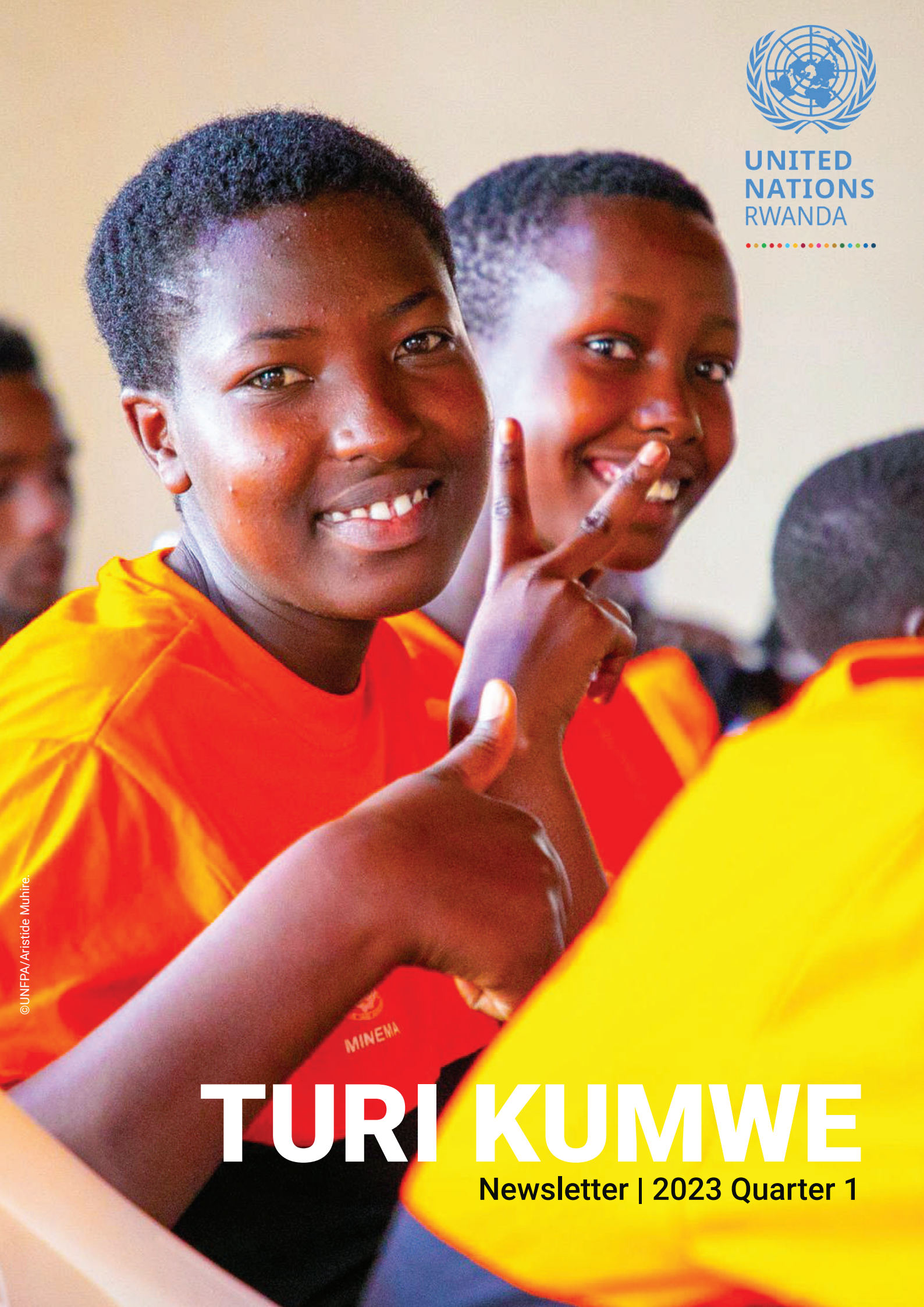




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# TURI KUMWE

Newsletter | 2023 Quarter 1



# FOREWORD



**Ozonnia Ojielo**  
UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR

I am delighted to share with you the latest edition of our quarterly newsletter, which provides a glimpse into the work of the UN Country Team (UNCT) in Rwanda. In the past few months, we have had several exciting initiatives and engagements that demonstrate our continued commitment to partnership as we strive to serve Rwandans.

I paid a courtesy call to the First Lady of Rwanda, Her Excellency Jeannette Kagame, to discuss areas of mutual interest, collaboration, and partnership, particularly regarding quality education, health, and empowerment programmes, especially for women and children. She reiterated that the goals of Imbuto and the UN are well aligned, noting that they are natural partners in poverty reduction efforts for the people of Rwanda.

Our UNCT visited the Mahama refugee camp, where we witnessed first-hand the triple nexus approach – humanitarian, development, and peace and its impact on improving the lives of refugees and host communities. We are committed to working closely with the Government of Rwanda to ensure that refugees have access to essential services and opportunities to become self-reliant.

I had the privilege to co-chair my first Development Partners retreat with the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, Dr. Uzziel Ndagijimana. With fruitful discussions on ways to strengthen our partnerships and enhance coordination in delivering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Rwanda, it was a valuable opportunity to explore innovative approaches to achieving sustainable development in Rwanda.

We also participated in various national dialogues like Umushikirano, the Rwanda Patriotic Front Inkotanyi international conference, where participants engaged with the Government and other stakeholders on Rwanda's development priorities.

Through various platforms, we exchanged ideas, reflected on the progress and challenges, and renewed our commitment to achieving Rwanda's development goals. At UN Rwanda, we remain committed to partnership as we serve the people.

We believe that by working closely with the government, civil society, private sector, and other stakeholders, we can contribute to creating a better future for all Rwandans. We will continue to explore innovative ways to leverage our collective resources, knowledge, and expertise to accelerate progress towards the SDGs and other development priorities.

As part of our efforts to enhance communication and collaboration, we organized training for our UN Communications and Programme teams on effective communication. We believe that investing in the capacity of our staff is essential for delivering quality and effective services to Rwandans.

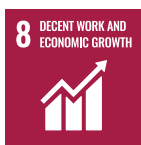
We also held retreats for the Gender and PSEA task group, as well as the Operations Management Team. These efforts are aimed at fostering a more people-centered approach to our work, ensuring that we remain grounded in the realities and needs of the communities we serve.

As we mark the 29th commemoration of the Genocide against the Tutsi, we remember our colleagues who were killed in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, comfort the survivors, stand in solidarity with Rwandans, and reaffirm our commitment to promoting unity, reconciliation, and peace in Rwanda.

We remain dedicated to supporting Rwanda's development aspirations and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Turikumwe!





Efficiently tackling waste management together: a group of dedicated youth sorting, recycling, and disposing of waste responsibly at Green Care Rwanda Ltd, ensuring a cleaner and greener Huye.

## FROM A JOB SEEKER TO A JOB CREATOR: THANKS TO THE JOINT PROGRAMME THAT ENABLED NIZEYIMANA TO BLOSSOM.

When Noel Nizeyimana was about to complete his university degree at the National University of Rwanda, one of the key lingering issues in his mind was whether he would secure a job to move his life forward. Little did he know that he would end up spending a considerable amount of time walking the streets, knocking on various doors in both public and private institutions, and submitting his job applications.

Indeed, the soil and environmental science graduate sent out quite a number of job applications; unfortunately, he couldn't secure any opportunities. He had numerous ambitions and future plans, but as he gazed at the sky, he couldn't help but feel dejected, witnessing his aspirations evaporating.

After his job search dreams failed, Nizeyimana decided to draft a project proposal with the intention of starting his own company. That's when he reconnected with three other colleagues whom he had previously studied with at the university and immediately, established GreenCare Rwanda Ltd.

Fortunately, their proposal was approved, making them one of the recipients of funds from the UN Youth Joint Programme implemented jointly by UNDP, FAO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, and WHO.

The company has thus far secured Rwf32 Million as a great innovator from various organizations, including UNDP under the YouthConnect initiative.

The company is currently negotiating to collaborate with the World Food Programme. The young company has invested in an Integrated Waste Management Solution to process waste products into organic fertilizers for agricultural activities.

*"I would like to express my gratitude to the United Nations for its support. Our company has transformed into a significant source of employment, currently employing over 27 permanent staff members. Out of those, 20 are youth, and 10 of them are women". he said.*

*He added, "We are actively seeking additional partners to facilitate the expansion of our company and provide employment opportunities for hundreds of youth and women, which is our primary goal."*

Located in Huye District in southern Rwanda, the company has diversified into the plastic recycling business. It treats and processes between 400-600 tonnes of waste, producing materials supporting the region's agricultural activities that support agricultural activities in the region.

 [Read more](#)







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A member of Icyerekezo cyacu is hoeing pineapples in the cooperative plantation from the support of the ECOBRIGADE programme supported by UNDP Rwanda.

## ENHANCING CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND INTEGRATED AGRICULTURE IN DISASTER-PRONE AREAS OF RWANDA

As the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres said, humanity is on thin ice, and that ice is melting fast. The clock is ticking on the climate crisis, and farmers in Rwanda are stepping up to mitigate climate change through the UN Rwanda's Joint Programme Enhancing Climate Resilience and Integrated Agriculture in Disaster-Prone Areas of Rwanda. This collaborative effort, led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), aims to make a difference in disaster-prone areas.

### Unlocking the Power of Organic Fertilizers

Meet Petronile Nyiranzarindwanimana, a seasoned farmer residing in the Rulindo district, Northern Rwanda. She has over two decades of experience cultivating fruits and vegetables on a vast 50-acre land. Thanks to the Joint Programme, Nyiranzarindwanimana has undergone training in using organic fertilizers and is reaping incredible rewards.

*"Before embracing organic fertilizers, my cabbage harvest weighed in at 6 tonnes. Now, not only do I yield the same quantity, but the fascinating thing is that the taste of organic cabbage has doubled the income I generate from selling my produce. I used to receive 100 Rwandan Francs per kilogram, but now it's a solid 180 Rwandan Francs,"* Nyiranzarindwanimana proudly shares. She chuckles as she adds, *"I've realized that climate-smart agriculture truly pays off. Chemical fertilizers were expensive, requiring an investment of 300,000 Rwandan Francs.*

*However, with organic fertilizers, I now invest a mere 180,000. My life has improved significantly. Just visit my home and witness how happy and healthy my children are. It's high time people consider agriculture as a respectable profession."*

### The Mighty Role of Organic Farming

Organic farming takes center stage in addressing climate change. By prioritizing natural methods and eschewing synthetic inputs like chemical fertilizers and pesticides, organic farming brings forth several positive impacts on climate change mitigation. These include reduced greenhouse gas emissions, improved soil health and carbon sequestration, lowered energy consumption, and enhanced water conservation.

### Harnessing the Potential of Organic Pesticides

Therese Nzamwitakuze proudly holds plants like Ikibonobono, Inyarabasanyi, and Umuhuku as she explains her transition to using organic pesticides. Organic pesticides, derived from naturally occurring sources such as minerals, plants, or animals, are known for their biodegradability when exposed to weather or soil microbes.

*"I've cultivated an abundance of plants like these, and produce natural pesticides from them. I used to spend 28,000 Rwandan Francs on chemical pesticides, but now I don't spend a penny. I have everything I need right here on my farm,"* Nzamwitakuze shares with a smile.

[Read more](#)







Marie Chantal Niyonkuru, is a software developer, who teaches coding.

## BRINGING WOMEN AND GIRLS TO THE CENTRE OF TECHNOLOGY RWANDA AND INNOVATION

This year's International Women's Day celebration focused on the role of technology and innovation in achieving gender equality. Marie Chantal Niyonkuru, a 22-year-old software developer from the rural village of Muyange in the Rusizi district, embodies this theme through her journey pursuing computer science.

Chantal grew up in a remote town where her closest relatives had no knowledge of computers. Even her mother was initially skeptical about her daughter's interest in computer science. *"Opening a computer for the first time during the UN Women's African Girls Can Code Initiative (AGCCI) boot camp was a life-changing moment for me,"* she explains.

*"I faced hurdles at home. Owing to my very humble background, my mother would have let my brother do it instead. But I knew that pursuing a career in technology was the right path for me. It has opened a world of incredible opportunities, and I'm excited about what the future holds,"* she adds. Already, the software developer has created various applications such as a blockchain-based rewarding system,

a bus booking app, a doctor appointment system, and an e-commerce platform. Chantal is also passionate about sharing her knowledge and inspiring others. She has taught coding to over 100 software developers in Rwanda and delivered motivational talks at girls' schools.

In her hometown, she established ICT clubs where she trains children in basic computer skills. As UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous emphasized in her IWD statement, *"Technology and innovation are game changers...if used wisely, they can bring us back on track for the SDGs and a more peaceful world."* Through her work and dedication, Chantal is empowering women and girls in her community to be part of the digital age.

Launched in 2018 by UN Women and the African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), AGCCI is working to empower girls across Africa by helping them build digital literacy and computer skills and placing them on the path to tech careers.

 [Read more](#)







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- 10
- 11

- 16
- 17



Various UN Heads of Agencies visit the Paysannat L School near Mahama Camp, in Kirehe District Rwanda.

## INSIDE RWANDA'S LARGEST SCHOOL WHERE THE UN IS HELPING THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS

Paysannat L is more than just a school— it's a community. With five campuses, it's the largest school in Rwanda, with over 20,000 children from both the nearby Mahama refugee camp and the Rwandan host community. Managing such a large number of students is no easy feat, but thanks to the support of UN agencies, the school is thriving.

The UN Country Team paid a visit to Paysannat L in March 2023 to see the impact of their collective support. During the visit, Muhanano Jackson, the head teacher at the Paysannat L C campus, expressed his gratitude for the UN's assistance but requested more support to address the lingering challenges. *"The children here are eager to learn but there remain big challenges. Many of our classrooms are overcrowded,"* Mr. Jackson said.

The UN's support has helped to address some of these challenges, and it is yielding positive results. The UN Rwanda Resident Coordinator Dr. Ozonnia Ojielo, during the visit, said *"Our visit to Paysannat L school showed us the power of a community dedicated to education for all. We are committed to continuing to contribute to building resilient and sustainable communities in refugee camps and host communities"*.

In 2021, the UNHCR, with funding from ProFuturo, built an IT room at the school and established a connected computer, tablets, projectors, and other digital gadgets to provide students with a more personalized and interactive learning experience, especially for science subjects. *"As we don't have a laboratory here, we use the IT tools to do simulations of experiments and results that we would otherwise not be able to showcase to the students,"* said Eric Uwintije, a physics teacher at the school.

Eric was initially nervous about teaching at such a large school but now feels there is no difference between teaching Rwandans and refugees from Burundi and Congo. He aims to create harmony and a conducive environment for all students. WFP provided hot meals for children in early childhood development programmes and primary school. In addition, UNICEF, through its collaboration with Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda (IEE) and the Ministry of Education, supplied laptops to 366 teachers at the school. IOM also supported the installation of durable handwriting stations at the schools.

UN agencies are working together to make sure that every child at Paysannat L has access to quality education. But it's not just about academics. The school has also introduced a 'Girls Room', which provides a safe space for female students to rest and get sanitary products when they are on their menstrual periods. Salome, the teacher who runs the room, says its impact has been transformative. Since the girls' room opened, there has been a notable decrease in the number of teenage girls dropping out of school. She hopes to see the initiative expanded to the other four campuses of Paysannat L school.

From the 'Girls Room' to the smart classrooms, learning outcomes at Paysannat L school are improving. The head teacher, Jackson said that in previous end-of-year exams, some of their students were among the top-ranked in the country, marking important progress towards achieving SDG Goal 4.

Evidently, UN support is helping transform education in Rwanda, including creating a better future for students of Paysannat L School.







©FAO/Eugene Uwimana.

Gabriel weeding his eggplant garden

## FARMER FIELD SCHOOL INITIATIVE EMPOWERS RWANDAN AGRICULTURALISTS

Gabriel Nzumvirimana, a 37-year-old Rwandan farmer, owes his successful eggplant business to the skills he acquired at the Farmer Field School (FFS), a group-based approach that trains farmers on sustainable production practices. For eight years Gabriel cultivated fruits and vegetables on his 20-acre farm, applying farming best practices that ensure a thriving business.

*"FFS is an important solution because we learned a lot. We initially used bad quality seeds, planted excess, and incurred losses because the produce was low compared to the number of seeds planted" he explained, adding: "But now, we plant in an advised crop spacing to reduce the number of crops and save money."*

The FFS brings together farmers, livestock herders, and fisher folk to learn about sustainable production practices. The approach enhances ecosystem services, improves skills and knowledge, and empowers individuals and groups to move towards more sustainable practices and improve livelihoods.

Gabriel is one of many Rwandan farmers who benefited from the FFS programme, which was established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

and implemented under a One UN Joint Project titled "Creating peace dividends for Women and Youth through increased cross border trade and strengthened food security." The project was funded by the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund.

The World Food Programme and the United Nations Development Programme also supported the project that lasted from July 2022 to January 2023.

*"Gabriel demonstrated that Farmer Field Schools work. He learned the best farming techniques and applied them to his farm, and the eggplant business is changing his life,"* says Coumba Sow, the FAO Representative in Rwanda.

Ms. Sow adds that Gabriel can *"feed his family and pay school fees and health insurance. He is one of the hundreds of Rwandan farmers benefiting from this great extension mechanism."* The success of Gabriel's eggplant business is proof of the effectiveness of the FFS approach. Farmers observe and nurture their crops and adapt their practices to meet specific needs.

Increased agricultural productivity contributes to sustainable food security and peaceful cohabitation across borders, making it a valuable tool in building and sustaining peace.







© WFP/John Paul Sesonga.

Epiphanyes picks eggplants in her vegetable garden at Rubavu, preparing to package and cross to Goma. More women are involved in informal cross-border trade between Rubavu and Goma.



## POST-HARVEST TRAINING FOR CROSS-BORDER TRADERS BOOSTS FOOD SECURITY

Epiphanyes Nyirarukundo, a 32-year-old woman involved in informal cross-border small-scale trading between Rubavu, Rwanda, and Goma, the capital of North Kivu in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), faces many challenges in her daily business, including robbery, major losses and low yields.

Now, there is a lifeline for Epiphanyes and her fellow traders following UN-provided training for women, men, and youth on post-harvest handling of fruits and vegetables. It is part of the UN's goal to create peace dividends for women and youth and strengthen food security in border communities. The training supports over 1,400 farmers to create 79 savings groups, benefiting over 2,700 community members.

In addition, over 460 storage crates were provided to small-scale farmers and traders to allow them to handle fruits and vegetables during cross-border business operations. Other items include over 390 tarpaulins, 150 pallets, and 56 wooden shelves that will ensure better storage of produce.

*"I'm happy that my cooperative is well organized, and this has solved the challenges that came previously with unorderly trading at the borders,"* says Epiphanyes.

*"My colleagues and I sell fruits, cabbages, and carrots across the border in Goma. We are now able to store vegetables and negotiate good prices."*

The UN's support is organized under a project jointly implemented by the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

For decades, an estimated 1.2 million people in Goma relied on vegetables from Rubavu through informal cross-border business, which is estimated at USD 125.3 million annually.

The 2022 national statistics report indicates that DRC is the second largest key destination market for Rwanda's regional exports, with a trade value of USD 40.83 million (11.9 percent share), after the United Arab Emirates, which is ranked first with a trade value worth USD 163.99 million (47.9 percent share).

Post-harvest training for traders will give them income opportunities as well as strengthen food security and sustainable livelihoods.







Weaving has brought smiles to refugee women



## WEAVING: A GAME CHANGER FOR RWANDAN REFUGEE WOMEN

Woven baskets are iconic items in Rwanda. Originally used to store grains and carry fruit and vegetables, in recent years woven baskets represent Rwandan culture; they are symbols of peace, hope, and opportunity. Weaving baskets, therefore, are economically relevant to refugees who found safety in Rwanda after fleeing their countries.

In the Mahama refugee camp, home to over 58,000 refugees from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), refugee women have embraced the opportunities in basket weaving.

*“The process of doing something with your hands can heal,”* explains Jean, a Burundian refugee who fled to Rwanda with her family in 2015. Jean explains that after collecting and drying natural grasses and fibers used as raw materials, a lot of thought goes into the dying process—the colors and weaving patterns to create a basket with a market appeal.

It may look easy, but a basket takes on average three days to weave. Jean is part of the Turashoboye Cooperative formed in 2021 by 12 women but has since grown to include 43 women: Burundian and Congolese refugees living in the Mahama camp. *“We don’t turn away anyone who wants to join us,”* says Jean.

*“Instead, we are happy to teach more women the skill and help them make money. If we make more products, then the increased income helps us all.”* On average, the Cooperative sells a woven basket for around 15,000 Rwf directly to customers, although prices depend on the size and material used. Through working with initiatives such as Indego Africa supported by UN Women and UNHCR’s Made51 brand, the women can access foreign markets in Africa, the US, and beyond, where their baskets can fetch over 30,000 Rwf each. The success of the project can be seen through the joy that Jean and her peers express when talking about it.

Aline, a mother of two, explains how the small income from weaving baskets gives her a sense of independence and confidence. *“I can rely on myself; I know with the money I get from these baskets; my family will be able to eat, and I can buy clothes for my two children.”*

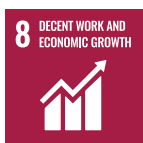
Achieving gender equality and supporting women’s empowerment is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Turashoboye Cooperative demonstrates the value of small investments in achieving the SDGs. *“We have lots of products, lots of ideas but the market is limited,”* concludes Jean, appealing to the UN in Rwanda to support the Cooperative to access a range of markets in Rwanda and abroad.







Imani Bora is the brains behind Hatch Plus to improve Rwanda's chicken supply.



## INNOVATORS, RWANDAN DIASPORA PARTNER TO BOOST POULTRY FARMING

At just 23 years old, Imani Bora co-founded Hatch Plus to improve the chicken supply in Rwanda.

Hatch Plus produces smart egg incubators that are controlled by smartphones. It uses a solar-powered pre-programmed digital machine that can incubate and hatch 30,000 eggs at a time. The incubators from Hatch Plus have a 92% success hatch rate and are far more affordable than their foreign competitors.

Imani, from the Musanze district in the Northern province of Rwanda, has been working in the poultry industry for the better part of the last decade. He brings his industry experience and passion for Rwanda's development to bear on Hatch Plus.

Through the "Young Innovators Competition", Hatch Plus received a grant to purchase new incubator machines for roughly 500 poultry farmers. Shortly after, they were able to transition their business model to allow farmers to use egg incubators as a service instead of buying them outright.

Imani also worked directly with Rwandan Diaspora professionals to improve Hatch Plus. The Diaspora mobilization and engagement programme is funded by the Belgian government and the IOM Development Fund.

*"We have been really open, and we are very grateful to have met an expert from the diaspora," Imani says, adding: "They really understand the business and the market and almost everything in the field."*

Leveraging the skills and expertise of the Rwandan Diaspora, Imani has taken Hatch Plus to the next level. He believes Hatch Plus' future is bright, as the company grows and provides services to meet the growing demand of the poultry industry in Rwanda.

Through collaborations and partnerships, poultry farmers like Imani are able to develop innovative solutions that improve the quality and sustainability of poultry production in Rwanda. Technology and modern practices could potentially enhance productivity and profitability for farmers, contributing to the country's food security and economic growth.

 [Watch for more](#)



The Diaspora mobilization and engagement programme is funded by the Government of Belgium and the IOM Development Fund.







©UNHCR/Lilly Carlisle.

Daniella sees hope in sports



# HOW SPORTS TRANSFORM REFUGEE CHILDREN.

Daniella Niteka doesn't remember much about her family's life in their native country, Burundi. She at least recalls that they fled their home in 2015 when violence broke out in their country.

Settled in Mahama refugee camp in Kirehe District in the Eastern Province of Rwanda, since then, Daniella, now aged 12, grew up with deep interest in sports as a form of physical exercise and a way of making new friends.

Currently in primary five at Paysannat school near the camp, she started by playing volleyball in the school. Two years ago, she began learning how to play basketball.

*"It's amazing when I see people playing sports," she says. "When I am playing, I get to meet many people and we become friends. I have made so many new friends. Playing sports at school helps me stay focused and perform well. After playing in the camp, I go back home feeling relaxed."*

Daniella was the 5th best performer in her class of 98 refugees and Rwandan students last term, and she hopes to keep excelling.

Refugees and Rwandan children in Mahama, like Daniella, have access to sports facilities and mentorship thanks to Educate A Child (EAC), a global programme that aims to reduce the number of out-of-school children in countries.

Over the last year, some of the sports grounds have been rehabilitated and new ones built in Daniella's school premises. Sports equipment were also procured while youth have been trained to be Sports Facilitators.

Astere Tuyikorere, 29, is another Burundian refugee and one of the Youth Sports Facilitators in Mahama camp. He maintains that sport is more than leisure for refugee youths like Daniella. It helps build resilience, leadership, and teamwork in the refugee community, he says. At 21 years old in 2015, Astere fled to Rwanda alone where he reunited with his brothers and sisters in the camp. He believes that the difficult situation he went through puts him in a better position to help fellow youth refugees through sports.

He explains: "After arriving here in the camp, I spent like a month at home feeling lonely. I was traumatized".

*"Eventually, I volunteered to organize a campaign to combat drug abuse and unwanted pregnancies through sports. I made new friends and learned to cope with new living conditions."*

With increased access to sports facilities in all refugee communities across the country, UNHCR hopes to continue to assist refugee children like Daniela to play, learn and develop in favorable environments.







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