
- Rwanda Governance Board
- Imbutu Foundation
- GLIHD
- IMRO
- RNGOF
- RSOG
- RBP prtners
- Women's Link WorldWide
- Global Giving





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Hotline for Sexual and Reproductive Health

Information: 3530