



Mr. Fodé Ndiaye
UN Resident Coordinator

FOREWORD

Dear esteemed partners and readers,

I welcome you to the 2021 First quarterly edition of the UN in Rwanda Newsletter dubbed "Turi Kumwe". This quarterly publication provides an insight into what the UN in Rwanda has been doing during the months of January, February, and March. Importantly, how all UN agencies are working together - delivering results as One with our continued and collective commitment to contribute to improving Rwanda people's live Leaving No One Behind.

As we started this year, the challenging situation due to COVID-19 pandemic continues, however good news of hope with the arrival of Vaccines. On March 3, 2021 **Rwanda received the first doses of COVID-19 Vaccines.** This was a historic moment for the Government and the people in Rwanda. The first dose of vaccines, through COVAX, a global initiative for affordable and equitable access to vaccine which is co-led by Gavi (the Global Alliance for Vaccine), the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and the WHO, in partnership with UNICEF and supported by donors and member states. **This shows solidarity.** This great step, combined with continued preventive measures, will save many lives and enhance hope for recovery. I commend the Government of Rwanda for its functioning health system, its outstanding preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the dedication of its frontline workers.

The UN has been a great partner to Rwanda and remains committed to fighting and recovering together from this pandemic.

Our joint support to COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic is US\$ 24 million, an increase of US\$ 4 million during this quarter 1 from \$20.8 million in December 2020. This amount combines health and socio-economic support, human resources, innovations, equipment, emergency, and individual staff voluntary donations.

Also in this quarter, the UN Rwanda had opportunity to participate at the Joint SDG Fund Briefing Session co-hosted by the Permanent Representative of Rwanda Ambassador Valentine Rugwabiza and the Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations. We presented Rwanda's financing work and appreciated the **support for three Joint Programmes** on: Social Protection; SDG Financing Architecture; and an integrated SDG investment project in the active pipeline of the Fund for which we received seed funding ("1000 Health Clinics in the Land of a Thousand Hills"). Rwanda's contributions were greatly appreciated by Member States in a session aimed to support the Fund's replenishment efforts, while further positioning our unique Joint Programme under this innovative financing mechanism.

Building back, or rather forward better from COVID-19 will require innovations, especially in financing and technology. Rwanda and the UN joined this year's celebrations of International Women's Day and various activities through-out March. The global theme for International Women's Day is 'Women in Leadership: Achieving an Equal Future in a COVID-19 World'. We advocate to Act Equal and as rightly said by the UN Secretary General António Guterres **"It is time to build an equal future. This is job for everyone - and for the benefit of everyone"**.

The Government of Rwanda has committed to participate in the preparation of the **UN Food Systems Summit 2021** which is led by the United Nations Secretary-General. UN in Rwanda is greatly committed to support the Government to organize the Food Systems Summit Dialogues that will shape Rwanda's pathway, intention and commitments to make food systems sustainable, inclusive, efficient and nutritious and healthy in line with the 2030 goals.

In this Newsletter, you will read stories from UNICEF, FAO, WFP, UNFPA, UNCDF, UNDP, WHO, UN WOMEN and UNV. I invite you to visit rwanda.un.org and to follow us 'as it happens' Twitter & FB: @UNRwanda.

As always, I take this opportunity to thank the Government of Rwanda and all our esteemed partners and donors and all my UN colleagues, for all the efforts you make every day for this country and people.

As we begin the month of April, I and the UN prepares to join the people of Rwanda to remember the victims of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Even with COVID-19 challenges, we will continue to remember the Victims and spread the message of Never Again. Our solidarity and compassion are more relevant in this very challenging time for mankind.

Turi Kumwe! We are together!

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FAO AND JR FARMS JOIN FORCES TO SUPPORT YOUTH-LED INITIATIVES IN AGRIBUSINESS IN RWANDA



Encouraging more youth in agribusinesses will enable sustainable food security ©FAO/Teopista Mutesi

Investing in young people to unlock agriculture's potential in Africa

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rwanda has signed an agreement with JR Farms Limited to promote youth involvement in agriculture and create decent work opportunities.

JR Farms is an agri-enterprise operating in Rwanda, Nigeria and Zambia in the areas of food processing and retailing, agro commodity trading and consulting. Its corporate goals are to ensure food security, end hunger in Africa and create decent jobs for Africa's women and young people.

FAO and JR Farms have joined forces with the aim of developing youth-led agriculture enterprises by providing equity funds, through JR Farms' Green Agribusiness Fund (GAF), to selected youth-led agribusinesses involved in different agri-food value chains.

The young "agri-preneurs" will also benefit from training and capacity development opportunities and will be introduced to wider networks of fellow agri-preneurs.

"This important partnership with JR Farms will open up new opportunities for young people in agriculture and agribusiness to create decent work, improve livelihoods and boost food security," FAO Representative in Rwanda Gualbert Gbehounou said.

"This is why we are excited about this partnership with FAO which will position more young people to engage in agribusiness," Rotimi Opeyemi Olawale, JR Farms Chief Executive Officer said.

Investing in youth

The alliance with JR Farms is one of the outcomes of the Africa Regional Conference on Youth Employment held in Kigali, Rwanda in 2018,

and organized by FAO in conjunction with the African Union and the Government of Rwanda.

The partnership is also in line with FAO's new Strategy for Private Sector Engagement (2021-2025), endorsed by the FAO Council in December 2020, and which promotes more diverse and inclusive partnerships, more cooperation at the local level and more attention to micro, small-and-medium enterprises (MSMEs).

"As a youth-to-youth initiative, the Green Agribusiness Fund will play an important role in creating opportunities for youth in agribusiness in Africa. The initiative is holistic, it does not only offer funding but other salient support such as capacity building, training and exposure which are necessary for success in agribusiness

The partnership also contributes to a broader multi-country FAO project in Guatemala, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal and Uganda and that supports countries to adopt more youth-inclusive agri-food system development policies, strategies and programmes.

More on this story: <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1379634/icode/>

Turi Kumwe NewsLetter - 2021 - Q1

CELEBRATING LEADING WOMEN IN RWANDA'S E-COMMERCE SPACE.



Tadhim Uwizeye, CEO and Founder, OLADO

From my young age, I have always had a dream of becoming self-employed. After my studies I worked in the IT domain for a couple of years and got the opportunity to work in the e-commerce sector. I discovered my passion for the industry when the company I was working for closed its doors while I was just starting to witness firsthand the impact it was creating in the Rwandan society. I then realized that this was the opportunity for me to start my own business, contributing my expertise and experiences to offer Rwandans an opportunity to continue shopping and selling online at the same time promoting our locally manufactured products (Made in Rwanda). Tadhim Uwizeye, CEO and Founder, OLADO

Tadhim Uwizeye is a Rwandan e-commerce business development professional with an academic background in computer science and information systems management. Her ten years of experience in the information and technology services focused on entrepreneurship and e-commerce. She is the founder and CEO of Olado Business Group, an e-commerce enterprise that she co-founded in 2017 with a mission to change and make the Rwandan shopping experience easier through e-commerce.

Despite the challenges posed by the infancy of the sector in Rwanda, Tadhim is optimistic about the development and adoption of e-commerce in the country.

'Starting an e-commerce platform in Rwanda as a startup was itself a challenge. E-commerce was really in its infancy; it was new, and few people knew what it was. We were really the first movers. That comes with a lot of challenges — convincing people to adopt a new way of shopping and selling, having the trust in the safety of their identifications and more. We had to do both marketing and education, but it took off in the end. Person to person selling is much more difficult.' she emphasizes. The industry is becoming so promising, and it is encouraging to have so much customers excitement about our service and to see the growth.

Tadhim's online marketplace displays various products for sale from Made in Rwanda products to imported products in different categories: Agro-processed food, fashion, electronics, household appliances, sports equipment, among others. Olado offers different payment options and delivery services to its users in Rwanda and abroad.

As part of its COVID-19 response and recovery plan, and in alignment with the Inclusive Digital Economies strategy, UNCDF Rwanda partnered with the Ministry of ICT and Innovation and ICT Chamber to pilot a project that aims to support Rwanda MSMEs to increase their revenues through their presence on digital marketplaces with a focus on women-run businesses.

"The project is a COVID-19 recovery response, with an aim of supporting Macro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to do their business digitally, especially after the lockdown period when only digitally run businesses could operate. The project supports MSMEs to manage the crisis by helping them access a broader market within and outside the country. In addition, the project's findings will contribute to the development of the e-commerce policy in Rwanda." said Roselyne Uwamahoro, UNCDF Rwanda Program Coordinator.

Thadhim's business, Olado, is one of the 25 e-commerce platforms that the project aims to strengthen. In a 12-month period, the project will also enable the digital onboarding of 1,000 MSMEs operating in different sectors while linking them with financing opportunities. It will also train 1,000 iWorkers (e-marketplace facilitators) and dispatch them to the field to train MSMEs on the usage of e-commerce platform.

"Being supported by the project has pushed us ahead. We are trained on the basics of building a successful business but more importantly we are given access to a network of other startups whom we could exchange ideas. we were able to secure basic support from different partners who appreciated our initiative, and we are now a recognized e-commerce platform, with promising opportunities ahead." noted Tadhim

THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA AND UNDP LAUNCH DISINFECTING ROBOTS TO FIGHT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 AND REDUCE HOSPITAL ACQUIRED INFECTIONS.



These new robots are cutting-edge Ultra Violet (UV-C) light robots which will help in cleaning and disinfecting treatment centres, hospitals and places of mass gathering.

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to ravage Africa and the world in general, the Government of Rwanda through The Ministry of ICT and Innovation and The Ministry of Health in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Rwanda and the Government of Japan, have deployed three additional state-of-the-art robots to reinforce its efforts against the virus.

The new robots that have been deployed at Nyarugenge District Hospital, are cutting-edge Ultra Violet (UV-C) light robots which will help in cleaning and disinfecting treatment centres, hospitals and places of mass gathering such as markets, offices and means to limit the spread of the COVID-19.

The acquired UV-C Robots have unique features which include the UV-C lamps that emit ultraviolet lights destroying deadly microorganisms that may be missed during the manual cleaning process, hence helping to reduce infection rates for patients and healthcare workers.

Among other capabilities these robots have is the capacity to undertake speedy cleaning and disinfecting patient and operating rooms, labor and delivery, ICU rooms, isolation discharge rooms and other indoor spaces. On average, one robot can disinfect one room in 32 minutes. They can also kill virus other than SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

Honorable Paula INGABIRE, the Minister of ICT and Innovation says: *"I would like to extend our gratitude to the UNDP and the Government of Japan for their continued support towards our efforts and desire to leverage cutting-edge technologies in the fight against Covid-19. These Robots offer a faster, more effective and less labour-intensive disinfection alternative to manual cleaning."*

"The GoR has placed ICT at the centre of its transformation and the health sector is a priority sector where technology is being used to provide better health outcomes through improved service delivery, patient experience, health and safety"; adds Minister INGABIRE.

"The introduction of robots in our COVID19 case management has contributed to limiting human interaction between healthcare providers and patients," said Dr. Sabin NSANZIMANA; Director General of Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC).

"As we introduce the use of robots in the Infection Prevention Control activities we intend to even minimize risks of infection of our IPC staffs as they conduct decontamination procedures," he added.

Mr. Maxwell Gomera, Resident Representative of UNDP Rwanda, notes *"Despite the darkness of the past year, there have been signs of hope, including from robotic science. At UNDP Rwanda, we are pleased to partner once again with the Ministry of ICT and Innovation to deploy three UV-C disinfection robots that will be used to disinfect treatment centers and public places to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus. In addition to vaccines, these Robots represent yet another great triumph of modern science, and one that will protect frontline workers and prevent spread of diseases."*

"Congratulations to the Government of Rwanda for once again moving forcefully to confront the COVID-19 pandemic." Adds Mr. Maxwell Gomera

This marks another milestone that Rwanda has achieved towards harnessing emerging technologies to curb the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, after eight months since the five smart anti-epidemic robots were deployed to minimize contact with patients and therefore reducing the risk of contamination of health professionals.

Read the full story here:

<https://www.rw.undp.org/content/rwanda/en/home/presscenter/articles/2021/News0/News.html>

SUPPORTING YOUNG MOTHERS IN NYAMASHEKE DISTRICT TO BUILD NEW LIVES

While many communities including young people, were participating in different activities to support national efforts in fighting COVID-19 pandemic, Francine Uwamahoro 17, from Nyamasheke District in the North- West of Rwanda, stayed home, hiding from the villagers because she was pregnant.

Beside the general pervasive atmosphere, she was also enduring the harsh reality of becoming a mother at 17 years. When her parents learned that she was pregnant, they almost banished her from home, yet the man responsible for the pregnancy, had fled their village for the capital Kigali, and could not answer her phone calls.



Supporting young mothers in Nyamasheke District to build new lives @UNFPA Rwanda

As the storm gathered, Uwamahoro was gripped with more fear when she realized that she was still under her parents' care and could not move to start a family with a man who had already rejected her pregnancy.

"How dare you get pregnant? How do you forget the poor life we are living? How will I be able to feed you, your sisters, and your child with my small income?" Uwamahoro Mother said with an angry tone.

She felt guilty that her mother had to sell their only goat to contribute to her medical bills and other needs during her pregnancy.

"I have been trying to figure out whether I am a child or an adult. Whenever I think about this, I begin crying, especially when I see my agemates live normal lives and being treated with love by their parents." Uwamahoro stated.

Local leaders in the Nyamasheke District indicate that teenage pregnancy and early motherhood take an enormous toll on girls' education and income earning potential, causing persistent poverty.

"Most girls, who become pregnant, drop out from school and are more likely to become pregnant again if they do not get the right information and services. Teenage mothers need health education and moral support to restore their hope towards a brighter future." Said Bankundiye Etienne, Nyamasheke District Official.

Uwahoro was identified, in August 2020, by a local community health worker from Gisakura Health Center in Nyamasheke, who informed her more about the Club of Teen Mothers and how they are supported to access the full package of reproductive health and services, including access to antenatal care, prevention of unintended pregnancy, delivery at the health center, and making a plan for a healthy future after delivery.

"Joining the club eased my pain and brought happiness back in my life. Ever since I joined, I have learned a lot about health priorities, and we have started a savings club with other mothers at the health center" Uwamahoro said.

Imbuto Foundation with support from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), conducts regular parent-adolescent communication (PAC) forums that bring together FTYMs and their parents to plan on supporting teenage mothers jointly, prevent gender-based violence, prevent subsequent unintended pregnancies and to build sustainable sources of income. PAC meetings bridged a relationship between teen mothers and their parents, families, and relatives.

For him, she had caused the family shame, and he thought of abandoning home and flee to Kigali. Fortunately, he found a solution in the PAC conversations.

UNFPA supports a holistic approach to promote sexual and reproductive health rights for all, empowering individuals to make healthy choices and inspiring adolescents and youths to attain their full potential in life. Additionally, UNFPA works to mobilize social support for rights and choices by engaging leaders, men, and boys.

"Especially critical during these challenging COVID-19 times, UNFPA in partnership with Imbuto Foundation and support of KOICA, is supporting First Time Young Mothers with the provision of Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health information and services through trained health providers and peer educators in the communities. It is paramount adolescents continue to be provided with the knowledge and access to services to protect against unintended pregnancies, prevent STIs, HIV/AIDS, and be empowered to make the right choices to continue with their income-generating activities and contribute to their communities." said Mark Bryan Schreiner, UNFPA Representative.

Read the full story here:

<https://rwanda.unfpa.org/en/news/supporting-young-mothers-nyamasheke-district-build-new-lives>

FROM THE FRONTLINES: THE BATTLE AGAINST COVID-19 MISINFORMATION

UNICEF is tackling the spread of misinformation on COVID-19 and the incoming vaccines



Justine, a Red Cross volunteer, informs people in the Gatsata community through her megaphone on how to effectively practice COVID measure.

It's a foggy, rainy Friday morning when Justine, a volunteer, gets ready to head over to her community market in Gatsata, just a couple minutes away from Nyabugogo. She puts on her jacket, grabs her phone and megaphone and begins the steep climb on foot to start her day. As she climbs up the hill she notices someone with their mask fitted incorrectly, and she quickly reminds them that for a mask to work effectively, it needs to cover their nose.

As the world at large, and Rwanda in particular, endures a surge in COVID-19 cases, UNICEF, with support from the Government of Japan, is working with partners such as Red Cross to counter the spread of COVID-19 and the misinformation surrounding it.

With preparations for the world's fastest and largest vaccination campaign now underway in Rwanda, this work is more vital than ever.

The volunteers traverse their respective neighbourhoods with smartphone and megaphone in hand, educating their respective community about COVID-19 and tackling misconceptions related to it, while also harvesting valuable data about knowledge, attitudes and practices around it.

"I begin my day in the morning at the market and walk around my community throughout the day with a megaphone. Most times, people are already practicing social distancing, but many are still struggling to wear their masks properly. When I'm deployed in rural areas, some think I am the police so they quickly put on their masks. I do not want them to fear me so I begin to educate them on what the benefits of wearing a mask are and why they should wear them correctly." Justine explains.

Even with the rain, the streets are bustling as people start their day. Some are opening up their shops and others take to the market to do their daily shopping. Since it's early, Justine avoids using the loud megaphone. Instead, she speaks directly with the people close to her.

"People in remote areas have limited access to information around the virus. Some think that the virus does not exist at all so it is extremely important for us to educate them, says Justine

Across town, Valens, an exuberant young man, is another volunteer who helps spread awareness about COVID-19 in his local community.

His witty and lively character easily engages the people around him. Today he is working alongside Faustin, a data collector.

As the day continues and approaches noon, Valens takes to the streets of Kimironko, a busy suburb with Faustin.

"In the mornings I have a lot of energy, so I use my voice and, since it is a rainy day, most people have taken shelter so I go door to door. When I begin to tire, I use the pre-recorded messages. When I began to volunteer last year, not many knew how to wash their hands properly, people were not wearing masks, but as one can see, all the shops on these streets now have handwashing stations and everyone is wearing their masks properly" says Valens proudly.

As Valens plays the pre-recorded messages, Faustin crouches next to a store owner, Virginie, with a questionnaire on his phone. He asks her "how many masks do you have at home?"

This is one of the questions that UNICEF and the Red Cross have put together to collect data from different demographics on their current knowledge about COVID-19. After Virginie's answers are collected, Faustin proceeds to another man standing in front of a kiosk and asks the same questions.

Thanks to the efforts of volunteers and data collectors such as Justine, Faustin and Valens, awareness is steadily increasing in communities all over Rwanda. UNICEF along with the government and other partners is working across the country to ensure that every family has access to the information they need about the virus and the vaccines that will help to bring the pandemic to an end.

Read the full story here: <https://www.unicef.org/rwanda/stories/frontlines-battle-against-covid-19-misinformation>



Mukansanga with one of her young mentees, showing her how the kitenge bag is made

“I care about empowering women by creating products that can help us become financially independent.” Said Mukansanga

In January 2021, UN Women Rwanda, in collaboration with Inkomoko Business Development Ltd, launched a scale up of the initiative started with Rwanda Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs to help women-led businesses recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The extension of the program includes 50 women-led businesses with 60% of them being out of the city of Kigali.

The program intends to strengthen businesses affected by COVID-19, helping them rethink their business model and targeted customers. To facilitate this, the businesses are linked to a network of investors as well as other financial institutions that are ready to support businesses that have suffered from the pandemic.

In a recent interview, Mukansanga shared that she expects to gain several skills through the program including technical skills, resource mobilization, online visibility, capacity building and networking with other businesses in the same field.

She is determined to use her business to advance women’s empowerment. She explains: “I care about empowering women by creating products that can help us become financially independent. As we weave and produce these arts in our center, we discuss how we can grow together and set an example for our daughters.

Among the businesses that are benefiting from the program, is Unique Arts and Crafts, an art and craft shop owned by one of the women entrepreneurs, Mukansanga and other women who are also part of a women empowerment group where they intend to grow and uplift each other while teaching young ladies to become entrepreneurs and be financially independent.

CROP INSURANCE INCREASES FOOD SECURITY AND PRODUCTIVITY IN RWANDA

"The future is looking bright.....Now that we know we will be compensated if our crops are damaged, we are much more motivated to pay insurance fees and increase productivity"

The effects of climate change are threatening the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in Rwanda. Climatic shocks such as heavy rains, droughts, hail, and destructive winds have damaged crops and reduced food security.

Most recently, two consecutive rainy seasons of above-average rainfall (September-December 2019 short rains and March-May 2020 long rains) led to localized floods and landslides which resulted in 317 deaths and the loss of livelihoods across Rwanda.

The land belonging to the KOAMAGI and KOAMANYA GISHUBI cooperatives is particularly vulnerable to flooding. The cooperatives are situated along the Akanyaru River which straddles the Rwanda-Burundi border and provides fertile ground for growing maize. However, the river is also prone to flooding which often damages the crops.

"Over the past two years, our cooperative has faced a growing challenge of crops being damaged as a result of flooding," said Gerard Kasarira, President of KOAMANYA GISHUBI. "In the past, there was nothing much we could do except wait for the next season," he said.

Clautrida received RWF 20,000 (US\$ 20.02) in compensation which she used to buy a pig and a goat. This was especially welcome as restrictions on movement brought about by the coronavirus pandemic prevented her and other farmers from trading at their local markets.

Insurance means food security

This all changed when these two cooperatives joined the government of Rwanda's National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) which is supported by the World Food Programme (WFP).

NAIS is a partnership between the government of Rwanda and some of the country's private insurance providers which promotes the adoption of crop insurance by smallholder farmers to mitigate against the effects of climate change. The government pays 40 percent of the insurance costs and the cooperatives cover the remainder.

The value chains covered under the insurance scheme are maize, rice, chilli peppers, French beans and Irish potatoes. There are also plans to include banana, soya beans and cassava.

"Before we had crop insurance, we would go hungry when crops were damaged," said Clautrida Mukankuruziza from KOAMAGI. "With the compensation I received from NAIS, I was able to continue buying food for my family," she said.



Gerard Kasarira, (President of KOAMANYA GISHUBI posing for pictures in the cooperative's maize fields. Photo: WFP/Daniel Kibsgaard

Clautrida received RWF 20,000 (US\$ 20.02) in compensation which she used to buy a pig and a goat. This was especially welcome as restrictions on movement brought about by the coronavirus pandemic prevented her and other farmers from trading at their local markets.

WFP supports NAIS by mobilizing farmers in cooperatives participating in the Farm to Market Alliance (FtMA) to sign up to the crop insurance scheme.

Initially, a mistrust of insurance companies led to scepticism of the scheme by many farmers in the cooperatives. By mobilizing and educating farmers and ensuring compensation is paid on time, WFP through FtMA has built trust between farmers and the insurance companies and increased uptake of the scheme.

"The future is looking bright," said Yeneste Niyitegeka, a member of KOAMANYA GISHUBI, "Now that we know we will be compensated if our crops are damaged, we are much more motivated to pay insurance fees and increase productivity."

This attitude is reflected across Rwanda where the amount of insured land increased from 357 hectares to 3,333 hectares between 2019 and 2020.

Increasing productivity

By promoting crop insurance, the Rwandan government and WFP are increasing the resilience of farmers to withstand climatic shocks, encouraging them to diversify their livelihoods and giving them the confidence they need to increase productivity.

Balackias Ndagwenayo, a farmer at KOAMANYA GISHUBI, paid RWF 2,000 (US\$ 2.00) to insure his 0.8-hectare farm and was compensated with RWF 10,000 (US\$ 10.01) when 0.2 hectares were damaged by flooding. He used this money to grow beans.

"With NAIS, my wish has finally come true," said Balackias, "The reduction in risk provided by crop insurance motivates me to invest more in increasing my productivity," he said.

COVID-19 VACCINES AND THE MUCH AWAITED JABS



A nurse preparing to administer a COVID-19 vaccine at Kigali Arena.

On 5 March, Minister of Health, Dr. Daniel Ngamije, WHO Country Representative Dr. Kasonde Mwinga and other officials received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at the Masaka Hospital. The event was live on some of the key media houses in the country and beyond as a sign of transparency and a way to deliver on a promise made publicly by Minister Daniel Ngamije.

"I will take the first vaccine to give an example". On 4th February speaking at a WHO-Africa Region virtual press briefing on COVID-19 vaccine rollout in Africa, Minister Ngamije committed to inspire trust in the Rwandan people. His efforts and those of the entire team involved in the vaccination campaign from procurement, shipment to administration paid off.

As of 25th March, 348,926 people including health care workers, elderly, people living with comorbidities and security organs have received their first dose.

As the COVID-19 vaccination campaign unfolded beautiful pictures from all 508 vaccination sites across the country started circulating.

Selfies and messages of gratitude from citizens previously concerned over how the issue of vaccine distribution and the hoaxes around efficiency would affect their chances to receive a COVID-19 vaccine

After 2020 which was such a trying year, many believed it would take nothing short of a miracle to turn things around. So when talks of a COVID-19 vaccine started in early 2021, people were hooked to their screens and radios. But which vaccine would it be? How long would it take for a middle-income and landlocked country like Rwanda to afford the vaccine? Is this the end of the face mask era? How much protection will the vaccine guarantee?

To answer some of these questions, Minister Ngamije and the Director General of the Rwanda Biomedical Centre Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana took turns on public and private media houses.

The officials and technicians in charge of Immunization programs on the government and WHO side became the spokespeople of Rwanda's plan-

and capacity to secure COVID-19 vaccines for its people through COVAX facility, a partnership between CEPI, Gavi, UNICEF and WHO.

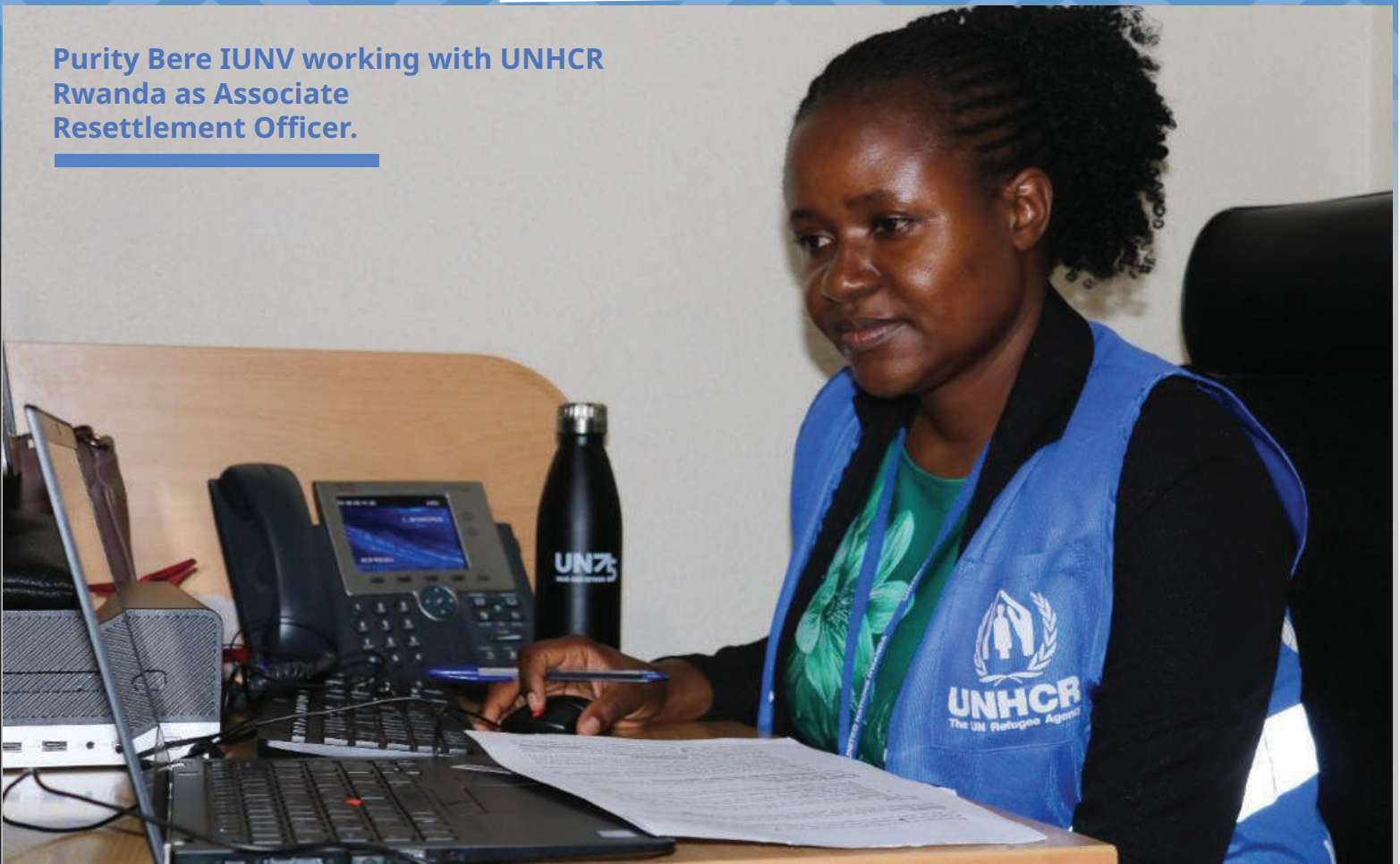
President Paul Kagame himself has been quite the outspoken of the concept behind the COVAX Facility. A quick look at his personal Twitter account and his stand on the matter is crystal clear from the exchanges with WHO Director General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and the talks with other World leaders on need to guarantee fairness in the access to the COVID Vaccines.

See more photos:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/govr-w/51016518378/in/album-72157718533227111/>

WHY I JOINED UN VOLUNTEERS

Purity Bere IUNV working with UNHCR Rwanda as Associate Resettlement Officer.



Before joining UNV I worked with UNHCR Zimbabwe in Protection. I was driven by the desire to help refugees in a “tangible” manner. I wanted to be able to advocate for them at a personal level and be able to literally count the number of people whose lives I had positively impacted directly.

I do my best on each resettlement case I work on because nothing gives me more joy than seeing the refugees, I interview successfully getting admitted into various receiving countries through the resettlement program.

I look forward to changing the lives of so many other refugees through resettlement.

2020 has been a difficult year because of the COVID 19 pandemic. Particularly in the field because Volunteers are usually involved in groundwork which involves coming into direct contact with persons of concern. However, despite the pandemic, Volunteer services were required in some areas and they kept working despite of the risk. Ensuring and supporting volunteers with access to good health facilities and standards is very important.





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