



Mr. Fodé Ndiaye
UN Resident Coordinator

FOREWORD

Dear Esteemed Partners and Readers,

You have in hand our 2021 end of year quarterly Newsletter! Please read these amazing stories on how UN Agencies working together with Government and different partners are impacting the lives of people, leaving no one behind: girls and women's wellbeing, turning dreams into reality in Burera District, efficient border management increasing socio-economic activities between DRC and Rwanda, training to help women farmers grow their business, support to women livelihoods recovery in Nyamasheke, Musanze and Nyagatare, tapping on the country's home grown solutions to fight COVID-19, increasing financial and digital literacy through the LENGA app, and leveraging technology to foster inclusion of the visually impaired. This is what the Sustainable development agenda and the SDGs are about: reaching the last mile for the vulnerable and excluded and fostering a more equitable society.

These results are commendable in the midst of these unprecedented intertwined COVID-19 crisis: health and socio-economic, with a wide-range of personal and societal effects. COVID-19 and climate change (as shown by the Glasgow COP26) have tested our humanity, our solidarity and beyond our survival as human beings. In such a context, the Government has shown a remarkable leadership, by being the first African country to revise its strong National Determined Contributions (NDCs) and by continuing, with our joint efforts, front line workers, citizens, UN, other development partners, to be at the forefront of fighting the Pandemic. The vaccination national plan has reached the WHO Global target of 40% fully vaccinated of the population and we are optimistic that the one of 70% by mid-2022 will also be achieved! The UN will continue its advocacy for vaccine equity and we welcome the African initiative for setting vaccine manufacturing including in Rwanda.

In all those aspects, multilateralism, with a renewed and networked UN at its center, is, more than ever, critical.

In such spirit, in October 2021, the land of a thousand hills joined the UN to celebrate UN Day. This marks the anniversary of the entry into force in 1945 of the UN Charter to honor the interstate organization promoting human rights, social progress, and world of peace for all. The UN Day was celebrated in partnership with the City of Kigali and graced by Hon. Dr. Vincent Biruta, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. We thank Ministers, Development Partners, all our stakeholders for joining UN staff in celebrating the UN Day. The commemoration was also marked by blood donation to the National Centre for Blood Transfusion. With the high turn up in numbers, we say sincere thanks to those who voluntarily donated blood to save lives. Other commemorations include the World Food Day, the World AIDS Day, the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence, the Human Rights Day, showing our convergence towards human rights for all and a more inclusive, stable and peaceful society, requiring a whole of government and a whole of society including Citizens, CSOs, Private sector, Development Partners, approach!

UN has also extended and strengthened its partnerships; both with the private sector and with our usual strategic partners: Sweden and Switzerland.

The United Nations and Equity Group Holdings, Equity Group Foundation and Equity Bank Rwanda signed a letter of intent to collaborate in accelerating implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The signed partnership will promote social inclusion and improve economic outcomes for human development contributing to the socio-economic transformation of the country. Indeed, the private sector is crucial in scaling up the implementation of the Agenda 2030, enhancing resource mobilization and moving from funding to financing.

Sweden's Ambassador to Rwanda, and the United Nations Resident Coordinator signed an amendment to the agreement of cooperation with the Government of Sweden and Sida of about USD 4.2 million. Through this partnership, Sweden enables the UN to allocate funding to several joint programs including those in the areas of inclusive economic growth, climate resilience, gender equality and governance to facilitate reaching the SDGs.

The Government of Switzerland through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with an amount of about USD 5.4 million for the implementation of the third phase of the Joint Nutrition Project which aims at effectively fighting stunting in the country. We highly appreciate the continued partnership and financial support from both Governments. The agreements complement the additional support and resources from the Netherlands through the SDG Fund, as well as KOICA, Japan, USA, and other Development Partners and global UN Funds (SDG-Fund and PBF).

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This signature of agreements was part of the One UN Steering Committee Meeting chaired by the Hon. Minister of Finance and Economic and during which we presented our Common Country Analysis, the UN independent and impartial view on the country's socio-economic situation, our Mid-Term Performance Review as well as our revised United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2018-2024.

Globally and in country, UN is very proud to be a trusted partner of the Government and the people of Rwanda in the remarkable trajectory of transformation in all areas: in governance, in economic transformation, in social transformation and in the improvement of the well-being for the people.

We thank the Government for being one of the top contributors to peace keeping mission forces.

Let us keep on aligning our collective contributions to national priorities striving towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to build a better world for all, Leaving No One Behind- sparing no efforts in this Decade of Action.

As we come to the end of 2021, we thank you all for your strong resolve, resilience and tenacity in playing your part to still deliver on national development agenda. I and our collective leadership are very proud of UN colleagues, of your tireless efforts in contributing to positively transforming people's lives and more importantly for whom it is worth sweating. We also thank your families and friends supporting you every day and every night! We look forward to continued collaboration and partnership to deliver even more in the years ahead.

Happy festive season and Prosperous 2022. May you and your loved ones stay safe and healthy.

Umwaka Mushya Muhire!

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Partnerships ensuring women & girls wellbeing in humanitarian settings amid Covid19 pandemic



humanitarian settings in the context of COVID-19 pandemic” funded under the Japan Supplementary Budget.

“Partnership with UNFPA and Japan Project, has improved our services particularly in the time of Covid19 since last year; this support is minimizing the risks of health care providers as front line workers. We thank the Government of Japan and UNFPA.” Debritu Bitre Abebe, AHA Country Representative

“We are very thankful for the collaboration with UNFPA and the People of Japan for providing the support to the refugees. We promise that this will continue to allow us to deliver our long term ambition for us to ensure that children are protected, learning and also surviving.” Marcel Sibomana, Head of Sector strategies and Child Right Governance at Save the Children Rwanda.

“We are very grateful for the generosity of the People of Japan and supports of UNFPA that allow us to deliver services on SRH, GBV and Innovation in refugee camps. This support will allow us to keep our front line workers in working safely and continue deliver services to the community”. Said Bernard O. Ochieng, Country Director Alight Rwanda

The Japan Supplementary project being implemented by UNFPA with partners is strengthening Maternal, Sexual and Reproductive Health Services including GBV Prevention and Response in the context of COVID-19 pandemic in six refugee camps in Rwanda. It builds upon foundations laid and results achieved with Japan’s support under previous Supplementary Budget Windows, and strengthens gains made to provide lifesaving support for Burundian and Congolese refugees hosted by the Government of Rwanda.

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic ravaging the globe including Rwanda has the potential to exert severe pressure on health services and consequently affect the quality service delivery in general, including heightened risks to ASRH services and exacerbation of Gender Based Violence (GBV).

In support of tremendous efforts of the Government of Rwanda (GoR), partners are coordinating assistance to ensure the continuity of healthcare services including maternal and newborn healthcare, Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services and prevention of Gender Based Violence (GBV). UNFPA has received financial support from the Government of Japan to collaborate with partners to support Rwanda’s leadership of humanitarian response especially during the context of COVID-19 pandemic context.

On October 14th, UNFPA handed over medical equipment including 3,000 packages of 50 surgical masks worth \$6,900 to Alight, Africa Humanitarian Action and Save the Children International in support of COVID-19 prevention in humanitarian settings. These Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE) will ensure protection of frontline health workers including nurses, midwives, doctors, community health workers, GBV cases managers and GBV community activists.

“Next year Japan and the Government of Rwanda will celebrate 60 years of collaboration. Rwanda and Japan have collaborated in providing support to refugees. We express our gratitude to the Government of Rwanda, UNFPA & other partners for collaboration. Japan has been able to play its role in supporting refugees. We will continue to working with you.” Yukako OCHI, Deputy Chief of Mission at Embassy of Japan

This equipment is part of UNFPA’s support to the humanitarian settings in its preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been made possible by the support received from the Government of Japan under the Supplementary budget.

Globally, UNFPA strategic priorities in regards to COVID-19 pandemic revolve around supporting national efforts to ensure the continuity of SRH services; the protection of frontline health workers providing SRH services; and the availability of FP commodities and lifesaving medicines amidst Covid-19.

In Rwanda, UNFPA support to the national response has included both technical and financial support across pillars including: Leadership and Coordination, Surveillance, Risk Communication and Community Engagement, Infection Prevention and Control, Case Management, Testing and Contact Tracing.

“UNFPA expresses deep gratitude to the Government and People of Japan for their important and consistent support for humanitarian response ensuring continuity of SRH and maternal health services amidst the challenges caused by COVID-19 pandemic.” Mark Bryan Schreiner, UNFPA Representative to Rwanda

With the Government of Japan’s support, UNFPA is partnering with AHA, SCI and Alight to deliver a one-year project “Strengthening Maternal, Sexual and Reproductive Health, Gender Based Violence Prevention and Response in --

Turning dreams into Reality: How lives are being changed for the better in Burera District



Sylvestre KORURURWANDA
Beneficiary

UNICEF is working to improve the livelihoods and wellbeing of households via Modelling of the Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection Interventions (MNSSPI) project in Burera and 3 other districts in Rwanda, to telling results.
©UNICEF/2021

Sylvestre Korururwanda stands tall as he surveys his vegetable garden, which is flourishing with carrots, tomatoes, and other vegetables. Not too far from his garden, a stable full of livestock is bustling with activity, the constant mooing of cows and bleating the goats completing the picture of a household that is thriving.

His children are all enrolled in school. He's an active member of his Village Savings and Lending Associations (VSLA) and recently received a small loan of Rwf 80,000 (equivalent of roughly 80 dollars), which he used to refurbish his parts of home. While initially doubtful that the VSLA was something he could participate in, he eventually warmed up to the idea and fully embraced the concept of saving – something he himself admits would never have even thought to engage in.

Sylvestre is a happy man, buoyed by his belief in a better and brighter future for himself and for his family.

But this wasn't always the case.

Before coming in contact with proximity advisors – a community work-force used to mobilise communities to join VSLA's – Sylvestre was a frequent visitor at the local pub, spending whatever little money he had made doing menial jobs on alcohol – in the belief that this is what 'real' men do.

His children were malnourished, and his home was falling apart. Sylvestre had a small plot of land next to his ramshackle house but had no idea what to do with it.

All of that changed when the proximity advisors approached him and started advising him and his wife on smart-spending techniques, fostering a culture of spending on household priority needs including savings rather than unplanned spending, and the importance of having a well-balanced diet for the family, among other pieces of advice.

Despite being initially skeptical, Sylvestre acquiesced and turned over a new leaf, and the results of this mindset shift smoothly followed.

Sylvestre's turnaround is just one story that highlights a transformation that is slowly but steadily happening in Burera District, a cold, extremely hilly region in Northern Rwanda, where UNICEF is implementing the Modelling Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection Interventions (MNSSPI) project with a partner and generous funding of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

According to the latest Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey--

in Rwanda, children under five experience multiple dimensions of poverty, with more than half experiencing deprivations in their nutrition, health, or access to water or sanitation.

To combat this, UNICEF is modelling the MNSSPI project in close collaboration with the Government of Rwanda through the Local Administrative Development Agency (LODA) and the National Children's Development Agency. MNSSPI promotes stronger synergies between nutrition, health, Early Childhood and Development (ECD), Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Social Protection services to address the bottlenecks of integrated nutrition-specific and-sensitive programming at the community level, particularly for the most vulnerable households.

In layman's terms, the hope is that the MNSSPI project will, over the long haul, improve the livelihoods, resilience, and nutrition of residents of the four pilot districts, and catalyze significant poverty reduction in the process.

Read the full story here:
<https://www.unicef.org/rwanda/stories/turning-dreams-reality-how-lives-are-being-changed-better-burera-district>

Cross border Meeting aiming to take stock of the progress in securing the cross-border social, economic and commercial activities at the Point of Entry Rusizi II/Bukavu between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo

In the framework of the EU-funded project “Secure cross-border social, economic and commercial activities in the Great Lakes Region”, IOM in partnership with TMEA supported the bilateral Project Steering Committee in Rusizi (Rwanda) between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo that took place on 29th and 30th November 2021. The Project Steering Committee is meant to provide strategic guidance to the implementation of the project and lead to the full-fledge operationalization of the One-Stop Border Post (OSBP) in Rusizi II/Bukavu.

The project, which has a budget of 19.8 million Euro, aims at strengthening the economic integration and social cohesion of the cross-border communities of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, through the implementation of an Integrated Border Management (IBM) approach, facilitated by improved-

infrastructure, including the construction of relevant border facilities comprising an OSBP at the Rusizi II/Bukavu Point of Entry (PoE), as well as support to the establishment of common border management mechanisms and procedures for the effective functioning of the OSBP. The construction of the OSBP, which is currently in the final stages of design, will start in 2022 in both Rwanda and DRC and is expected to be completed in 2023.

<https://ronairobi.iom.int/news/cross-border-meeting-review-progress-securing-cross-border-social-economic-and-commercial>



The Rusizi II border is an important trade and transport corridor and the daily movement of the cross-border communities, who cross the border between Rwanda and DRC in search of employment, business opportunities and health care. Credit: IOM/Rwanda/2021.

Rwanda: How training is helping women farmers grow

A rural women's initiative, jointly implemented by FAO, WFP, IFAD and UNWOMEN, is empowering Women farmers in Rwanda.



The joint project is empowering women with agricultural and business skills. Each agency applying its expertise to maximize women empowerment. Photo: WFP/JohnPaul Sesonga

In sub-Saharan Africa, more than 60 percent of women are employed in agriculture and yet their potential as farmers and entrepreneurs is often limited due to gender inequalities, reduced access to farming inputs such as seeds and fertilizers and little or no access to finance.

Despite women being the largest contributors to the agricultural sector, they are often excluded from decision-making within their households and communities. The potential economic gains from reducing gender gaps in agriculture can translate into significant poverty reduction and improved nutritional benefits for rural women and their families.

In Rwanda, where nearly 70 percent of women are engaged in agriculture, the UN through WFP, FAO, IFAD and UN WOMEN have implemented an initiative that seeks to empower rural women by reducing gender inequalities and poverty, improve food security, and enable women to be leaders, decision-makers, and agents of change.

"I used to be very shy and felt unable to talk in front of people, especially in the presence of men. Now I feel more empowered and confident," says Marie-Rose, one of 2,000 farmers in 19 cooperatives in Rwanda supported by the Rural Women's Economic Empowerment programme.

Agriculture in Rwanda accounts for a third of GDP and generates nearly half of all export revenues. So farmers are taught entrepreneurial skills such as public speaking and good governance, and innovative farming skills such as grafting –

a horticultural technique which joins two plants in one to make a hybrid – in addition to best harvesting practices, accessing the market and contract negotiation skills.

"My leadership skills gave me the confidence to campaign and win a seat as a member of the National Women's Council in my district," adds Marie-Rose. "And my grafting business has also enabled me to buy a cow and pay for my family's medical insurance."

Cooperative members also notice nutritional benefits for their communities and increased profits, too.

"We grow tomatoes, beetroots, carrots, cabbages and bell peppers which are sold locally says Anastasie, president of the B'im pundun-ka-Nyagisozi cooperative which was started in 2017.

"This means that local families have access to fresh vegetables and means profits for cooperative members."

The success of the cooperatives is inspiring others to start their own businesses.

"I saw that the chickens from cooperative members were laying many eggs and this inspired me to buy my own and start a business," says Anastasia, a mother of six living near the Abahangudushya women's cooperative.

I now have enough eggs to feed my children and to sell some which has enabled me to pay for my family's medical insurance."

This UN joint initiative promotes gender equality across all its programmes in Rwanda and provides food assistance in a manner that makes equal resources available to women and men. The Rural Women's Empowerment programme is also implemented in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal and Niger.

UN Women Rwanda to provide cash transfers to support the livelihood recovery of 1,700 women-headed households from Nyamasheke, Musanze and Nyagatare Districts



Claudine Nyinawagaga, Director General, LODA (L) signing the MOU with the UN Women Rwanda Country Representative, Ms. Fatou Lo (R).

Social protection systems are an indispensable component of a coordinated policy response to the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring that people can effectively access health care while supporting livelihood security for the most affected households. As such, social protection constitutes an important part of the national recovery plan implemented by the Government of Rwanda in collaboration with development partners including the UN system. The plan makes provision for expanded access to social protection to households and communities most impacted by COVID-19.

In this spirit, UN Women Rwanda under the new partnership with Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA) signed earlier this month, provided cash transfers worth 300,000\$ to support 1,700 women-headed households from Nyamasheke, Musanze and Nyagatare Districts who fell into extreme poverty due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The targeted districts are home to many women whose livelihoods, mainly based on informal cross-border trade, were severely impacted by restrictions on cross-border trade to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The grants will be distributed through GiveDirectly Rwanda, an international NGO specialized in administering and implementing unconditional cash transfers to the most economically vulnerable populations through mobile money administered by MTN.

“The pandemic threatens to reverse the gains made on gender equality; exacerbate the feminization of poverty, increase vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence, and limit women's equal participation in the labor force. Mitigating this risk requires higher and more targeted investments, as well as adequate social safety nets for the most vulnerable,” says Fatou Lo, UN Women Representative in Rwanda.

In Rwanda, evidence from various assessments including the rapid gender assessment of the impact of COVID-19 conducted by UN Women and UNFPA in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and Family Promo-

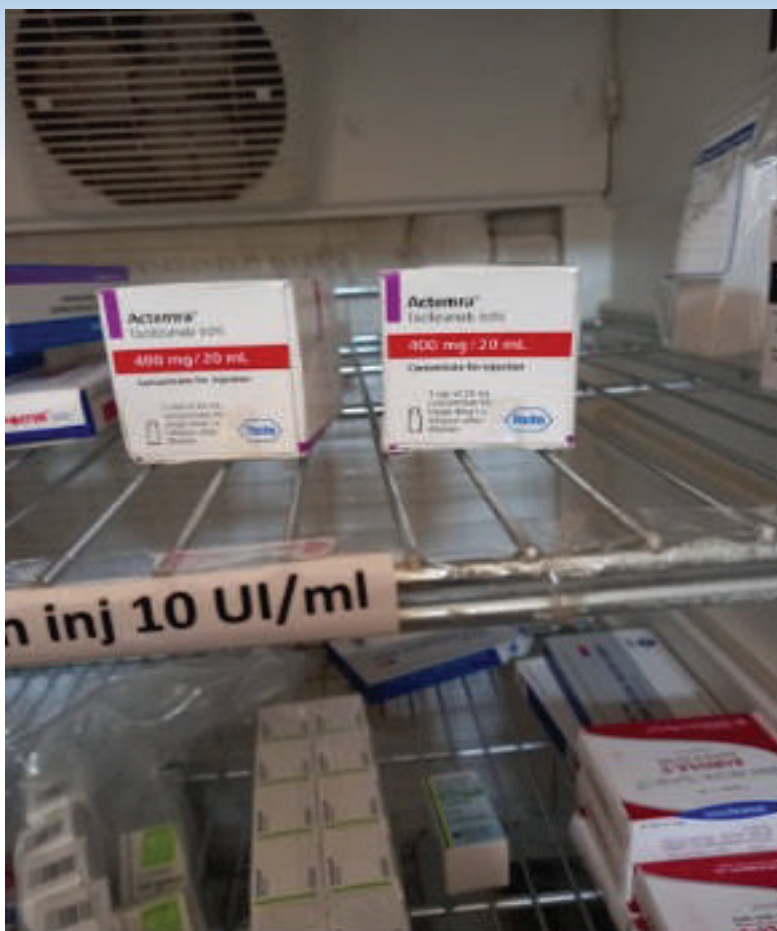
tion (MIGEPROF) in November 2020 found that women were disproportionately affected in terms of unpaid care work and lost income, particularly those relying on informal businesses and daily wages. Findings from the Labor Force Survey (LFS-2019) also indicate that over the past three years, more women were employed in the informal sector compared to men, which means that women were more vulnerable to economic shocks such as the one caused by the pandemic.

While signing the Agreement, UN Women Country Representative Ms. Fatou Lo and LODA Director-General Ms. Claudine Nyinawagaga, mutually committed to strengthening efforts to accelerate women's resilience and recovery.

“The gender dimension of this project complements LODA's efforts in mainstreaming gender and childcare instruments within the Vision 2020 Umurenge Program, let alone the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic could have far-reaching socio-economic consequences on families if the gender equity is not given the due attention. There is evidence that even under normal environment, women are more likely to fall into poverty trap, which means their situation could be aggravated by the Covid 19 pandemic; promoting women's participation in the labour force is a strong safeguard against lack of confidence and vulnerability of being prey to sexual and gender-based violence. Most importantly it such investments boost their productivity in favor of their families' welfare.”; says Claudine Nyinawagaga, Director General, Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA).

In addition to the partnership with LODA, UN Women is also providing support to several civil society organizations namely (1) SOLID Africa to support in-patients and caregivers essentially women to reduce their burden of care; (2) Rwanda Women Network to strengthen capacities and knowledge to prevent and respond to SGBV, through toll-free helplines and mobile GBV clinics; (3) Faith Victory Association to provide social safety nets to 100 teen mothers from Nyagatare District; (4) Legal Aid Forum to offer legal assistance to women who experienced SGBV during the COVID-19 lockdowns as well as the (5) National Association Supporting People Living with HIV(ANSP+), which has extended its services to female domestic workers who lost their jobs and were at greater risk of unsafe and life-threatening alternatives.

WHO taps into Rwanda's Home Grown Solutions to make daily miracles in COVID-19 Treatment Centres

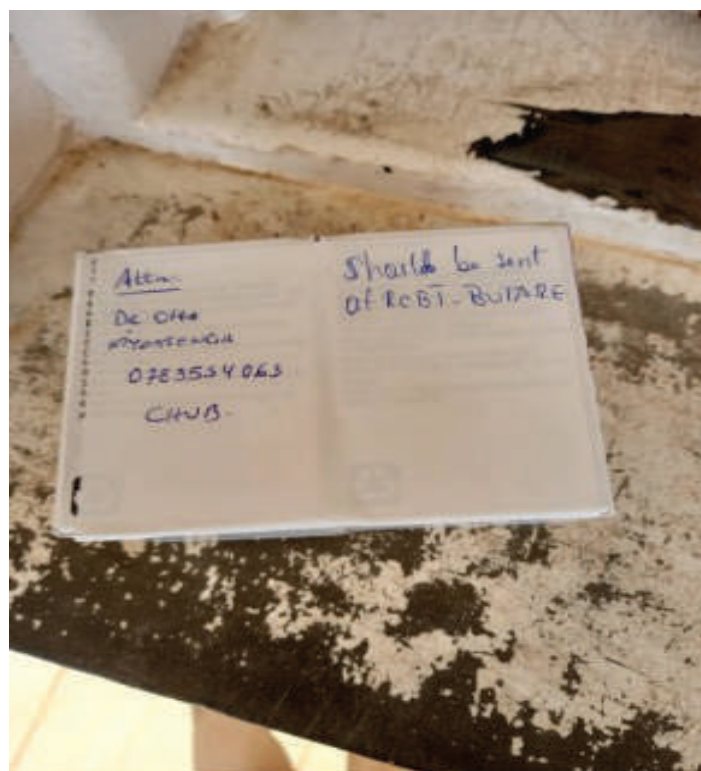


Medication for people with severe COVID-19 being prepared for delivery by drone.

Dr Otto Niyonsenga and Dr Menelas Nkeshimana are two of the clinicians in the World Health Organization (WHO) COVID-19 surge response team deployed to support Rwanda Biomedical Centre and manage COVID-19 cases at the sub national level (provinces). Prompt and effective case management remains a critical intervention particularly for patients with severe symptoms and underlying medical conditions. Since the beginning of the pandemic, case managers the world over, start and end their days with the same question: "How can we save more lives?"

WHO Rwanda technicians have been on the frontlines supporting the National COVID-19 Joint Task Force to contain the virus and mitigate its impact. These technicians bring in their expertise in different fields within different strategic areas such as coordination and planning, surveillance, laboratory and diagnostics, case management, infection prevention and control, risk communication and community engagement among others.

While two years of fighting a pandemic from different fronts can trigger complacency from the population, for families with their loved ones admitted in COVID-19 treatment centres, front liners represent the light at the end of the tunnel. Some even expect miracles. Indeed, a miracle is exactly what was expected of Dr Niyonsenga and Dr Nkeshimana on the night of 13 November 2021 when two of their patients in critical condition required a quick unusual solution.



UNCDF Launches the LENGA Financial and Digital Literacy App in Rwanda

The United Nations Development Fund (UNCDF) has launched a new application called LENGA to help build Rwanda's financial and digital literacy.



A community facilitator being trained on the use of the 'Lenga' financial literacy app (Photo by Jessica Massie, UNCDF Rwanda)

With more and more financial products and services, both formal and informal, available throughout Rwanda, clients are required to make informed choices and manage their money. New skills are especially important in times like these, when the use of digital financial services and mobile money is growing because of convenience, and also of large-scale events like the COVID-19 crisis.

The LENGA application, or 'app', is geared towards Rwandans who wish to build their skills in creating savings plans, making a budget, understanding different types of savings groups, comparing financial services, and deciding whether to borrow. The app currently has six modules that target the financial and digital skills necessary to achieve these skills.

The app is easy to use and includes both video and audio content with quizzes and activities, along with demonstrations and explanations of key content areas like creating your own budget, using mobile money products safely, or thinking about one's own capacity to borrow money.

LENGA has been developed over the past year and a half through targeted research and partnership in the "Expanding Financial Access and Digital and Financial Literacy for Refugees and Host Community in Rwanda" project, known as "REFAD" for short.

REFAD partners work across the country, and include Equity Bank, Inkomoko, Umutanguha Finance Company, and World Relief Rwanda.

These four partners are now using the app along with targeted financial services, such as savings groups, digital financial products, and traditional brick-and-mortar products. According to UNCDF Rwanda Programme Lead Roselyne Uwamahoro, the LENGA app will reach at least 10,000 Rwandans during the REFAD project. However, the app is meant to be used widely, and any Rwandan with an Android device is welcome to download the app and use it to build their own financial and digital skills.

"In Rwanda, the use of mobile phones – even smart phones – has grown exponentially over the past few years," says Uwamahoro. "UNCDF and partners found that there was a great deal of need for people to build their digital skills, and a great deal of excitement for our app during the testing phase of the REFAD project."

LENGA was developed by Khangarue Media and the Busara Center for Behavioral Economics working in collaboration with the UNCDF technical experts. The app is in Kinyarwanda and is available for free from the Google Play store.

Watch the video here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBfUcyfVBOA>

UNDP is leveraging technology to support the visually impaired



Sumaya Rebecca, a resident of Masaka, Kicukiro District, Photo UNDP Rwanda

On November 26, 2021- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Rwanda Union of the Blind (RUB) and Beno Holdings launched a Smart White Cane (SWC) which is expected to transform the lives of the visually impaired by increasing their mobility independence. This should also boost their confidence, dignity, and enable them to expand their social and economic activities.

The high-tech white cane is the first of its kind to be made in Rwanda. It uses ultrasonic ranging technology to detect obstacles in a distance of 1.2 meters and alert the user through vibrations and sound. It has sensors, which can help the user to differentiate day and night. The GPS functionality allows to identify the geographic location of the user. This feature also facilitates to track the smart white cane in case it is lost. It has reflectors that inform other road users that the cane user needs special assistance.

The process to develop the SWC was innovative. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Rwanda Accelerator Lab (Acclab) partnered with Beno Holdings, a Rwandan technology company, and the Rwanda Union of the Blind (RUB) to design the SWC.

Following the daily challenges that people with visual impairment face, the UNDP (Acclab) organized thinking sessions with members of Rwanda Union of the Blind (beneficiaries) and Beno Holdings to deeply understand the challenges and learn how visually impaired persons are trying to address the mobility issue. Based on discussions with the members, the Acclab team and Beno Holdings began to experiment on what features could help persons with visual impairment to move freely and safely.

Rwanda's SWC joins a small but growing set of adaptive technologies for persons with disability in Africa.

Sumaya Rebecca, a resident of Masaka, Kicukiro District mostly relies on her child's guidance for movement. A young woman with visual impairment, Rebecca has had her fair share of challenges living life daily. Even with her walking cane, getting around hasn't been easy. And because of such limitations, her survival has been mostly supported by well-wishers who sometimes pay rent; buy food and other necessities for her.

"I face various challenges because of my visual impairment. One of them is not being able to move on my own from one place to another, for example going to a somewhat distant place like church. My daughter normally acts as my guide, but when she is at school, I find it hard walking by myself. Even when I use a walking stick, I find it hard to get around as I often bump into obstacles and fall into ditches," the 29-year-old says.

Rebecca's case is not an isolated one. Many of those living with visual impairment find it difficult to navigate around places. The possibility of them bumping into obstacles, knocking things over and hurting themselves is high and can be frustrating and frightening. Such challenges are what impelled United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Accelerator Lab to look for solutions that can improve mobility independence of persons with visual impairment.

Using a virtual solution mapping exercise, UNDP Accelerator Lab worked in collaboration with the Ministry and ICT and Innovation and the Ministry of Youth and Culture, to identify local solutions that address complex development challenges. Innovation for disability inclusion emerged as a priority thematic area.

Christa Munezero Uwahoro, the Head of Experimentation at UNDP, says UNDP Accelerator Lab organised design thinking sessions with members of Rwanda Union of the Blind and a solution provider to deeply understand the challenges and learn how visually impaired persons are trying to address the mobility issue. Based on discussions with members, they began to experiment on what features could help persons with visual impairment to move freely and safely.

Read the full story: www.rw.undp.org



Officials from Government of Rwanda, UN Head of Agencies and Development Partners during the One UN Steering Committee, which took place on December 8th, 2021



Policy Dialogue on Shock response attended by Officials from Government of Rwanda, UN Head of Agencies and Development Partners during the which took place on December 9th, 2021



The Deputy Regional Director Mr. Peter Lindenmann (L) , UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Fodé Ndiaye (R) shaking hands after signing a MoU for the implementation of the 3rd phase of the Joint Nutrition Project. December 8th, 2021



L-R: Her Excellency Swedish Ambassador to Rwanda Johanna Teague, UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Fodé Ndiaye exchanging MoU documents during the signing ceremony of an amendment to the agreement of cooperation, which took place on December 8th, 2021



Mr. Fodé Ndiaye (L) , Dr. James Mwangi, Equity Group MD and CEO, Equity Group Holdings and Executive Chairman, Equity Group Foundation (R) at the signing ceremony of letters of intent to collaborate in accelerating implementation of the SDGs



L-R: Mr. Pudence Rubingisa, Mayor of Kigali City, Hon. Dr. Vincent Biruta, H.E Guy Nestor Itoua, Ambassador of the Republic of Congo to Rwanda



Blood donation volunteers, donating blood during UN Day celebrations which took place on October 24th, 2021



UN staff, Staff of Development Partners and their dependants exercising in a Car Free Day dedicated to celebrations of UN Day 2021



UNITED NATIONS
RWANDA



**Wishing everyone a healthy, safe, peaceful,
prosperous 2022 with all hands on deck
to advance the Sustainable Development Goals
for all people and for our planet**