



Mr. Fodé Ndiaye
UN Resident Coordinator

FOREWORD

Dear Esteemed Partners, Readers and UN Family members,

I welcome you to the 2021 3rd Quarter Edition of our UN in Rwanda Newsletter "Turi Kumwe". As always, this quarterly publication is a collection of stories from UN Agencies giving us a glimpse of the work we are engaging in Rwanda, capturing the impact we are having, delivering results together with our collective commitment to the Government and people of Rwanda -- Leaving No One Behind.

In this quarter, we had the visit of the Special Adviser of the UN Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide Ms. Alice Wairimu Nderitu. She had a courtesy meeting with the President of the Republic of Rwanda H.E Paul Kagame, with senior Government officials and partners with responsibilities to prevent Genocide and promote Unity and Reconciliation, and with the UN Country Team and the Diplomatic and international organization community.

She paid tribute to the victims of the Genocide against the Tutsis. Madam Nderitu reiterated the commitment of the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and that of the whole UN leadership to fight genocide and make

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Never Again a reality, and to fight hate speech.

In this last month of the quarter, I held fruitful bilateral meetings with new Ambassadors of our important partner countries including Belgium, France, and the United Kingdom. Our discussions focused on UN operations in the context of UN reforms and enhanced partnership, grounded on renewed and networked multilateralism to continue supporting Rwanda's development agenda articulated with the UN agenda 2030 and the Sustainable development goals. I wish fruitful mission to the new ambassadors.

The last week of September was special with the UN General Assembly that brought together world leaders under the theme: "Building resilience through hope – to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people and revitalize the United Nations." In his statement, President Kagame supported the UN SG's common agenda with a great component on Climate action, a milestone towards the Conference of Parties (COP26) to be held in Glasgow, October-November 2021. Alongside, the UN Food Systems Summit which featured Rwanda's FSS pathways with the President's remarks -- I commend, the UN SG Special Envoy Dr. Agnes Kalibata for leading the Food Systems Summit, Rwandans, UN and all Partners for their active participation at various levels to this important endeavor.

I wish to quote the UN SG's tweet: *"This week at the UNGA my message was simple: Our world has never been more threatened or divided. But I have hope. These are problems we have created, and problems we can solve. Humanity has shown that we are capable of great things when we join forces. Let's get to work"*. The UN SG has underscored the need for a global vaccine plan to reach 70% of the world's population by mid-2022, through at least doubling present production capacity. Ending the pandemic for everyone, everywhere, is the first step in bridging the gap between the rich and the poor.

While reflecting on the SG's message, I am excited to share the positive news from the Ministry of Health. Rwanda has fully vaccinated 12% of its population against COVID -19, superseding the September 10% global target set by the World Health Organization (WHO), aimed at widening vaccination and helping to turn the tide against the pandemic. The country has been a model of good practice since the beginning of its vaccination program in March. I congratulate the Government and its partners for their sustained efforts against the COVID-19 pandemic. Rwanda is committed to reach as many people as possible in each targeted group which gives hope to achieve global targets in the country's COVID-19 vaccine responses set at 40% by the end of December and 70% by mid-2022. For the target population, as of 26th September, 21% have been vaccinated (1,640,974) and 26.8% (2,099,305) have received their first dose.

I and fellow UN Head of Agencies also joined hands with the Government through the SINDOHOKA campaign -- a campaign that encourages us not to baulk but continue adhering to all COVID-19 preventive measures.

The Economic Recovery Plan is also yielding results and the real GDP growth is 20.6% during Q2, 2021 up from 3.5% in Q1, 2021.

However, we know that results both in Rwanda and in the world remain fragile and uncertainties and risk-informed policies and strategies and resilience are the new norms. Nonetheless, we remain optimistic and together we will win as our achievements are grounded on strong leadership, good governance and enhanced partnership and innovations, with youth and women as driving forces. The last Development Partner Coordination Group (DPCG) has reiterated the importance of our partnership to consolidate and enhance the results.

In this Newsletter, you will read stories from FAO, IOM, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women, and WFP. The UN family appreciates the continued partnership and collaboration with all partners for their contribution towards achieving collective results in the development of the country and improving the lives of the people of Rwanda, leaving no one behind.

Let me end by paying tribute to our dedicated, professional and hard-working colleagues whom we unfortunately lost: Eustache, Seth and Sylvain. The UN family and I extend our deepest condolences to their families. Komera! May our continued commitment to honor their memories keep on inspiring us to live up to the standards and norms of our UN Charter.

I invite you to visit rwanda.un.org and to follow us on Twitter & FB: @UNRwanda

Let us all stay safe. Enjoy reading!

Turi Kumwe!

Table of Content

Icyimpaye’s fierce fight to protect her children with albinism.....Page 1

Whether baby boom or bust, the solution lies in prioritizing the reproductive health and rights of all people.....Page 2

Despite COVID-19 disruptions, Marie Chantal aspires to finish her education and achieve her dreams.....Page 3

FAO and RDB in a new drive to raise awareness on E-commerce in agricultural value chain to enhance access to markets.....Page 4

IOM Campaign to raise awareness on trafficking in persons reached millions in Rwanda.....Page 5

Smallholder farmers in Rwanda expand into commercial markets with WFP’s support.....Page 6

UN Women provides psychosocial support to teen mothers in Rwanda through the GBV Mobile Clinics.....Page 7

Between health emergencies and natural disasters, essential health services not to be disrupted.....Page 8

Africa’s Great Lakes women reinforce their mediation and negotiation skills to better contribute to preventative diplomacy and mediation efforts in the region.....Page 9

Pictorial.....Page 10

Icyimpaye's fierce fight to protect her children with albinism



Icyimpaye with Umutoniwase, her first daughter born with albinism

Icyimpaye Riziki, 37, is a mother of nine children, including three born with albinism. She lives with her family in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda.

She is among 20 people trained to make liquid soap through a project of the Organization for the Integration and Promotion of People with Albinism (OIPPA), with financial support from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Rwanda.

The training changed her life and the lives of her children—from being outcasts in their own family to being respected members of the community.

Icyimpaye agreed to share the story of her life after giving birth to a child with albinism, in a society that still stigmatises and discriminates against people with albinism.

Once happily married, Icyimpaye's life changed in 2002 when she gave birth to her baby girl Umutoniwase, who was born with albinism. In the months and years that followed, Icyimpaye suffered a constant barrage of insults and mistreatment.

"This is a curse." "You have given birth to an animal, not a child." These were some of the words that spoken by her husband and other family members who did not understand albinism and were shocked to receive a first child with albinism.

Icyimpaye's husband stopped caring for the family. "My children and I lived a miserable life because my husband abused me verbally and physically and accused me of prostitution considering the fact that where I come from no one else has children with albinism," she explains.

Things got worse after she gave birth to two more babies with albinism. "My husband treated me as a prostitute. My fellow church believers rejected me saying I was possessed and gave birth to devils," she recalls.

Icyimpaye and her children went through hard times of hunger and sickness. There were days they could not afford even one meal, and depended on their neighbours for help. Nor could she afford to pay health insurance for herself and her nine children.

The children with albinism faced many health challenges as their skin was highly vulnerable to the damaging rays of the sun. Icyimpaye did not have enough money to buy them protective clothing such as hats and long sleeve shirts or T-shirts.

"When I looked at their damaged skin, I felt very sad that I could not meet the basic needs for skin protection. I heard about sunscreen lotion, but I did not have enough income to buy it," she deplores.

She stood up alone against all odds and worked hard to take care of her children. Icyimpaye gained hope for her children's future in July 2019, when she was selected by OIPPA to participate in a one-month training workshop in vocational and entrepreneurship skills. It was there that she learned how to make and market liquid soap.

After the training, Icyimpaye started producing and selling liquid soap to village residents. She continued to expand her business to supply other villages and local markets.

Today, her family can afford two meals a day. She has money to provide her children with appropriate clothing and sunscreen lotion. Her three children with albinism have been progressively accepted by the neighbourhood and they now attend school regularly. The husband also regards his wife with renewed respect. "My husband no longer treats me as a worthless wife because I contribute to catering for the family," she says.

"I can now sleep peacefully and have happy dreams," she says.

The project trained more than 150 parents and persons with albinism on how to protect the rights of persons with albinism. Parents of children with albinism also learned about their own rights. They shared experiences and challenges that they have faced in raising children with albinism.

"I learned that Albinism is caused by both parents who have the albino genes. I also learned that children with albinism are human beings like others and have rights like other people," Icyimpaye said.

The project provided 30 households with small livestock such as pigs and goats to improve the livelihood and nutrition conditions of their family members. More than 100 persons with albinism were tested for skin cancer, and 150 were provided with sunscreen lotion. Icyimpaye never gave up. She persevered through the most difficult of times. But it was only with the support of OIPPA and UNDP Rwanda that she was able to change her circumstances.

Read the full story here: <https://www.rw.undp.org>

Whether baby boom or bust, the solution lies in prioritizing the reproductive health and rights of all people.

While celebrating the World Population Day, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) called for more efforts in the provision of sexual and reproductive health information and services.

Celebrated on July 11 of every year, the World Population Day is a moment to raise awareness on population and development issues around the world. This year's commemoration comes during the COVID-19 pandemic that may have lasting consequences on the population.



The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed weaknesses in health care systems globally, and has caused serious gaps and challenges in the provision of sexual and reproductive health information and services. Additionally, the reallocation of resources away from these services is taking a toll on the health of women and girls. This year, the UNFPA is calling to prioritize the reproductive health and rights of all people, including ease of access to information and services.

"Sexual and reproductive health services are essential," said UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem adding, "Health systems should be supported to deliver sexual and reproductive health services during crises, including by classifying this work as essential".

A woman, who has control over her body gains not only in terms of autonomy but also through advances in health and education, income and safety, is more likely to thrive, and so is her family. As the United Nations sexual and reproductive health Agency, UNFPA helps people obtain contraception and life-saving reproductive health services as well as information to empower women and girls to make informed decisions about their bodies and lives.

"What leads to healthy and productive societies is when women can make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health, and when they have access to services to support their choices," said Mr Mark Bryan Schreiner, UNFPA Rwanda Representative

Compounded economic impacts of the pandemic have been felt especially by women and girls, who generally earn less, hold less secure jobs and face greater risk of losing their livelihoods or descending into poverty. The Government of Rwanda has done a great job in creating conditions for individuals to access SRH information and services, and choose the number of children they want, even in the context of COVID-19.

"UNFPA wishes to express its gratitude to the Government of Rwanda for its Nairobi Summit commitments to accelerate access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. Rwanda continues to make tremendous progress in implementing the commitments through innovative, high impact health programmes to improve lives, particularly for women and girls," said Mr. Schreiner in a statement.

Family planning

At the Nairobi Summit in 2019, Rwanda committed to reduce unmet need for family planning through improving further service delivery, access and uptake by increasing the number of health facilities, skilled healthcare providers and by expanding the available contraceptive method mix, including emergency contraceptives. Key progress includes decreased Unmet Need for Family Planning from 19% in 2015 to 14% in 2020; and teenage pregnancy reduced from 7,3% in 2015 to 5,2% in 2020, despite the pandemic.

"Old and new challenges have emerged that could hamper our progress. A lot of progress has been made since the original ICPD, including significant improvements in maternal health and expanded access to voluntary family planning as highlighted in the dissemination of DHS IV 2020 key indicators report." Said Hon. Dr. Daniel Ngamije, Minister of Health at a high level multi-sectoral stakeholders meeting organized in December 2020 by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with UNFPA to disseminate the Rwanda ICPD25 Commitments.

"The key drivers of the progress made so far include visionary leadership, community participation, commitment, citizens' hard work and support from development partners." Hon. Dr. Ngamije added.

Rwanda is among countries that were able to maintain or restore access to essential health services, including family planning. Rwanda's current population is approx. 11.8 million, of which around 70 per cent is youth with 27.6 per cent between the ages of 16 and 30. The total fertility rate (TFR) is 4.1 children. Results from the 2019-2020 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS 2019-2020) show that 5 per cent of women aged 15-19 have begun childbearing and this rises rapidly with age from less than 1 per cent at the age of 15, to 15 per cent at the age of 19 adding that teenagers with no education and those in the lowest wealth quintile tend to start childbearing earlier than other teenagers.

Despite COVID-19 disruptions, Marie Chantal aspires to finish her education and achieve her dreams



Marie Chantal is one of the 450,000 students in Rwanda who took the national exams this year despite COVID-19-related challenges, in hopes of becoming a journalist. ©UNICEFRwanda/2021/HabibKanobana

22-year-old Marie Chantal knows exactly what she wants to do once she passes the national exams. "After finishing my studies, I want to become a journalist because I like working in the media," shares Marie Chantal. "I love journalism so much, and I look forward to also learn literature where we get used to writing articles and other types of writing as well as performing different plays."

Born with a physical disability, Marie Chantal is unable to move by herself and coordinate her hands. In July, Marie Chantal sat for the Grade 12 national exam conducted safely across the country in the middle of a Covid-19 lockdown. Aided by a computer to help her study for the exams, she is sure she will pass and proceed with higher education. "I have the confidence," she says with a warm smile that inspires confidence of a bright future ahead.

For the second straight year, COVID-19 continues to upend the lives of many across the world. Children have been affected by the different measures being put in place to halt the spread of COVID-19. With fear of new waves, the Government of Rwanda has put measures in place including school closures in 2020, followed by remote learning and then gradual school re-opening and catch up classes. The closures last year resulted in the postponement of the national exams, which will help students determine their future.

With the outbreak of COVID-19, schools in Rwanda were closed in March 2020, partially reopening in November 2021 and then fully reopening in February 2021. Learning continued throughout this period either at home or through safe school re-opening, and recently completed national exams offer the students the opportunity to progress to the next level of education of their choice.

Thanks to funding from the people of Switzerland, UNICEF worked to ensure that children with disabilities such as Marie Chantal have access to early childhood development, quality education, family care and protection despite uncertainties caused by the pandemic.

To mitigate the impact of COVID-19 for children with disabilities, UNICEF partnered with Humanity and Inclusion to ensure remote learning opportunities for more than 7,200 children with disabilities. This included sign language interpretation of video content developed and aired on television, printing and distribution of braille learning material that benefited 600 children with visual impairment or with low vision and outreach to families with children with disabilities for individualised support during lessons on the radio by teachers and inclusive education activists.

Through the generous support provided by the people of Switzerland, UNICEF also supported the capacity development of 3,700 teachers in inclusive education schools and cluster schools to support the enrolment and learning of 7,512 children with disabilities.

Back at Marie Chantal's school, being born with a disability has not stopped her from pursuing her education.

However, she is worried about some challenges that students like her face while attending school and taking exams. Regardless of the challenges, Marie Chantal is hopeful and beaming with optimism.

"What I can say to my classmates who live with disabilities is that we are able to study and achieve our dreams like the rest of the students. There's no difference," she says. "For example, on my side, I plan to become a journalist, and my disability cannot prevent me from doing all I can to achieve it. So, we're able!"

FAO and RDB in a new drive to raise awareness on E-commerce in agricultural value chain to enhance access to markets



The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Rwanda Development Board (RDB) have trained over 230 local suppliers and traders around the country on how they can buy and sell agricultural products through E-commerce to enhance access to markets.

The workshops were organized through the FAO project "Support Local supplier's Capacity Development and Promotion of E-commerce for Agricultural Value Chains in Rwanda" which also developed the National E-commerce in Agriculture Value Chains Strategy (2021-2026).

The project has supported 20 businesses to develop web pages to boost their online presence and build their capacities on the use of online marketing.

The workshops also took the participants through the online-payment modalities, challenges, and risks linked to fraud and cyber security concerns and mitigation measures. Celestin Kabera from RDB noted that E-commerce is bridging the gap between the buyers, the local suppliers and the sellers.

FAO's project manager, Angelique Uwimana, during the training remarked that E-commerce has the potential to widen the consumer base for the suppliers and traders from within the country, and at regional and international level.

Jean premier BIENVENU, an E-commerce Specialist in the ministry observed that even though this electronic trade is quite new in Rwanda, it is growing and will be adopted by a high number of traders.

Considering the products sold online, food products stand on 15.2 percent, agriculture products on 13.4 percent and animal products at 5.1 percent compared to other products and services sold such as clothing and textiles, and footwear among others.

Traders attended the training from Kigali and the four Provinces. Participants agreed to continue exchanging knowledge, and to ensure the knowledge is shared with other local suppliers.

The FAO Representative Dr. Gualbert Gbehounou asserted that E-commerce of agricultural value chains achievements are in line with Covid-19 recovery plan. The Government of Rwanda articulates that, "Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) will need to innovate new capabilities for remote operation and keep virtual customer engagement while creating digital platforms, allowing customers to engage entirely online, upsetting long-held assumptions about the need for in-person meetings".

IOM Campaign to raise awareness on trafficking in persons reached millions in Rwanda

IOM, the International Organization for Migration, and its partners Easy and Possible and Prison Fellowship Rwanda, are using radio as well as risk communication messages as part of efforts to reach communities to raise awareness on trafficking in persons in Rwanda.

More than 3 million people have been reached in an outreach campaign launched in September in border districts of Huye, Rubavu and Rusizi and the six refugee camps across the country. IOM developed easy messages in Kinyarwanda and English on what human trafficking is and how to combat it. These messages were distributed through posters, banners and brochures with key messages, a mobile sound and one-hour radio programs. IOM targeted congregations points such as markets, bus stations, points of entry, distribution centers in refugee camps, youth centers, schools and colleges. An army of 90 youth volunteers was assembled to distribute posters and brochures. "I'm glad to be part of this campaign, as young people we need to take a lead in important issues like human trafficking" said one volunteer.

Among the campaign's supporters is a famous local female artist Yvonne Mugimana known to her fans as Queen Cha, who encouraged young people, especially women, to be cautious when dealing with strangers online or even people they know. "Young people, especially girls, should be educated about human trafficking as they are targeted by traffickers the most, we must ensure that the message reaches everyone" she said. Queen Cha was supported by local social media influencers Umutoni Nadia and Karangwa Ange who weighed in to support the campaign on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.



Influencers Umutoni Nadia and Karangwa Ange who weighed in to support the campaign on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Photo IOM 2021.

Smallholder farmers in Rwanda expand into commercial markets with WFP's support

"What excites me most is knowing that WFP buys this produce to distribute in school meals"



Immaculée Mukarusanga has seen a turnaround in her business, thanks to the Farm to Market Alliance. Photo: WFP/Fredrik Lerneryd

There was a time when Immaculée Mukarusanga relied on farming just to feed her two teenage daughters. These days, she grows enough beans, maize and potatoes to sell to a range of buyers in Nyaruguru district, in Rwanda's Southern Province, including the World Food Programme (WFP). She has also bought cows and is exploring ways of further developing her agricultural and livestock produce.

The turnaround was made possible through the Farm to Market Alliance – comprising six global agri-focused organizations including WFP – which provided training on improving crop quality and volume, as well as reduced losses after harvest.

Immaculée also has crop insurance to protect her from climate-related threats such as droughts or floods. She secured this through the Government's National Agricultural Insurance Scheme, again with support from the alliance. Other farmers, within a cooperative, have also benefited from the support, with over 30 metric tons of maize and 60 metric tons of beans sold last season with WFP's support.

"We get good markets for our maize and beans, we get money to support our families, and we can pay medical insurance on time – we have stability," says Immaculée. "Before joining this farmer's cooperative, I didn't have the skills to produce enough for the market. I am also happy because in a cooperative like this, we learn from each other and support one another."

Immaculée primarily grows iron-rich, single-variety beans, then sells them through the farmers' cooperative which she has been a part of since 2015. WFP buys beans from the cooperative for its home-grown school feeding programme in Rwanda. In fact, it has become one of the group's main buyers.

"WFP not only trains us, but also comes back to buy our produce," says Immaculée. "Before, getting buyers was not so smooth. What excites me most is knowing that WFP buys this produce to distribute in school meals. It feels good to know that your produce is reaching children in your very own community."

She explains how the project also increased farmers' resilience to the effects of COVID-19: "During lockdown, we couldn't sell any produce, but we were lucky to be able to take back and eat the produce we sent to the cooperative. We didn't make any money but at least we got some food to eat."

Immaculée's cooperative has about 330 members, of whom 151 are women. It started receiving support from the Farm to Market Alliance programme in 2018. In total, the alliance supports more than 85,000 smallholder farmers in Rwanda.

The Farm to Market Alliance comprises WFP, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, Bayer, Rabobank, Syngenta and Yara International ASA. It forms private and public sector partnerships to deliver products and services tailored to the needs of farmers. The goal is to sustainably improve smallholder farmer incomes and resilience, and to develop commercial opportunities for all groups along the value chain.



Elisabeth and her daughter during the mobile clinic visit. Photo: Courtesy of Afrifame Pictures

UN Women provides psychosocial support to teen mothers in Rwanda through the GBV Mobile Clinics.

19-year-old Elisabeth is a senior three school dropout and one of the victims of gender-based violence in the Burera District of Rwanda who was raped during the COVID19 pandemic. The perpetrator fled to the neighboring country Uganda when he learned that she was going to report the case. Elisabeth's family abandoned her and was faced with shame, humiliation, and discrimination which made her life as a child tough.

In the framework of UN Women and partners through the [Fostering women and girls' dignified lives through GBV Prevention, response, and women's economic autonomy in Rwanda](#) project provided psycho-social support services during the GBV Mobile Clinics outreach using a reintegration full package combined strategy.

This includes psycho-social support group counseling, Parent-Adolescent Communication forums sessions; community-based outreach campaigns to increase awareness, male involvement and fighting social discrimination, stigma, and violence as well as promotion of income-generating activities for teen mothers.

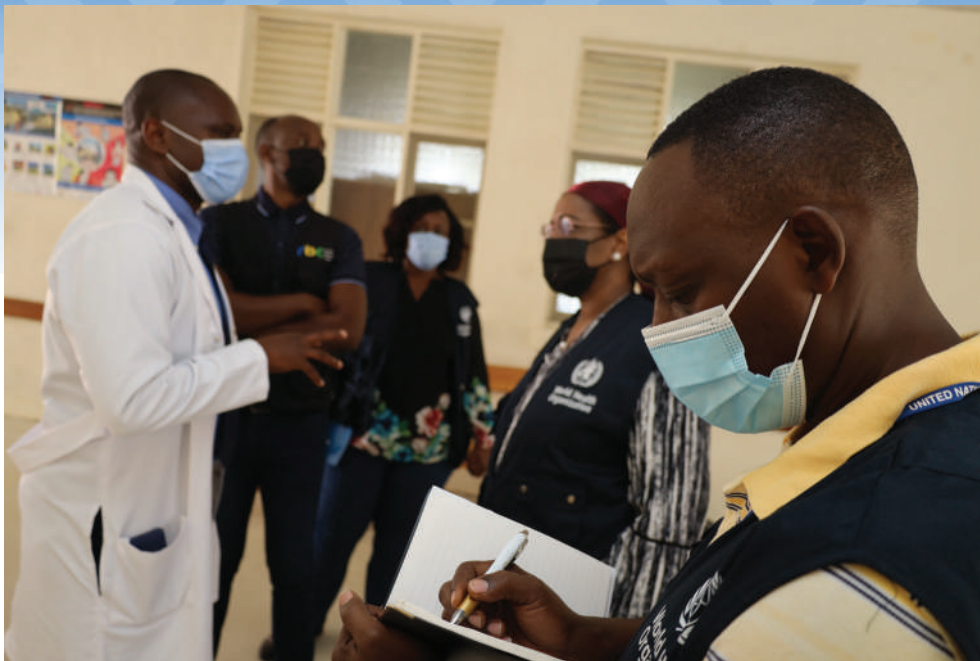
One of the key consequences of gender-based violence (GBV) in Rwanda is the drastic increase in teen pregnancies. In 2017, over 17,000 cases were identified countrywide. In only two years, in 2019, the number of teen pregnancies increased to 23,000, constituting an increase of 35.3%.

With the persistent culture of silence at community levels combined with patriarchal social norms, cultural beliefs, and unequal power relations between men and women, as well as high economic dependence of women to men, many cases remain unreported. The number of unreported cases is estimated to have increased during the pandemic as a result of the preventive measures including lockdowns which forced survivors of GBV to remain at home with the perpetrators and with limited access to support services, or support/rescue from either the neighbors or authorized officials.

In May 2021, UN Women and its partners Imbutu Foundation and National Child Development agency (NCDA) organized Gender-Based-Violence(GBV) mobile clinic outreach to teen mothers in Burera district. The outreach activity was organized in the framework of UN Women partnership with Imbutu Foundation on socioeconomic reintegration of survivors of GBV, especially teen mothers using a reintegration full package combined strategy. The package includes psycho-social support group counseling, Parent-Adolescent Communication (PAC) forums sessions; community-based outreach campaigns to increase awareness, male involvement and fighting social discrimination, stigma, and violence as well as promotion of income-generating activities for teen mothers.

The outreach brought together different key stakeholders, including local authorities, law enforcement actors, civil society organizations, development partners involved in GBV and child abuse prevention and response. Read more : africa.unwomen.org

Between health emergencies and natural disasters, essential health services not to be disrupted



Joint RBC - WHO field visit | Rubavu&Musanze, 17 September 2021

When Rwanda experienced the third wave of COVID-19, Musanze and Rubavu Districts reported the highest number of cases compared to other regions in the country. From June to Mid-August 2021, the number of daily cases superseded those reported in the first and second waves.

On 17 September 2021, a joint RBC/WHO team led by the Director General of the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC), Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana and WHO Rwanda Representative Dr. Ndoungu Salla Ba set out on a field mission to assess the COVID-19 response activities including continuity of essential health services in Rwanda experienced the third wave; Assess the impact of volcanic eruption in the facilities and disruption of services; Identify best practices and challenges in COVID-19 pandemic response in Musanze and Rubavu Districts.

While in Musanze District - the most popular tourist destination in the country - the team under the guidance of the DG of Ruhengeri Regional Referral Hospital Dr Philbert MUHIRE, visited different departments within the Hospital including the hospital oxygen plant and COVID-19 Isolation Unit. The team also visited the Regional Centre for Blood Transfusion (RCBT)-Ruhengeri that is located beside the regional hospital.

In Rubavu District - the busiest border in Africa with over 90,000 daily crossing - the team visited Gisenyi Hospital, Nyundo Health Centre COVID-19 vaccination center and La Corniche-Grande Barrière Point of Entry (POE).

The Nyiragongo volcano eruption that occurred on May 22nd, 2021 and the consequent earthquakes in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) affected the Rubavu District and other nearby Districts in Rwanda. Influx following the volcanic eruption was identified as one of the drivers of COVID-19 transmission. The eruption and subsequent earthquakes caused great damage as buildings and vital infrastructure were destroyed.

CSP Dr. Orest Tuganeyezu Director of Gisenyi Hospital said he saw things he has never seen before but what he believes was the most difficult was relocating patients during earthquakes, testing refugees, and treating them.

“When the volcano erupted, we already had high cases of COVID-19 in Rubavu District but when Congolese refugees started arriving, we hadn’t planned for something like this. There was nowhere to put them especially those that were sick. Some met or interacted with citizens, exposing them to the virus which drove numbers even higher.”

Despite having faced the COVID-19 pandemic, a volcanic eruption and a series of earthquakes, Musanze and Rubavu Districts have generally maintained key indicators above expected for some of the essential health services e.g. HIV programme and routine vaccination, an indication that provision of services was ongoing.

The Districts also implemented a number of best practices including strong support from the community and local leaders to socio-economically disadvantaged COVID-19 cases in Home Based Care and the reorganization of hospital staff to enable concurrent response to emergencies while maintaining essential health services. By end August 2021, Rubavu and Musanze Districts had COVID-19 positivity rates of 0% and 2.5% respectively.

To encourage the Districts’ efforts, RBC and WHO pledged to double efforts and help tackle the setbacks in Oxygen production, blood collection and Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for health-care providers highlighted by Hospital Directors. WHO has previously procured 225 oxygen cylinders after another RBC/WHO joint visit to the Nyarugenge District Hospital, a 136 bed facility repurposed into a COVID-19 Treatment Centre receiving most of the COVID-19 cases in need of respiratory support including oxygen therapy in the City of Kigali.

Africa's Great Lakes women reinforce their mediation and negotiation skills to better contribute to preventative diplomacy and mediation efforts in the region



The Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation, better known as 'FemWise-Africa', has concluded a week-long training in Kigali, Rwanda, to enhance the mediation and negotiation skills of the Network's members, and thereby strengthen their contributions to preventative diplomacy and mediation efforts in the Great Lakes region.

FemWise-Africa has conducted several induction and basic mediation training sessions over recent years to ensure its members have the technical skills in their interventions and preventative efforts across their various areas of engagement. To enable a ripple effect, whereby trained members can, in turn, replicate similar capacity-building activities in their constituencies, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes and the Secretariat of the African Union (AU) Special Envoys, in coordination with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) organized the advanced training on mediation and negotiation skills for selected members of the FemWise-Africa Network.

The training, which started on 6 September, has its roots in the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), which stresses the critical role of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace building. Similarly, at the continental level, commitments to enhancing women's meaningful role, including in the peace and security sphere, are enshrined within various AU continental frameworks, such as the Constitutive Act and the Maputo Protocol.

The domestication and implementation of these frameworks is further critical in the realization of landmark continental priorities, such as 'Silencing the Guns' Agenda and the AU's Agenda 2063, through an inclusive and sustainable process. The trainees for this workshop were drawn from eight countries of the Great Lakes region, namely Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. Other participants were representatives of the AU, the ICGLR, and UN entities, including the Office of the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality, the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The training also welcomed the strong commitment of the ombudspersons to promote and support women's inclusion and work in synergy with FemWise members throughout the region. Integration of women's priorities into the agenda of the Ombudspersons is central to effective equity. This is at the heart of responding to the aspirations of Agenda 2030 among other international instruments. Honorable Busisiwe Mkhwebane, Public Protector of South Africa and Chair of the African Ombudsman and Mediators Association's (AOMA) solidarity pledged to mobilize all African Ombudspersons to advance the full participation of women in peace and security processes.

In his closing remarks to the training workshop, Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region also highlighted regional cooperation, stating: "The present workshop that we are closing today is a demonstration of our good collaboration, complementarity and excellent coordination between the African Union and the United Nations. This is further evidence to our commitment to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda, as well as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and its protocol relating to Women's Rights in Africa".





Courtesy visit of the UNIDO Regional Director CALABRO Aurelia to UN Resident Coordinator

Rwanda President H.E Paul Kagame (C) received in his office, Alice Wairimu Nderitu, UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. Hon. Dr Vincent Biruta, Minister of foreign affairs (L), Mr. Fodé Ndiaye (R), UN Resident Coordinator, Dr. Jean-Damascène Bizimana, Minister of National Unity and Civic Engagement (Far Right) ©Urugwiro Village



Courtesy call of H. E Bert Vermessen, Ambassador of Belgium in Rwanda on UNRC.

Courtesy call of H. E Antoine Anfré the Ambassador of France in Rwanda on UNRC.



Alice Wairimu Nderitu, UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide with some of UNCT members

Courtesy call of H. E Omar Daair British High Commissioner to Rwanda on UNRC.

