



UNITED NATIONS
RWANDA



TURI KUMWE

Newsletter | 2024 Quarter 2





Mr. Ozonnia Ojielo
UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR

Dear Esteemed Partners,

We are excited to share the quarterly highlights of the UN Rwanda Country Team's achievements

This second edition of our newsletter "TURIKUMWE" for 2024 underscores our unwavering commitment to develop a new Cooperation Framework, that is aligned to the country's own degree of ambition. In addition, in the face of shrinking fiscal space there is need for the UN to ensure it is applying a balancing act between its traditional sources of funding and exploring innovative financing approaches for its development work, and ensuring the Private Sector plays a pivotal role in supporting Rwanda's socio-economic goals and accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals.

We journey to Western Rwanda, where women cross-border traders excel in supporting their families. Back in Kigali, we feature a remarkable woman member of Rwanda's Private Sector who combines business with environmental sustainability through her work in solar energy and energy efficiency.

You will also find insights from the Government on our priorities for the new Cooperation Framework, aimed at making meaningful contributions to Rwanda's Strategy for Transformation.

As we face the evolving challenges and dynamic environment of development, our commitment remains steadfast. Together, we are ready to address current issues and shape the future.

I offer my sincere thanks to you, our Esteemed Partners who contributed to our collective achievements. Your dedication, enthusiasm, and teamwork are the foundation of our success. I hope the stories and insights in this newsletter inspire us to continue our journey with renewed energy and determination.

Let us move forward together towards a more prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable future for Rwanda.



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KIGALI CITY, RWANDA

A group photograph following the meeting with the Assistant Secretary-General and CEO of the UN Global Compact, Ms. Sanda Ojiambo, UNRC Mr. Ozonnia, UNCT, and the private sector in Rwanda to discuss the engagement of the private sector in Rwanda.

POWERING PROGRESS: WHY PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT IS KEY TO ACHIEVING THE SDGS

According to the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024, only 17 % of the SDG targets are on track, nearly half are showing minimal or moderate progress, and progress on over one-third has stalled or even regressed.

The report suggests that massive investment and more effective partnerships are needed to drive critical transitions across food, energy, digital connectivity, and more, unlocking progress right across the Goals. Therefore achieving these ambitious targets by 2030 necessitates the active involvement and innovation of the private sector.

The private sector's involvement is not just beneficial but essential for achieving the SDGs. By mobilizing resources, driving innovation, creating jobs, and adopting sustainable practices, businesses can make significant contributions to a sustainable and equitable future. As we strive to meet the 2030 targets, the collaboration between the private sector, governments, and civil society will be the driving force behind our collective progress.

The private sector's engagement with SDGs is strategically advancing

Ms. Francine Munyaneza is CEO and Founder of Munyax Eco a company specialised in solar energy (thermal and photovoltaic) and energy efficiency sectors by selling and installing environmentally friendly products. She shared what pushed her to establish this company in 2013 *"I wanted to create an impact in terms of the environment, knowing that with solar energy, you can create water heaters and electricity."*

"My wish was to provide electricity in rural areas as well as hot water mostly in urban areas." Her company's motto is "Save Money, Save Energy, Save the planet", an ambition which also contributes to the achievement of SDGs.

"Apart from reconciling business and clean environment, my goal has also been to ensure that more women are in our mission to provide solutions to clean energy" she stated.

Francine was speaking during the CEO's Roundtable convened by the UN Global Compact. This discussion was organized on 15th May 2024, on the margins of the Africa CEO's Forum. Francine and other CEOs of leading companies in Rwanda held an interactive discussion with the Assistant Secretary General and CEO of the UN Global Compact, Ms. Sanda Ojiambo, and the UN Country Team. It once again confirmed the opportunity for the United Nations Global Compact to partner with Rwanda's private sector to establish a Network of sustainable businesses in the country, adding to the active Ten Global Compact Networks across the continent.

"What we engaged on, is the opportunity for the Private Sector to come together, to really work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The Goals themselves are actually investments and business opportunities. So, we are talking about how companies can do good business, but also make sizable contributions to Rwanda's transformation strategy as well as the goals of the African Union 2063 Agenda" Ms. Sanda Ojiambo said in an interview with journalists after the CEO roundtable.

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Odette Musabyemariya, leader COBATOMU, asking a question during her engagement with UNCT



EMPOWERING WOMEN TRADERS AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES: UNCT FIELD VISIT HIGHLIGHTS PROGRESS IN RUSIZI

Odette Musabyemariya, a mother of eight, leads COBATOMU, a cooperative of cross-border traders selling fruit and vegetables at Rusizi II in Western Rwanda. Her cooperative comprises 110 women and 2 men. *"Cross-border trade is the sole source of income for me and my fellow cooperative members,"* she said.

We met Odette in Rusizi district during the UNCT Field Visit on 26-27 June 2024. Organized by IOM, UNICEF, and the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator, this visit aimed to monitor the progress and results of two joint interventions: the construction of a One-Stop Border Post (OSBP) and the rehabilitation of three water supply systems.

Economic and Social Context

Rusizi is a significant hub for cross-border trade, contributing an average of \$108.3 million per year to Rwanda's economy, with one-third of this trade passing through the Rusizi II border. Despite these financial opportunities, many small-scale cross-border traders (SSCBTs) and border populations remain economically and socially vulnerable. Transnational security challenges, health emergencies like Mpox, and climate-induced disasters exacerbate these vulnerabilities.

These challenges are reflected in the personal experiences of traders like Odette, for whom cross-border trade is a lifeline. *"When all goes well, I can personally earn \$100 per month. I use this money to pay school fees for my children, health insurance, and cater to other family needs,"* said Odette.

Ongoing UN Interventions

Under the EU-funded project "Secure Cross-Border Social, Economic, and Commercial Activities Project," IOM, in collaboration with the Government, is constructing an OSBP at the Rusizi II/Bukavu border crossing to streamline cross-border movements and enhance trade. The project also supported Partner States of the East African Community (EAC) to revise and develop a harmonized training programme on Migration Management for border officials in OSBP settings, and facilitated a draft Legal Framework Agreement on OSBPs between Rwanda and DRC. It aims to empower SSCBTs, particularly women, with strong involvement from local partners and civil society organizations.

"This new One-Stop Border Post will accelerate our business because it will reduce the time we used to spend in the queue. IOM's support made our trading relations with Congolese a lot easier, at times we don't even need to cross the border. We send fruits and vegetables, and they send us money. We did not have this common understanding before," said Berthe Nyirahabimana, of the Women Cross-Border Traders.

Rehabilitation of Water Supply Systems

Following the roundtable with the traders, UNCT members also visited the valley of Murangi in Kamembe sector, where they witnessed the rehabilitation of three water supply systems damaged by flooding. With generous funding from the Government of Japan, this rehabilitation improved climate resilience for over 29,000 people, 15 schools, and nine health centers.

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Mr. Ozonnia Ojielo, UN Resident Coordinator delivering his remarks during the third edition of Captain Mbaye Day

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"ACT NOW: NEVER AGAIN FOR VICTIMS AND PEACEKEEPERS LIKE CAPTAIN MBAYE DAIGNE"

As Rwanda marked the 30th anniversary of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, the United Nations and the Embassy of Senegal organized the third edition of Captain Mbaye Diagne Day. The event was attended by the family of the late Captain Mbaye, represented by his wife Madam Yasin Mar Diop, senior Government officials, and members of the Diplomatic Corps.

In his remarks, Ozonnia Ojielo, United Nations Resident Coordinator, urged all actors to actively participate in making "Never Again" a reality.

"In our diplomatic messages to our headquarters, in the decisions we make, we must pass a message. It's time for the member states to come together. It's time for the UN Security Council to become more active, more functional. It's time for us to respond much more actively as a global community so that victims like those in Rwanda and peacekeepers like Captain Mbaye Diagne will look like they died in vain" he said.

Captain Mbaye Diagne, a UN peacekeeper in the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda, risked his life to save hundreds of innocent lives during the genocide. Tragically, he was killed on the morning of 31st May, 1994, by a fragment from a mortar that exploded near his car.

Ojielo highlighted Captain Diagne's bravery, saying, *"Did he have to do that? He didn't. He could have stayed in his military post and said it was too risky. So the avoidance of responsibility must stop."* During the event, a genocide survivor saved by Captain Diagne gave a moving testimony, reiterating his bravery.

"He saw me when I was about to be killed by a Catholic priest. He stopped and told him he could only kill me after the priest would have killed him first. He went on to explain to the priest that everyone was watching, and the killers finally left me alone. I am here thanks to Captain Mbaye Diagne" said Madam Concilie Mukamwezi.

In an exclusive interview with the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator (RCO), General Mbaye Cissé, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Senegal, noted that Captain Diagne's courage and legacy have been integrated into the training of Senegalese soldiers.

"Before deployments and in training, we always tell our soldiers about the bravery of the late Captain Mbaye. It is an immense pride and responsibility he left for us as soldiers and peacekeepers around the continent," General Cissé said.

Ms. Veneranda Ingabire, Executive Director of Memory and Genocide Prevention in the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement, expressed gratitude for the commemoration.

"I thank the Embassy of Senegal and the United Nations for organizing this event. Remembering the victims of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi and brave people who tried to stand against it like Captain Mbaye is very important in reminding ourselves about the duty we have to continue fighting genocide ideology and embracing unity and reconciliation for what happened to never happen again" she said.

In 2010, the Rwandan Government awarded Captain Mbaye Diagne's widow a medal for his courage in saving lives during the genocide. The Senegalese officer was honored with the Umurinzi, Rwanda's campaign against genocide medal,

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Umutoni Gisele at her workshop in Kigali.



MECHANICAL ENGINEERING: GISELE UMUTONI BREAKING STEREOTYPES IN RWANDA

Falling pregnant at the age of seventeen, Gisele Umutoni found herself at a crossroads between having to solely raise her first child as a single teen mother, and taking the time to explore multiple avenues to generate income to sustain herself and her now two children.

“When I got pregnant, I really did not know what to do with myself. I had no source of income or technical skills that I could use to find a job.” Gisele reflected.

Fortunately for Gisele and many other vulnerable women in the country, UN Women fostered partnership with the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) to reach more vulnerable women in the country, including teen mothers, sex workers, and women living with disabilities, with the intention of equipping them with actionable entrepreneurship skills to strengthen their potential to participate in safe and profitable income generating activities.

“When I was approached by YWCA and UN Women to receive the training, I immediately accepted knowing that this would be a valuable opportunity to shift my fortunes towards a better future for myself and my children.” She added.

Over the course of several months, Gisele, along with over 500 vulnerable women in Rwanda, determinedly took part in a comprehensive training curriculum entailing financial literacy, entrepreneurship, business management, and more, paving way for them to transform their lives towards a more positive socio-economic trajectory.

Upon completion of the initial training courses, YWCA opened opportunities for some of the participants to take part in additional TVET courses including mechanics, tailoring, and other fields.

When Gisele heard about this, she immediately took the opportunity to pursue mechanics, despite it being a male dominated field. Three months after completing the mechanics course, Gisele delved into the sector in an effort to break the common stereotypes that have hindered women from effectively participating and thriving within the field.

“Pursuing mechanics sparked my passion, and I was sure I would dedicate my career to it after graduation. Shortly after the course, I was approached by a friend who was already a mechanic to work with him on various jobs. This period was truly enriching as it enhanced my skills to tackle many of the real-world scenarios beyond what we were taught in the trainings. Through this partnership, we were able to make a significant amount of money that we could evenly split. At this point I felt a major relief because as a single mother, I was finally able to meet my family’s basic needs, and even afford to take my children to school.” added Gisele.

Now after all expenses, Gisele can make a saving of approximately Fifteen US Dollars (\$15) per week. Her expertise is now recognized outside of her direct environment, enabling her to travel to different districts to provide expert mechanical services. For her, this is only the beginning towards fulfilling much larger ambitions to strengthen the socio-economic position of her family.

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Godfrey Kabera, Head of National Development Planning and Research, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, presenting during the UNCT Retreat in Bugesera District.



UNCT RETREAT 2024: REFLECTING ON ACHIEVEMENTS AND SHAPING FUTURE COLLABORATION IN RWANDA

As Rwanda approaches the final months of its National Strategy for Transformation (NST1 2017-2024) and the conclusion of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2018-2024), the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) gathered for a pivotal retreat. Held from 28th to 30th May at La Palisse Hotel in Nyamata. The retreat provided a unique opportunity to reflect on achievements, share best practices, and plan for the future. This gathering also marked a crucial moment for aligning the upcoming UNSDCF with Rwanda's next development plan, NST2 (2024-2029).

The retreat came on the heels of the High-Level Development Partners Retreat held in early May, which focused on strategic discussions to inform the Government's next National Strategy for Transformation. For the UNCT, it was a moment to enhance collaboration with the Government of Rwanda (GoR), ensuring that efforts are synergized to accelerate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and national priorities.

"For us, this retreat is crucial for unlearning all that we know so we can learn new approaches that directly address Rwanda's needs. We must leverage our unity, collaboration, collective knowledge, and shared vision as the United Nations family in Rwanda. This retreat is about fostering togetherness and forward-thinking to effectively support the country's development," said Ozonnia Ojielo, UN Resident Coordinator.

Transforming Collaboration

One of the retreat's key objectives was to transform the UN's collaboration with the Government of Rwanda

by identifying concrete steps to enhance both strategic and operational partnerships. This included outlining effective mechanisms to strengthen the "Delivering as One" approach, ensuring that UN efforts are aligned with national priorities and are impactful.

Directives from the Government

As Rwanda ushers in the next medium-term development strategy (NST2), which aims to achieve sustainable and resilient growth, reduce poverty, and create quality jobs, the Prime Minister through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning provided direction and guiding points to the UN Country Team on the government's expectation of the UN's full alignment with the national strategies through the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

This guidance is crucial as the UN develops the next Cooperation Framework, fully aligned with Rwanda's Strategy for Transformation.

"The Government of Rwanda (GoR) wants to work within—and only within—the UN Cooperation Framework to keep the partnership with the U.N. at a strategic level. This is aligned with our programmatic approach to ensure that agencies' program documents are geared towards impact at a macro level," Ms. Jeanine Munyeshuli former Minister of State in charge of Public Investment & Resource Mobilisation, MINECOFIN.

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(L-R) Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources Dr. Ildephonse Musafiri, Governor of the Southern Province Ms. Alice Kayitesi, and Ms. Coumba Sow, FAO Representative, visiting a poultry farm in Southern Rwanda.



JOINT EFFORTS TO BOOST RWANDA'S POULTRY SECTOR: EMPOWERING YOUTH AND WOMEN FOR FOOD SECURITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

In response to the urgent need to make Rwanda's agrifood systems more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable, the Government of Rwanda, with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), has identified the poultry sector as a pivotal area for boosting national food security and generating income for small-scale farmers, particularly youth and women. As part of this initiative, four poultry model farms have been established in Nyaruguru, Ruhango, and Nyanza districts, benefiting 246 youth and women.

"We were delighted to join MINAGRI, the governor of the Southern Province, and the mayor of Nyaruguru district to launch these FAO-supported poultry model farms for the youth," said Coumba Sow, FAO Representative. *"We are supporting these young people in starting their own businesses. A successful business involves making profits, establishing market connections, and ensuring that their production is profitable for themselves, their families, and the country."*

The beneficiaries received 7,000 laying chickens with 1 year of health insurance, constructed poultry model houses, 120,741 Tons of chicken feeds, electronic devices, bicycles, drugs & vitamins, model farm inputs, and several farm equipment

FAO experts have trained all beneficiaries in poultry farming, poultry diseases management and control, entrepreneurship, technology use, poultry products marketing, market linkage, budget development, business planning, and modern resources in poultry farming to maximize profits and achieve self-reliance.

"Here in Nyaruguru, we are showcasing a successful example of what is possible," noted Ildephonse Musafiri, Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources. *"We support young entrepreneurs, particularly those in poultry farming, by providing them with training and additional knowledge to help them become successful business owners."*

Frederick Manirabona, a poultry farmer and team leader of the Abahigirakwesimihigo Cooperative in the Cyahinda Sector, shared his inspiring experience *"FAO learned about our efforts and decided to support us by providing 500 chickens, constructing a modern poultry house to transit from traditional farming into farming as business. and offering sufficient training on effective poultry farm management and farming as businesschicken care. Out of 500 chickens, 489 lay eggs daily, allowing us to earn approximately Rwf 60,000 per day, which covers our daily expenses. As a giving back, we give for free 10% of produced egg to Malnushed children, under FAO's program of one egg per child per da. This success story is just one of many that demonstrate the potential of this initiative."*

"In Nyaruguru, we are showcasing a successful example of what is possible," said Minister Ildephonse Musafiri. *"We support young entrepreneurs, particularly those in poultry farming, by providing them with training and additional knowledge to help them become successful business owners. We have provided them with egg-laying chickens and established model farms, and they are now reaping the rewards and earning money. This is a pilot phase, and if successful, we hope to expand this initiative nationwide, potentially including provision of cows or pigs to promote agricultural pursuits further."*

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IOM's National PSEA Officer, Sophie, discusses changes at Nyabiheke camp following the trainings with Emmanuel from MINEMA.

VOICES FROM THE FRONTLINE: THE UNITED NATIONS' STAND AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

Amidst the rolling hills of Rwanda, the United Nations has taken a resolute stand against sexual exploitation and abuse. On 5th December, 2023, UN agencies gathered together to launch the initiative “PSEA at the Frontline: Together We Say No” with the aim of equipping frontline workers with critical knowledge on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and sexual harassment.

Originally developed by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the campaign received widespread support from the UN in Rwanda. It marked the first time a multi-agency approach was adopted, including the Resident Coordinators Office, WHO, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNWOMEN, and UNFPA.

Following the launch, UN staff visited four refugee camps including Kiziba, Kigeme, Mugobwa, Nyabiheke and the Nkamira Transit Center, to sensitize frontline workers who play critical roles in assistance programs. Reaching over 770 frontline workers over the course of a two-month campaign, has had a profound impact on ensuring the human rights and dignity of beneficiaries remain preserved.

Didier is a both a frontline worker and a refugee from DRC who has been living in Rwanda for 18 years. Currently working as a Camp Mobilizer for Plan International, he explains why PSEA is so important for the refugees in the camps.

“There are many vulnerable people in the camps, and instances of sexual assault. As both a humanitarian worker and a refugee, I am motivated to speak on their behalf.”

“Since I joined Plan International, I have been trained on PSEA and am a strong fighter against it.”

While the PSEA trainings are helping frontline workers have a better understanding of what they can do to prevent cases of SEA and sexual harassment, the Ministry in Charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA) Social Affairs Officer at Nyabiheke Camp, Emmanuel Mbabazi, reminds us of the importance of empowering beneficiaries to report SEA.

“We frontline workers have a big role to play in PSEA. So, it’s good when we empower frontline workers to prevent sexual exploitation. However, we have also to empower the community to report it.” One way frontline workers are enabling this is by ensuring information from trainings is trickled down to the beneficiaries themselves.

Christine Mumporeze, a Child Protection Officer overseeing community mobilizers, has worked with Plan International for seven years. She explains why it’s important for refugees to understand their rights.

“It’s important for refugees to know that the services they receive are free; otherwise, they can be exploited. If they know their rights, they can report those trying to take advantage of them,” she says.

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Willine Ikirezi



DOTPHARMA, TRANSFORMING HEALTHCARE ACCESSIBILITY

Various events and circumstances inspire people to start businesses. For some, it might be winning a grant, while for others, it could stem from a long search for something essential. When they finally find it, they decide to spare others the same struggle.

For Willine Ikirezi, it was one fueled by need – need for a specific, but uncommon medical prescription during her university days.

She barely got time to stay afloat her busy schedule due to class assignments and this made accessing medication to take care of herself much harder. This is when an idea was born in her mind - online prescriptions as a solution to this common issue.

She discussed the solution that would hopefully change the face of access to medication on Rwanda's healthcare landscape with a friend who eventually became her business partner.

"We both knew people who struggled to obtain prescribed medicine because it was hard to know which pharmacy stocked what specific type of medication."- recalls Willine.

The graduate of Healthcare Management from Southern New Hampshire University was deeply passionate about improving healthcare accessibility. Together with her co-founders, they established DotPharma to bridge gaps in accessing medicines and healthcare products.

Today, their e-pharmacy platform allows Rwandan patients and caregivers to order and receive drugs and personal care items conveniently. Moreover, it offers information on prescribed product usage, enhancing healthcare literacy.

DotPharma is the go-to platform for those with non-communicable diseases and people who need products that require privacy, such as sexual and reproductive health products.

In March 2023, Willine discovered Aguka, an innovative program aimed at empowering youth-led businesses in Rwanda. Funded by the European Union, the program is implemented by UNDP, Tony Elumelu Foundation, Norskken, and Rwanda's Ministry of Youth, and the initiative has provided crucial support to DotPharma.

Aguka played an instrumental role in Willine's entrepreneurial path, providing DotPharma with management skills and resources that were crucial to the startup's success.

Willine emphasizes Aguka's value in filling knowledge gaps and fostering connections within the startup ecosystem. *"Joining Aguka taught us how to trust, delegate, and effectively market our products. Our customers are our top priority,"* she asserts.

Willine envisions expanding DotPharma across Africa, anchored by their positive trajectory and newfound skills.

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Lydia Nishimwe and her children in Mahama refugee camp



BOLSTERING NUTRITION EFFORTS IN RWANDA'S REFUGEE SETTINGS

In a tiny living room, Lydia Nishimwe, a Burundian refugee in Mahama camp, laughs while playing with her children. Her youngest child, 11-month-old Clarisse Izudukiza, clings to her mother, eager to join her older siblings in play. Lydia feels happy because her daughter is getting better after many hard days.

Her mother explains that Clarisse has started regaining strength over the last few months thanks to supplementary foods, as she was diagnosed as underweight at the health centre in Mahama refugee camp five months ago.

"When we first arrived at the health centre, my daughter weighed 5kg at six months and was suffering from diarrhea. Health practitioners told me that this could indicate malnutrition," Lydia recounts. "But with the regular check-ups, nutritional supplements, and health education sessions provided by Save the Children, she's now healthier and more active; she weighs 7 kg at 11 months."

Refugee parents like Lydia, who have children facing malnutrition across all camps in Rwanda, receive nutrition education and supplementary foods through a joint initiative spearheaded by UNHCR, the UN Agency for Refugees, and the World Food Programme (WFP), working alongside the Government of Rwanda through the Ministry in charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA).

This nutrition programme helps restore lost nutrients, ensure weight gain, and support the overall recovery and rehabilitation of refugee children experiencing Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM). For families like Lydia's, the joint initiative has been a lifeline, offering hope in an otherwise precarious situation.

Despite the positive changes, some challenges remain. Figures from the 2023 Standardised Expanded Nutrition Survey (SENS) reveal that acute malnutrition has increased since 2021 for the first time in seven years in most of the refugee camps.

For instance, acute malnutrition has increased from 3.8% to 5.9% in Kiziba refugee camp and from 2.8% to 6.1% in Mahama refugee camp. The only improvement was recorded in Nyabiheke with a noteworthy decline from 2.8% to 0.4%.

Lydia points to diminishing humanitarian aid and escalating food price inflation as the primary factors that prevented her from meeting the nutritional requirements her daughter needed for healthier growth.

"Before, I could buy fruits or milk for my younger children once a week. But now, with reduced cash transfers and lack of other assistance, we struggle to make it last even a week and a half," Lydia explains. "And the rising prices for food in the market make things even harder for us."

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Kigali residents attending the World Health Day Walkathan



MENYA UBUZIMA - YOUTH-LED WALKATHON CHAMPIONS HEALTH AWARENESS

On 5th May, 2024, hundreds of Kigali residents laced up their walking shoes on a sunny morning for the World Health Day Walkathon, a vibrant event led by young leaders from the Global Health Corps (GHC) fellowship program in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The “Menya Ubuzima” Walkathon (Menya Ubuzima= Know Your Health) held on the famous Car-Free Day (which happens every first and third Sunday of the month) saw over 500 people from all walks of life taking part in the race to Kigali Heights from BK Arena and Kigali City main roundabout.

More than just a walkathon, the event was a platform for youth-led health advocacy. GHC Fellows, young changemakers from around the world, spearheaded the organization, infusing the event with their energy and dedication. Their efforts fostered a dynamic atmosphere where participants were not just exercising, but also engaging with informative booths and health professionals.

Free health screenings on diabetes, blood pressure, vision and breast cancer and information on sexual and reproductive health were offered to participants adding another layer of value, enabling participants to get checked for a range of conditions.

“The Menya Walkathon wasn’t just about physical activity; it was about empowering Rwandans to take charge of their health.” said Saruh Rusike, a GHC Fellow from Zimbabwe.

Health exhibition booths, managed by various stakeholders such as HDI, Urukundo Initiative, Kosmotive Rwanda, and Association of Midwives in Rwanda, provided crucial information on preventive care and empowered individuals to make informed decisions about their health.

“As we commemorate World Health Day, it’s inspiring to see the synergy of diverse generations coming together to uplift their health and wellbeing. WHO is also excited to nurture youth leadership through working with organizations of young people like the GHC Fellows led the organization of the walkathon.”

Observed every year on 7th April, since the inception of the World Health Organization in 1948, World Health Day is a vital platform for global health advocacy and awareness. With the 2024 theme centered around “My Health, My Right,” this year’s focus encompasses critical global health issues including environmental risks, infectious diseases, maternal and child health, non-communicable diseases (NCDs), and universal health coverage (UHC).

The car-free day also coincided with the International Day of the Midwife, a day we celebrate the role of midwives, recognizing their contributions in improving care quality and reducing maternal and newborn mortality.

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HIGH-LEVEL UN MISSIONS TO RWANDA



*Ms. Sanda Ojiambo Assistant Secretary-General and CEO United Nations Global Compact
15th May 2024*



*Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa, Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director, Regional Bureau for Africa
18th May 2024*



*Dr. Gerardine Mukeshimana, Vice-President of IFAD
20th May 2024*



*Mr. Jean Todt, The Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety
26th to 28th May 2024*

HIGH-LEVEL UN MISSIONS TO RWANDA



*Amb. Claver Gatete, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of UNECA
11th July 2024*



*Ms. Afshan Khan, Assistant Secretary-General, Coordinator of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement
12th to 14th June 2024*



*Mr. Jorge Moreira da Silva, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UNOPS
21st June 2024*



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