



## FOREWORD



# SHAPING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER

Dear esteemed partners and readers,

I welcome you to the 2nd edition of "Turi Kumwe" our quarterly One UN in Rwanda Newsletter. This publication provides an insight into what the One UN in Rwanda have been doing during the quarter and how all UN agencies **are working together - delivering results as one for the benefit of the people, leaving no one behind.**

I hope this publication finds you and your families well, in these very uncertain and challenging times. I extend my sincere condolences and my sympathy to those who lost their loved ones and express my best wishes of speedy recovery to people who are sick.

I praise the Government of Rwanda in general, the health workers in particular, for their tremendous efforts to keep us all safe and healthy!

As we are all ware, the COVID-19 pandemic continues spreading, more and more -- infected cases are emerging with the death toll climbing day by day globally. It has left health care systems strained, the education system disrupted, and businesses and economies in the world over uncertain about the future. In addition, this pandemic has major social impact including on mental health.

I commend the Government of Rwanda for their leadership, strong actions and unwavering commitment in responding to COVID-19. The health workers also deserve special recognition for their tremendous and tireless efforts to keep us all safe and healthy. The citizens and residents of Rwanda have also played a critical role with individual, collective contributions and adhering to the Government measures. *"Murakoze Urakoze!"*

•Office of the UN Resident Coordinator •  
4 KN 67 St • Kigali • PO Box 445  
[twitter.com/UNRwanda](https://twitter.com/UNRwanda)

In Rwanda, the Government has put in place enhanced measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 with the support from the UN, Development Partners, and all key players. We are all working hand in hand for the well-being of all residents of Rwanda. **It is our shared responsibility to work together**, protecting personal health and that of others around us. UN Rwanda collectively will continue to play its role both in the fight against the COVID-19 but also in the successful implementation and support of the Economic Recovery Plan in collaboration with the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1).

This year, the UN is marking its 75th anniversary in a middle of a global crisis/ pandemic that has highlighted the flaws in the international system. However, COVID-19 pandemic has re-emphasized the great need for global solidarity and shared responsibility for our human security. It has shown what it means to be **"a human being"** in this interdependent and interconnected world. This microscopic virus knowing no borders taught us that **"No one is safe until everyone is safe"**. More than ever the UN charter "we the people" remain relevant to pave the way for hope for a future we all want for the next 75 years. However, this means that we work together for a more harmonious, inclusive and equitable world, prosperous for everyone, praying diversity and fighting bigotry, protecting our planet, putting people at the center and managing risks by building resilient institutions and systems (including in health for all).

All these elements should be grounded on fundamental human rights, solidarity, giving more voices and power to youth and women, people with disabilities and vulnerable people, to citizens in general, on building back better and greener with a focus on the agenda 2030, our blueprint for the people, the planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. Most importantly, develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and dignity, the peaceful resolution of disputes and stronger international co-operation.

We also need to strengthen multilateralism in the digital era, by being more inclusive with the Government at national and decentralized level, the civil society organization, the private sector, the financial institutions including the International financial institutions and a more efficient and **"fit-for-purpose"** United nations, working in a more coherent and cohesive way aligned with the UN reforms. Whenever, we are together, we will find the required "adaptative leadership", resolve, political will and financial and human resources to solve problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and to promote respect for human rights, for a safer and better earth for all.

Now is the time to put into practice our commitment to future generations that is central to UN Charter. Join us to shape the UN future by taking the short survey: [www.un75.online](http://www.un75.online) or download the survey <https://collect.un75.online/>. Your voice should be heard. I already have taken the survey!

The UN has remained focused in advocating for global solidarity in addressing the current challenges at all levels. The global solidarity is key in ensuring complementarity, value addition and building stronger support to national response to the prevailing situation. Our humanity is tested. However, I have the strong conviction that we shall overcome! Together!

Over the last quarter, the UN in Rwanda was pleased to join the rest of the globe to commemorate this year's World Refugee Day and I commend Rwanda for providing asylum to more than 150,000 refugees for the last two decades, the World Environment Day where Rwanda has implemented tremendous measures to protect the environment, International Day of UN Peacekeepers, particularly Women in Peacekeeping, to mention a few.

In this Newsletter, you will read stories from, IOM, UN Women, UNAIDS, FAO, WFP, UNFPA, UNCDF, UN Volunteers, UNICEF, UNDP, UNECA and UNHCR. I invite you to visit [rwanda.un.org](http://rwanda.un.org) and to follow us 'as it happens' Twitter & FB: @UNRwanda

I take this opportunity to once again salute the Government of Rwanda of its commitment to ensure development of this country and safety of all people living in Rwanda, Leaving No One Behind.

The One UN in Rwanda and myself, pledge through the voice of our UN Secretary General, António Guterres, to continue doing everything within our capacity and resources to improve the standard of living of the people in a world in peace within families, communities, societies, between countries and with our environment. Today and every day, we stand in unity and solidarity.

I wish to conclude by wishing everyone a **Happy Liberation Day "Kwibohora26"**.

We are together! Turi Kumwe!

**Fodé Ndiaye**  
United Nations Resident Coordinator

# BETTING ON AEROPONICS TO INCREASE FOOD SECURITY IN RWANDA



*Apollinaire inspects the plantlets in the greenhouse. One plantlet produces between 30-50 potato tubers.*

©FAO/Teopista Mutesi

## Growing safe food sustainably, saving the increasingly scarce water resource

Growing food without soil or natural light is not something many Rwandans had seen or heard about. Agriculture – growing crop in soil and relying on natural rain and sun is embedded in the culture of the people of Rwanda.

Currently, about 67 percent of Rwandans – of 12 million population – are employed in agriculture, with arable land covering over 1.56 million hectares at national level.

According to the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), Rwanda's population will grow to 16.9 million by 2032. The rise is expected to increase the demand for food yet the arable land will not expand and will likely shrink due to expansion of cities.

New food production innovations will have to be adopted especially those that ensure high productivity with less or small spaces. One of those technologies that are being tried out in Rwanda, is the Aeroponic system.

light is not something many Rwandans had seen or heard about. Agriculture – growing crop in soil and relying on natural rain and sun is embedded in the culture of the people of Rwanda.

Growing food without soil or natural light is not something many Rwandans – of 12 million population – are employed in agriculture, with arable land covering over 1.56 million hectares at national level.

According to the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), Rwanda's population will grow to 16.9 million by 2032. The rise is expected to increase the demand for food yet the arable land will not expand and will likely shrink due to expansion of cities.

New food production innovations will have to be adopted especially those that ensure high productivity with less or small spaces. One of those technologies that are being tried out in Rwanda, is the Aeroponic system.

### Meet the pioneer

Apollinaire Karegeya is the pioneer of this system in Rwanda. He started greenhouse Aeroponics farming for potato tubers in 2015. For more than 20 years he had been using soil to grow maize, potatoes, and beans with the biggest chunk for home consumption and a little for sale.

Aeroponics is a way of planting in which roots are suspended on the air and grow in a humid environment without soil. The plants are sprayed with water and nutrient solution.

He cultivated four hectares but getting quality seeds was a challenge as some would come already infected with bacteriosis and viruses. He was buying the seeds from the government and private seed multipliers in and outside Rwanda.

"I conducted three study tours to different countries with the support from the government. I was amazed by this soilless technology, it prevents diseases and increases productivity," says Apollinaire.

His greenhouse is 9 by 20 meters on a small land. He plants about 2,500 plantlets which produce potato tubers in 2.5 months. The technology is climate friendly and tubers are disease free because normally crops are attacked by diseases mostly from the soil.

"Since it is not rotational farming, I grow three times a year. When the nutrients are well regulated, you can be assured of the yield, and the profit is easy to calculate. For instance, I generate RWF6 million (approx. USD 6 400) on an investment of RWF3 million (approx. USD 3 200). This wasn't the case with growing in open fields where you're on the nature's mercy," he testified.

Improving mindset, increasing profitability  
When Apollinaire first introduced his technology there was a lot to learn, from storage of the tubers, to marketing his produce, and generally changing the mindset of the Rwandan population about his potatoes.

"Tubers from the Aeroponics are kept for four months before they can be transferred to gardens. I lacked storage facilities, and along the way some potatoes would rot. Also, I didn't know I needed to make known my new technology, and business in general," said Apollinaire. **Read the full article here**

[fao.org/rwanda/news/detail-events/en/c/1272458/](https://fao.org/rwanda/news/detail-events/en/c/1272458/)

Turi Kumwe NewsLetter - 2020 - Q2

## IOM COVID-19 RESPONSE:

### SUPPORTING A CONTEXTUALIZED RESPONSE AT THE POINT OF ENTRY.

The International Organization for Migration-IOM Rwanda's EU funded cross border action, "Secure Cross-Border Social, Economic and Commercial Activities in the Great Lakes Region", implemented in partnership with TradeMark East Africa (TMEA), has proactively broadened its scope to support the national efforts of the Governments of DRC and Rwanda in the implementation of their respective COVID-19 preparedness and response plan, in coordination with UN agencies and development partners.

*Highlights of the initiative to reinforce disease surveillance and tailored prevention activities at the Rusizi/Bukavu Point of Entry (PoE) & mitigate the outbreak's impact:*

**Support to institutions and communities:** Increase capacities and awareness of border officials and communities on COVID-19: effects, transmission, identifying and managing emerging cases and containing the spread of the virus.

**Social support:** Intensify risk communication for border communities, cross border women traders, and truck drivers who heavily rely on cross border movements.



©Photo: IOM Rwanda

“

Gisèle Nabozzi Balegamire, former Minister of DRC: “As a public health provider and a political leader who has been involved in the management of the country, I am impressed with the training's expert insights and lessons learned on how to effectively address the COVID-19 pandemic at the PoE. It is crucial to train officials responsible for COVID-19 surveillance at the PoE to prevent the spread of the disease in the country”.

”

Abeli Mutuza, port health officer in Bukavu: “The training has a multiplier effect. I have raised awareness of my family on safety measures and, family being the foundation of communities, the knowledge has been passed on further”

# UNAIDS SUPPORTS CALL CENTRE FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV IN RWANDA



*“UNAIDS is pleased to support this innovative community-led approach for monitoring of community needs and efforts to respond to the prevailing challenges, with home grown solutions,”* said Betru Woldesemayat, UNAIDS Country Director in Rwanda during a recent visit to the call centre.

To respond to the challenges that the lockdown has caused for people living with HIV, UNAIDS provided financial and technical support to the Rwanda Network of People Living with HIV (RRP+) to establish a toll-free call centre. The purpose of the call centre is to share information about lockdown regulations and available HIV services in real time, at no cost.

Furthermore, people with possible non-communicable diseases were identified through the call line, referred to the nearest health facility and followed up by peer educators or service providers within the catchment area.

By the end of May 2020, the call centre had received 123 calls. Most callers were people living with HIV and peer educators, while a significant number of calls were also received from young people, female sex workers and gay men and other men who have sex with men.

The main inquiries to the call centre were about lack of access to HIV treatment and food. Other callers requested information about RRP+'s interventions during COVID-19 and 2% of calls were related to violence against women and children.

Through the call centre, RRP+ has identified areas of ongoing advocacy, including lack of food support, lack of masks and hygiene kits to prevent COVID-19 and supporting people living with HIV who are currently out of the country with no access to medicines. Furthermore, youth groups are no longer receiving monthly fees and incentives to provide peer support and mobilize young people to access HIV services. UNAIDS is working RRP+ to follow up on these issues.

# UNDP AND GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA DEPLOY SMART ANTI- EPIDEMIC ROBOTS TO FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19



From left to right: Stephen Rodriques, the Resident Representative UNDP, Minister of ICT & Innovation Paula Musoni, Minister of Health Dr Daniel Ngamije, Dr. Sabin NSANZIMANA, Director General of Rwanda Biomedical Centre. In the ceremony of handing over 5 Smart Anti-Epidemic Robots to the Government of Rwanda donated by UNDP Rwanda. 05/19/2020, Photo by @The New Times Rwanda.

In May 2020, the Rwandan Ministry of Health acquired and deployed five smart anti-epidemic robots to contain the spread of COVID-19, with the support of UNDP Rwanda. They were immediately deployed to two treatment centers, and at the Kigali International Airport.

The robots will support detection of COVID-19 cases including among returning citizens, test patients, and provide other services in the hospitals. Designed with various advanced features, the robots will support doctors and nurses at the designated treatment centers and, in the future, at boarder points and other screening sites in Kigali and other provinces.

Among other capabilities, the robots have the capacity to screen between 50 to 150 people per minute, deliver food and medication to patient rooms, capture data, and notify officers on duty about detected abnormalities for timely response and case management. Such features are expected to increase timeliness and efficiency in the fight against COVID-19 and reduce exposure of health workers to possible Covid-19 infection.

This initiative, a first of its kind for UNDP, is a risk mitigation measure to support the national COVID-19 response efforts. Experience has shown that a few countries, notably in Asia, have used similar technologies to help flatten the Covid-19 curve.

The robots were acquired through the partnership between the UNDP Rwanda Accelerator Lab (AccLab) and the Ministry of ICT and Innovation. Established in 2019 by UNDP Rwanda, AccLab is a small team of national experts with unique skills – to work inside the country office and help search for and support development innovations and solutions.

According to the UNDP Resident Representative to Rwanda, Mr. Stephen Rodriques, COVID-19 presents a huge, complex challenge that requires us to think differently, search for new solutions, and use every available resource (financial & human) to stop its spread.

# AFCFTA REMAINS AFRICA'S AMBITIOUS PLAN TO PROSPERITY EVEN AMID COVID-19



## Gender equality at the centre of AfCFTA

**At every step of implementing  
the AfCFTA, It is  
important to ensure that  
no one is left behind.**

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is still the agreement with the potential to foster regional economic integration and economic growth, even in the midst of a crippling coronavirus crisis.

The AfCFTA is a crucial move towards removing the continent's heavy reliance on commodity and agricultural exports leading to exponential growth in the manufacturing sector, export diversification and creation of quality jobs if its full potential is tapped.

Mr Stephen Karingi, Director of Regional Integration Division at the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) said that One of the things we have been able to demonstrate is that the AfCFTA has the potential to deepen not only the regional integration but also to allow us to do more value addition in our production processes.

Mr Karingi said that the agreement presents an opportunity not only to create economic resilience but also create quality and more valuable jobs.

*"We know what the AfCFTA means for this continent. COVID-19 has exposed that had we implemented the AfCFTA earlier, we would be in a better position than we are now",* said Mr Karingi.

Mama Keita, Director of the UNECA's Sub-Regional Office for East Africa, said in COVID-19 recovery, Africa should prioritise labour-intensive sectors to preserve jobs and livelihoods. This includes the agricultural sector to ensure food security for the continent.

She said that for a robust COVID-19 response and recovery plan, what is needed is the commitment from everyone, including governments and the private sector," Ms Keita added that UNECA is exploring ways of developing the local pharmaceutical sector in Africa.

In the post-COVID-19 we should secure demand for local products and enhance productive capacities to supply goods and services while promoting strategic sectors, including innovation and manufacturing.

# “WHEN A WOMAN LEAVES THE HOSPITAL WITH HER NEWBORN SMILING, IT FILLS MY HEART WITH JOY”: A STORY OF A RWANDAN MIDWIFE.



*Mugisha Philippe is a proud Rwandan male midwife. He graduated in 2017 and has 2 years experience working as a midwife at Kibagabaga Hospital, Kigali. Mugisha has served on the frontline teams of COVID-19 at Kanyinya Center for the last month.*

*Mugisha Philippe at work, Kibagabaga Hospital ( Credit: UNFPA, May 2020)*

supplies to deliver the basic health services we all need. Midwifery education is expensive, and our salaries are very low. Midwifery students and professionals should be supported.”

## **My journey as a Midwife**

“When I started midwifery school, I didn't know what midwifery was, nor its difference from nursing. I was even given a chance to change my mind. I fell in love with this profession because of the healthy outcomes of it, there is nothing better than saving a pregnant woman's life and their newborn and put a smile on her face. When a woman leaves the hospital with her newborn, smiling, it fills my heart with joy. This is the only profession that gives you the unique opportunity to partner with women and to build trusting and reciprocal relationships through the continuum of pregnancy, labour, birth and the postnatal period. It is a good profession.”

## **Midwifery in Rwanda**

“In Rwanda, Midwifery is improving daily. If you compare to a few years ago when we started, today we are recognized, people start to understand our role and contribution to the health sector. They now value our profession and ideas,

we get support from doctors and hospitals where we work, there are new protocols, and the Rwanda Association of Midwives (RAM) does everything to support us, including providing mentorship, seeking partnership with different organizations, and being on our side on a daily basis.

We meet many challenges though, and some of those challenges are the reason why people are discouraged to join our profession. We have a lot of work, and we are not many, the number of midwives is still low compared to their work, for example at Kibagabaga Hospital where I work, we can have between 500 and 600 deliveries per month, which makes our schedule very busy and doesn't allow us to get some rest and that may have impact to our outcomes in general.

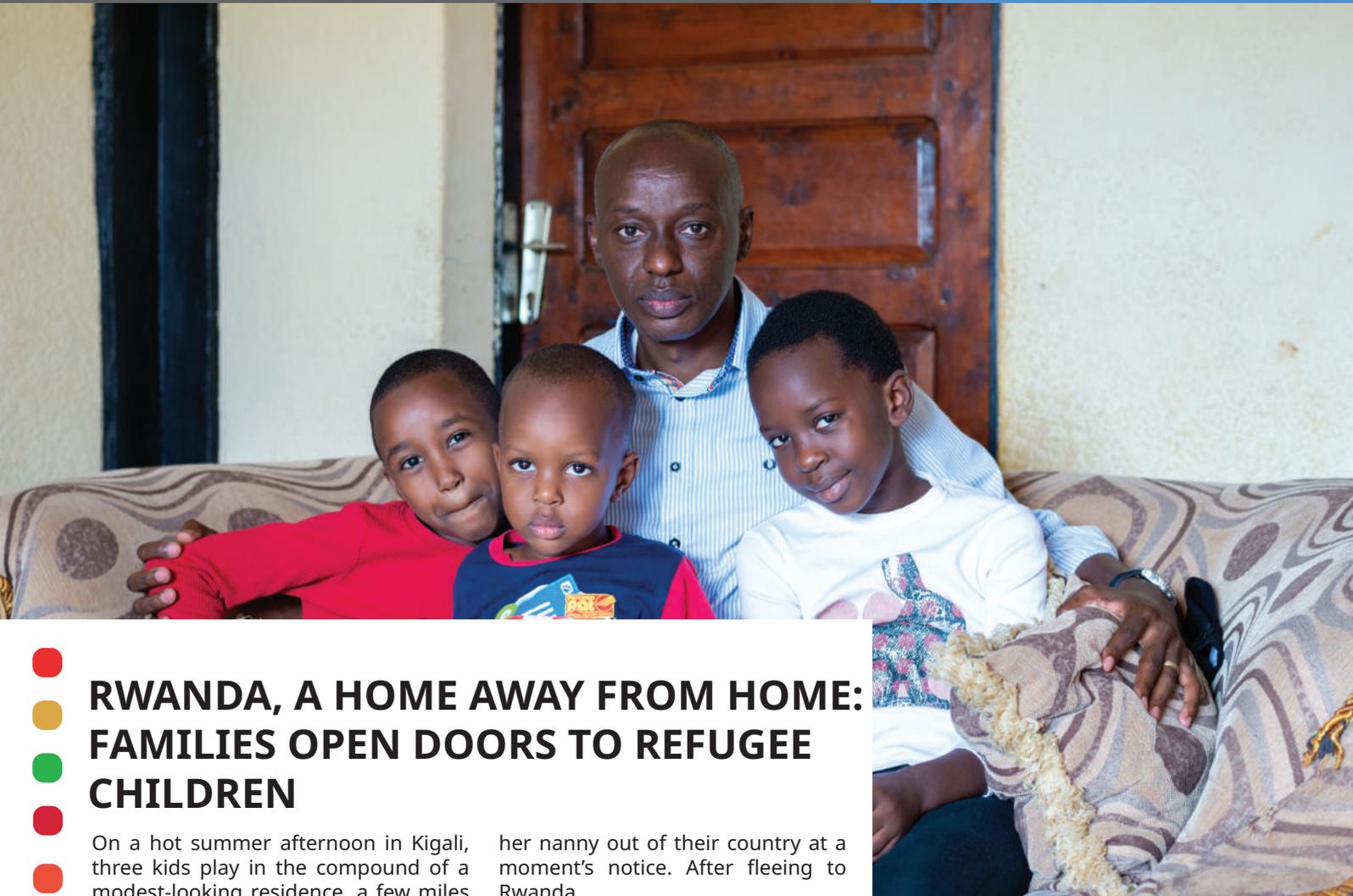
There is a need to invest in strengthening the midwifery workforce. In many areas, there simply aren't enough midwives to do all this work effectively. Even where they are present, many lack the power, training, equipment and medical

## **In the context of Covid-19 response in Rwanda**

“During this period of coronavirus outbreak, midwives are crucial to promoting maternal and newborn and in reducing maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity. Women continue to get pregnant, and babies are still being born.

Midwives are working tirelessly in communities, health centers, hospitals and sometimes in women's homes under difficult circumstances, often risking our own lives and well-being. Apart from that, we are also supporting other teams at the frontline at the COVID 19

Read the full story here:  
<https://rwanda.unfpa.org/en/news>



Kigali, Jacques\* pauses for a photo with his two kids and the foster daughter (Arlency) in their living room. ©UNHCR/Eugene Sibomana

## RWANDA, A HOME AWAY FROM HOME: FAMILIES OPEN DOORS TO REFUGEE CHILDREN

On a hot summer afternoon in Kigali, three kids play in the compound of a modest-looking residence, a few miles from the Kigali International Airport. Their happiness as they ran through the yard is uncontainable, the little one repeating 'Maintain distance, one meter and wash your hands' - a famous health announcement to fight COVID-19. A few years ago, this laughter in this family wouldn't be heard as cheery.

"They are like this all the time. They're always happy," says Jacques, the father of the two kids and foster parent of the third, an eight-year-old unaccompanied refugee girl.

"We've always dreamed to foster a child. My wife was raised in a foster family, and she'd often spoken about her aspiration to give back to other children. The opportunity to care Arlency\* was a dream come true for our family."

Conflicts in the country of origin in 2015 forced Alrency [who was only three at the time], her grandmother and

her nanny out of their country at a moment's notice. After fleeing to Rwanda,

Arlency 's grandmother relocated to Uganda just a few weeks later, leaving the baby and her nanny behind. The nanny found work at Jacques' house and the parents agreed for the child to live under their care

*"We have established a close relationship. She calls me 'Papa',"* Jacques says.

*"I consider the kids my own. Their mum was a good friend of mine."* A refugee mother of four, Nadine decided to foster three refugee children after their parents left them in May 2019. Carine says she wants to show her children that people should help each other.

*"There would be no pain in the world if we all helped each other out. If you show love for a child, a child will grow up to love others,"* she says. *"When kids grow up watching you support people, as they grow up, they support those in need too."*

Mama Michael lives a happy life with her daughter and two foster children. They're all refugees from the same country. One of those kids has been in the family for more than 12 years.

Even though the caregiver lost almost everything when she fled, "a quiet place to sleep and a life of prayer help her cope with the situation".

Now she is helping the children and it also helps her cope with the situation. "I left everything behind when I fled. Compared to living in my own home, I have to live in a single room with all the children now," she says.

Read the full article [here](https://www.unhcr.org/rw/14933-rwanda-a-home-away-from-home-families-open-doors-to-refugee-children.html). <https://www.unhcr.org/rw/14933-rwanda-a-home-away-from-home-families-open-doors-to-refugee-children.html>



# UNICEF DELIVERS HYGIENE SUPPLIES TO HELP CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES FIGHT COVID-19



Essential supplies like soap, handwashing stations and sanitizer will help vulnerable children in 12 institutional care facilities prevent coronavirus infections.

By now, almost everyone knows that handwashing and social distancing are some of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of coronavirus. With over one thousand confirmed cases and 556 active case of COVID-19 in Rwanda, the government has established strong prevention measures-such as closing schools and cross-border travel which has helped slow the spread of the virus

@UNICEF/UNI328061/Nzenze

*Sister Priscah Uwamahoro, Coordinator of Centre Saint Vincent, uses a new bottle of alcohol-based sanitizer provided by UNICEF to help her and the children fight COVID-19. She has been caring for children with disabilities at this institution for 5 years.*

But for some children with disabilities in Rwanda, this is not enough to protect them. Residential care institutions can sometimes house up to 200 children with disabilities in close quarters, making social distancing difficult. These centres also lack enough critical hygiene supplies like soap to keep everyone healthy during the pandemic.

In bustling Musanze, just 500 meters from downtown and the main bus park, Saint Vincent is one such centre. But luckily, most children residing there understand what they need to do.

"Coronavirus is transmitted by coughing or sneezing on someone," says Clemence. He has lived at Saint Vincent for 10 years. "You can prevent COVID-19 by washing your hands a lot, using soap and clean water."

## Supporting children with disabilities

"UNICEF primarily supports family-based alternative care for children rather than institutional living, but not all children with disabilities have been placed into homes yet," says Patricia Lim Ah Ken, UNICEF Chief of Child Protection. "Providing these hygiene supplies in the short-term is critical to address the immediate risk of coronavirus, ensuring all children remain healthy and safe."

## Fighting COVID-19 for children

To help Sister Priscah fight COVID-19, UNICEF delivered hygiene kits to Saint Vincent, as well as 10 other residential care institutions, reaching in total over 190 children and young adults with disabilities plus 52 of their caregivers. These kits include essential supplies like laundry soap, cleaning solution, bathing soap, menstrual hygiene pads, and handwashing stations.

*"To fight coronavirus, we must keep our bodies, homes and environments clean," says Sister Priscah. "With these supplies, the children here will be better protected and will also learn more about proper hygiene."*

Many children in Rwanda are feeling the secondary effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to these hygiene supplies, UNICEF has procured therapeutic milk and ready-to-use therapeutic food for children suffering from severe acute malnutrition. UNICEF also supports Rwanda Education Board to develop remote learning opportunities for students affected by school closures, such as radio and TV lessons.

To find loving, family-based care alternatives for children with disabilities, UNICEF supports the "Tubarerere mu Muryango" programme with Rwanda's National Commission for Children. Check out these case studies on the Tubarerere mu Muryango programme and how UNICEF has helped find homes for nearly 3,200 children.



## INCREASING RESILIENCE OF VULNERABLE WOMEN TO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID19 CRISIS IN RWANDA

As part of the support to complement the national response to the health and socio-economic impact challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, UN Women is supporting women-owned businesses, as well as income generation and employment of vulnerable women.

In partnership with New Faces New Voices and through Gahaya Links, a women-owned business, the project aims to not only enhance prevention measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 infection in communities, but to also support

women-owned business, income generation and employment of vulnerable women through the production of protective masks.

On average, women tailors make between 4000 to 5000 Rwf every day. This initiative enables hundreds of women tailors across Rwanda to navigate this time of economic uncertainty by producing re-usable protective cloth masks for the public, while also strengthening their income-generating skills.

Ms. Fatou Lo, the UN Women Representative in Rwanda notes that women are, and will be the hardest hit by this pandemic, but they will also be the backbone of recovery in communities.

*"We salute the Government's authorization granted to several companies for the local production of protective masks and personal protective equipments, UN Women calls on all these companies to hire female workers as a way to mitigate the socio economic impact on women and their families. We can build a better and more resilient economy by addressing inequalities in the response and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic," says Fatou Lo.*

Read the full story here

<https://rwanda.un.org/en/45440-increasing-resilience-vulnerable-women-socio-economic-impact-covid19-crisis-rwanda>

# FARMERS IN RWANDA PROVIDE FOOD TO THOSE AFFECTED BY CORONAVIRUS



WFP-supported farm cooperatives distribute surplus food to vulnerable community members.

Rwanda registered its first case of COVID-19 on 14 March 2020 and implemented a strict lock-down, including closure of schools across the country. The lock-down was especially hard for Rwandans working in the informal sector and has severely impacted their food security.

For Zainabo Uwizeyimana, president of Kabyiki farm cooperative and her members, supporting fellow community members impacted by the COVID-19 lock-down with food assistance was a natural inclination. The idea came about when members were harvesting maize produced by the WFP-supported cooperative located in southern Rwanda.

*"During this year's harvest we produced a surplus of maize. All members collectively decided to set aside one kilo each to give back to the community during these difficult times,"* Zainabo recalls.

Neighbouring cooperative, Tuzamurane-Cyeza had a similar idea. The two-smallholder farmer organisations voluntarily donated nearly one metric tonne of maize produced by the cooperatives, along with other assorted food commodities to nearly 200 people from 42 families impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown. Each family received a food package containing 20 kilos of maize, 5 kilos rice, 2 kilos nutritious porridge for young children and one litre of vegetable oil, in addition to a bar of soap.

The food assistance was a welcome relief during a period when many were left out of work, due to measures put in place to contain the spread of COVID-19. For Mohammed and his wife Sarah, the assistance helped feed their family of seven for a month, during a time when both had lost their jobs.

*"We are so grateful for the generosity of the Kabyiki farmer cooperative for this support,"* said Mohammed, a 40-year-old bus driver, who lost his job when his bus company operating between Northern Rwanda and the capital city of Kigali was forced to stop operating due COVID-19 preventive measures that stopped travel between provinces.

His wife Sarah also lost her job as a teacher at a local private school when all schools in Rwanda were closed in March.

*"We both hope the situation soon improves, and things can go back towards normal,"* Mohammed added.

# UNCDF RWANDA PROGRAMME COORDINATOR INVITED ON A WEBINAR BY OPPORTUNITY INTERNATIONAL AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION FORUM UK TO SHARE THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 CRISIS ON THE REFUGEES LIVES IN RWANDA.



Refugees before the introduction of social distancing. Photo credit, Kate Holt

In preparation of the world refugee day 20th June 2020, Opportunity International and the Financial Inclusion Forum UK hosted a panel discussion on 18th June 2020, to shine a spotlight on the financial lives of refugees and IDPs after the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The discussion covered:

- How the pandemic is affecting the economic well-being of refugees and IDPs across Uganda, Rwanda and Nigeria.
- How COVID-19 is impacting the delivery of financial services to these groups, including informal savings mechanisms and the delivery of cash transfers.
- Why digital and financial literacy of refugees and IDPs is so vital.
- How access to financial services can support crisis-affected populations to mitigate the economic shocks caused by stringent lockdown and social distancing measures.

Roselyne Uwamahoro, programme coordinator in UNCDF Rwanda, was invited to be a panellist together with Noah Ssempijja, Opportunity International's Refugee Programme

ICoordinator in Uganda and Mike Warmington, Director of Financial Inclusion at Mercy Corps. She addressed how COVID-19 is negatively impacting refugees in the camps in Rwanda.

*"We're seeing a big impact of COVID-19 on income generation of refugees, with rising unemployment and limited access to external markets due to the lockdown. Men are especially affected by the travel restrictions, since they are generally the ones who leave the camps to look for work. With the lockdown in our country due to the crisis, no-one is permitted to leave the camps. We urgently need to find alternative ways to support the ability of refugees to earn an income, especially when it comes to youth," urged Roselyne.*

She also shared the experience of savings groups development being hampered as community gathering has been constrained to prevent virus spreading. COVID-19 crisis has negatively impacted the livelihoods of the refugees and their host communities and UNCDF is actively seeking digital solutions to have them financial inclusive to build their resilience.together with Noah Ssempijja, Opportunity International's Refugee Programme

# MY STORY AS INTERNATIONAL UN VOLUNTEER

My name is Biniam Hagos. I was born in Mekelle, Ethiopia. I am proud of being an IUNV, Currently, working in UNHCR Rwanda ETM Gashora as Tigrigna, Amharic Interpreter, and General protection. I have been working here in Rwanda since October 20, 2019. When I first left my country to work as IUNV, I had mixed feelings, fear, and excitement. My big fear was leaving my country and working with evacuated refugees from Libya. Because I have heard and read many things about Libya. My excitement was being among a select group of individuals as IUNV.

The first two months were a bit tough and challenging. It was very difficult to work with refugees who have gone through a lot of trauma and torture. Hearing their story every day even makes it very harder. By hearing their stories every day, I can say that I was also the second victim for a while. After some time, through experience and reading, everything went well, and I found out that being as IUNV was the best choice I have ever made in my life. That is why I said, I am proud of UNV.

Small things become great when done with love. That is what I have learned from my colleagues, my supervisor, and our head of the office. I try to be happy and smile every day as much as I can, it is not because everything is good but, I try to see the good side of everything. I am having a good time of my life as IUNV and I also see a bright future in my life. I am very grateful and thrilled.



Biniam Hagos  
An International UN Volunteer in  
Rwanda

