

# HDI NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2023



RAISING  
COMMUNITY AWARENESS  
ON CERVICAL CANCER  
SCREENING



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**Dear Partners,**

**Welcome to our February Newsletter.**

In this edition, we launched a one-month media campaign to raise awareness on the value of vaccination against HPV and regular cervical cancer screening.

During the campaign, we invited experts to our Twitter, radio and HDI TV platforms to shed light on the cause, prevention, detection, and treatment of cervical cancer, and how to access these services.

We also share feedback related to the response to this campaign. We also update you on the 2-day retreat that HDI and other members of AmplifyChange Coalition had and what they discussed in line with advancing the mission and strategy of the 'Fostering Collaboration to Amplify CSO Contribution in the Realization of SRHR in Rwanda' project.

We also touch on the training of over 120 female domestic workers on how to identify, prevent and report Sexual and Gender Based Violence.

These and more stories and feedback from the people that we serve can be found in this edition of our newsletter.

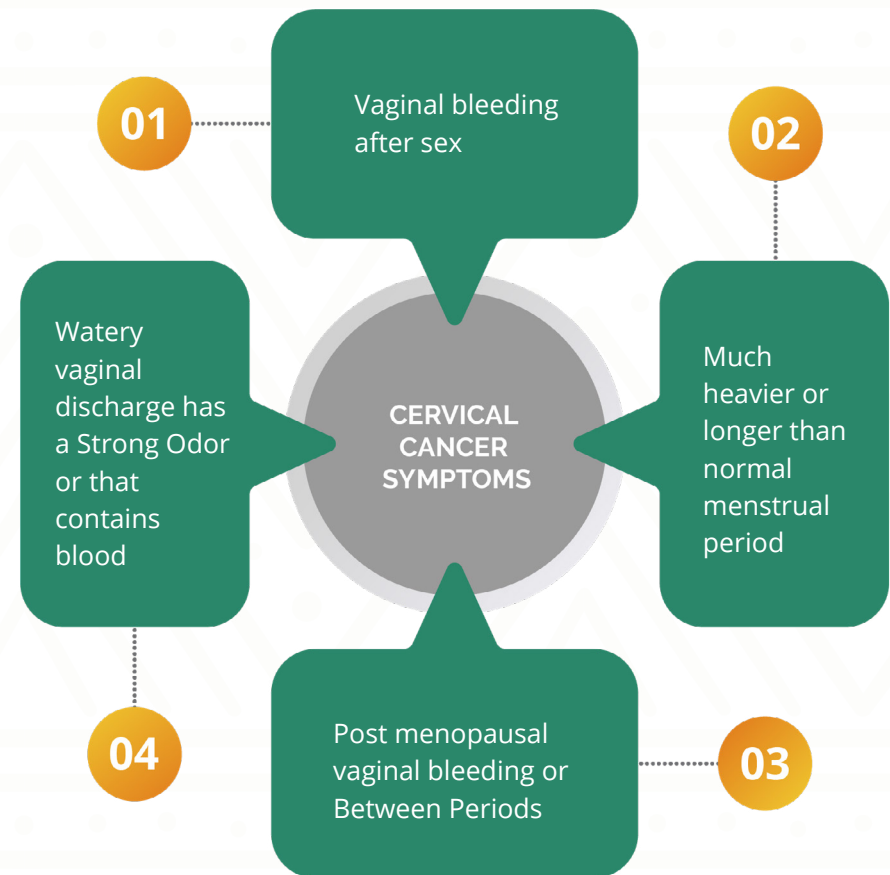
We welcome your feedback and invite you to follow us on our social media for daily updates on the work that we do to serve our communities.

**Best Regards,  
Communication Team.**

This February, we joined the world to observe World Cancer Day with a month-long cervical awareness campaign on the value of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination and regular screening.

The World Cancer Day is observed worldwide on February 4. This year's World Cancer Day theme was 'Close the Care Gap', which was specifically chosen to shed light on the challenging inequalities in cancer care around the world. Our campaign sought to raise public understanding around cancer, to raise awareness on cancer, its prevention, early detection, and treatment.

By raising awareness, HDI also aims to contribute to the improvement of personal and collective action towards the Government effort to provide access to life-saving cancer treatment and care and the prevention of cancer deaths.



## EXPERTS SPEAK

To provide expert advice, we hosted Dr. Magnifique Irakoze, an assistant lecturer at University of Rwanda in the department of Obstetrics and Gynecology to our Twitter Space where he reminded the participants that human papillomavirus (HPV), which is transmitted through sexual intercourse, causes 99% of cervical cancers.

Although cervical cancer attacks women, HPV can be carried and transmitted by men.

Dr. Irakoze reminded that currently, more than half of cancer deaths are happening in the least developed parts of the world and developed places where inequities still exist among lower-income communities.

While cervical cancer is mostly asymptomatic in its early stages, Irakoze reminded that women who have contracted the virus are likely to experience vaginal bleeding after sex, vaginal bleeding after menopause or between periods.



**People who are likely to contract HPV are those with multiple sexual partners, those who engage in sexual activity at a young age, those who smoke and those with a weakened immune system due to other underlying health conditions.**

**- Dr. Magnifique Irakoze,**  
Gynecologist

Patients are also likely to experience periods that are much heavier or longer than normal or vaginal discharge that is watery, has a strong odor or that contains blood.

People likely to contract HPV are those with multiple sexual partners, those who engage in sexual activity at a young age, those who smoke and those with a weakened immune system due to other underlying health conditions.

As part of our campaign, we also hosted Dr. Diane Ndoli, a Clinical Oncologist at Kanombe Military Hospital on HDI TV, who reminded the public that cervical cancer screening helps save lives as it helps specialists to check for precancerous lesions which if found early enough, can be treated before they become cancerous.

Dr. Ndoli advised parents to ensure that their children aged between 11 and 15 are vaccinated for HPV. American Cancer Society recommends cervical cancer screening every 5 years for everyone with a cervix from age 25 until age 65.



**There are two main types of screening tests: the Pap test and the HPV test, which are done through taking a small sample of cells from your cervix and sending it to a lab to check whether there are no abnormal cells growing on the cervix.**

**- Dr. Diane Ndoli,  
Clinical Oncologist  
Kanombe Military Hospital**

## CERVICAL CANCER PREVENTION

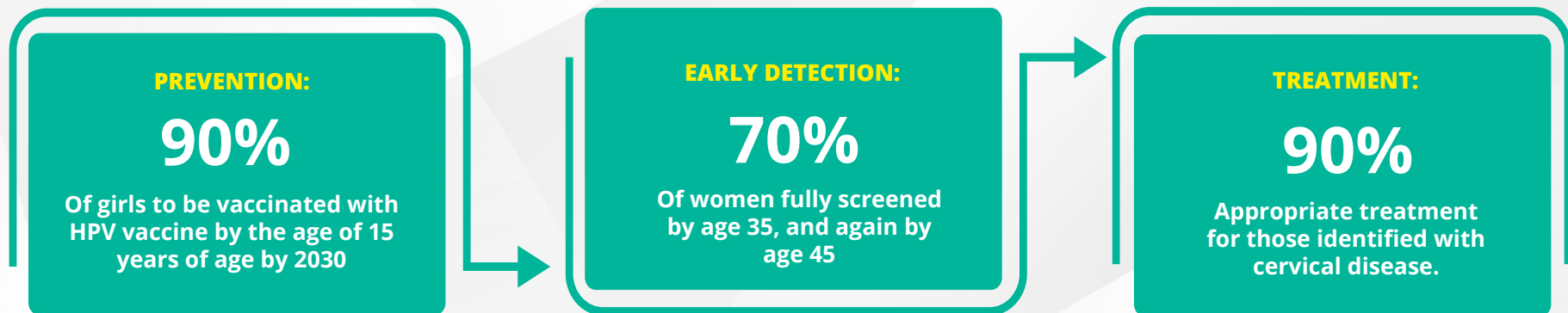
To lower exposure to HPV, the participants were advised to limit their number of sex partners and to avoid sex with people who have had many other sex partners. Additionally, people can lower their risk of developing cervical cancer by using barrier protection methods during sexual activity.

She reminded that there is an ongoing project in several districts in Rwanda that continues to provide information and cancer screening in line with the WHO Global Cancer Elimination Strategy.

The strategy outlines three measurable global targets to prevent and treat cervical cancer including fully vaccinating 90% girls of 15 years of age with HPV vaccine by 2030, screening

70% women by age 35, and again by age 45, providing appropriate treatment for 90% of those identified with cervical disease. Under our Twitter Hashtag #GetScreened, our Twitter Campaign reached 667,000 people. Following our radio programs on Isango Star and Kiss FM, 283 people called in on our 3530 hotline requesting for cervical cancer screening related information. According to Rwanda Biomedical Center (RBC), cervical cancer is the second leading cancer in Rwanda, with an estimated 1,229 new cases and 829 deaths in 2020.

However, data from the National Cancer Registry shows that in 2020, 617 new cases of cervical cancer were diagnosed in Rwanda, representing 50% of the expected incidence, and around half of these were at late stages (stage 3 and 4).





## FOSTERING COLLABORATION TO AMPLIFY CSO CONTRIBUTION ON SRHR

In February, Health Development Initiative (HDI) and other members of AmplifyChange Coalition attended a 2-day retreat in which they revisited the mission and strategy of the 'Fostering Collaboration to Amplify CSO Contribution in the Realization of SRHR in Rwanda' project.

The Coalition is made up other like-minded CSOs including Ihorere Munyarwanda Organization (IMRO), Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development (GLIHD), Rwanda NGOs Forum on AIDS and Health Promotion (RNGOF), Strive Foundation Rwanda and Medical Doctors for Choice.

## 1<sup>st</sup> DAY



The first day of the retreat was dedicated to reviewing the project's previous achievements, challenges and assessing its strengths and weaknesses. Participants were given the opportunity to share their experiences, insights and ideas on how best to improve the delivery of the project objectives. The review highlighted the need for more collaboration among civil society organizations (CSOs), better coordination, and improved communication to ensure effective and efficient project delivery.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> DAY



On the second day of the retreat, participants worked on developing strategic plans and action points to guide future project activities. Several priority areas were identified, including building capacity of youth and women led organizations to engage in advocacy and policy influencing, promoting youth participation in decision-making processes, strengthening partnerships with key stakeholders and increasing the visibility and impact of the project through effective communication and outreaches.





Participants also discussed ways to leverage technology and social media platforms to amplify the project's message and increase engagement with target audiences.

This includes the use of digital storytelling, online advocacy campaigns, and webinars to disseminate information on SRHR issues and promote the work of AmplifyChange SRHR Coalition in Rwanda and the region.

Overall, the participants left the retreat with renewed energy and commitment to delivering on the project's objectives.

The Strategic Plan developed during the retreat will guide the project's activities over the next few years and help to foster collaboration and amplify the contribution of CSOs to the realization of SRHR in Rwanda.

## FACILITATING CONVERSATIONS ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

**B**efore kicking off women's month, HDI and Generation Gender coalition members engaged over 400 participants in a Twitter Space dialogue themed 'Tinyuka Urashoboye', to challenge socio-cultural norms that hinder women's auto promotion and financial freedom.

The discussions sought to provide a platform for women to share their stories and experiences, to identify the barriers and develop solutions to advance women's economic empowerment.



While a section of the Rwandan society continues to struggle with accepting a generation of financially stable, educated and independent women, young people are dedicated to the fight of gender promotion and equality of the genders in terms of opportunities and well-being.

Women in particular, are committed to empowering each other to be part of leadership and decision making while breaking free from a cycle of norms that hinder their success.

Fostering such conversations on Rwandan women's economic empowerment is crucial for promoting gender equality and advancing development.

The dialogue started with comments on the common cyber bullying and degrading of wealthy women, negative perceptions for women in science fields and the assumption that a woman's way of living should always be underneath that of a man.



## INSANGANYAMATSIKO: MUGORE, MUKOBWA TINYUKA URASHOBOYE

UMUYOBOZI  
W'IKIGANIRO

ABATUMIRWA



Ange Aisha  
(HDI)



Annonciata Mukayitete  
(HDI)



Marie Ange  
Raissa Uwamungu  
(Impanuro Girls Initiative)



Olivia Promise Kabatesi  
(Empower Rwanda)

23 Gashyantare 2023 | 7PM

#Duhindurelmyumvire #Hinduralmyumvire #GenG



Guest speakers Olivia Kabatesi, Country Director at Empower Rwanda and Marie Ange Raissa Uwamungu Founder of Impanuro Girls Initiative, shared their insights on what it takes for a woman to claim her rights and go for what she wants in life.



**We live in a society where some people still view women as second-class citizens but we, as women, must know our value and demand our rights.**

**- Olivia Kabatesi,**  
Country Director at Empower Rwanda

Furthermore, they touched on the importance of women empowering others to ensure safeguarding and solidarity.

They suggested partnerships with local NGOs and women's organizations to provide training, mentorship, and financial support for women entrepreneurs and encouraged the private sector to invest in women-led businesses and provide opportunities for women to access capital, markets, and networks. Kabatesi urged for women to know their rights and fight for it.

Participants of the dialogue expressed the urgency to put an end to gender roles and norms that continue to interfere

with women's lives such as marital expectations and nurturing duties at a young age.

To conclude the discussion, young men in the dialogue put emphasis on the importance of "Men Engage" in the conversation about gender equality and to turn them into allies in dismantling patriarchal communities, supporting women's rights movements and the fight for women's economic empowerment.

They suggested a look into the use of data and research to understand the economic impact of gender inequality and make the case for investing in women's economic empowerment.



## EMPOWERING DOMESTIC WORKERS TO FIGHT SGBV

**T**his February, we trained over 120 female domestic workers drawn from all the Sectors in Kicukiro District as well as Nyarugenge District in Nyamirambo Sector on how to identify, prevent and report Sexual and Gender Based Violence.

The World Health Organization estimates that 1 in every 3 women worldwide has experienced domestic violence and

a quarter of all girls have faced different forms of domestic violence by age 19.

According to the 2019/20 Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey report, 37% of women and girls who are aged between 15-49, have experienced physical or sexual, or psychological violence.



**The Ministerial Order on Abortion permits victims of rape, incest, those who are underage and those with pregnancy related complications that are likely to harm them or the unborn child to approach any hospital or polyclinic and seek abortion services if they choose to end the pregnancy.**

**- Brenda Karungi,**  
Facilitator

Despite the high numbers of young people who experience violence, there is no research on the depth of this abuse among domestic workers.

Facilitator Brenda Karungi opened the training sessions explaining the meaning of GBV where she told participants that it is any form of violence that is directed at an individual based on her sex or gender identity.

She took the participants through the types of GBV, including physical violence, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse. She touched on the impact of GBV including STI infections, unwanted pregnancy, and unsafe abortion. She also explained that GBV can potentially cause other long-term psychological effects where the victim may have feelings of isolation and depression.

## Risk factors

In an open session, the participants said that they are hesitant to report GBV cases due to stigma and in fear of retaliation.

The domestic workers discussed risk factors that make them vulnerable to GBV including poverty and discrimination. Some of the participants also indicated that they did not know where to report before and the kind of evidence that would help their cases. Karungi told the participants to approach any Isange One Stop Center that is closest to them upon facing any form of GBV. Karungi pointed out that the victims can also call the HDI Hotline 3530 for support and guidance.

The participants were reminded the value of preserving evidence including not washing clothes or underwear that they may be wearing during physical and sexual attacks and how taking a bath immediately after assault contaminates or erases any medical or forensic evidence. The participants were also reminded to safekeep paper documentation, text messages or photographs that may be used in supporting their pursuit of justice.

## Ministerial Order on Abortion

Karungi also shed some light on the Ministerial Order on Abortion, emphasizing the four categories of those that are legally permitted to access abortion services. She reminded that these include victims of rape, incest, those who are underage and those with pregnancy related complications that are likely to harm the mother or the unborn child. Additionally, she advised them to approach the nearest healthcare facilities or HDI offices to seek family planning advice that will protect them from unwanted pregnancies.

# STAKEHOLDERS SPEAK:

**HDI Rwanda @HDIRwan...** · 23/02/2023 ...  
**Host**


 **HDI Rwanda** **Host**

**TINYUKA URASHOBOYE**

▶ 23 Feb 2023 · 2h 28m · 256 tuned in


**Play recording**

4 2 4 753

 **UWUMUKIZA Françoise**  
@uwumukiza11 ...

Murakoze cyane kuri iyi Twitter Space ikangurira abagabo n'abagore kubana neza mu bwuzuzanye, bakundana kandi bafashanya muri byose. Imihigo irakomeje!!!

8:11 PM · 23/02/2023 · 79 Views

 **Ma Sosie**  
@SosieMa ...

Is it just me or some ppl here thinks "kubahwa k'umugore n'umukobwa kera urugero nko kubaheka babashyiriye abagabo" byabagaho kera was gender equality 🤔🤔! Or some ppl saying ko umukobwa ari mutima w'urugo ngo bigaragaza equality! Kuki ataba mutima w'urwuri so she manages that 🙄

10:08 PM · 23/02/2023 · 75 Views



# HDI WISHES TO THANK OUR PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

- AMPLIFYCHANGE
- BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH IMPERATIVE
- CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE
- CRICKET BUILDS HOPE
- DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO RWANDA
- EAHP
- EQUIMUNDO
- FEMNET
- FOSI/OSIEA
- GIZ
- GLIHD
- GLOBAL HEALTH CORPS
- IMBUTO FOUNDATION
- IMRO
- IPPF-Asociación Profamilia
- JHPIEGO/MCGL
- MINISTRY OF GENDER AND FAMILY PROMOTION
- MINISTRY OF HEALTH
- MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
- MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT
- NORWEGIAN PEOPLE'S AID
- PARLIAMENT OF RWANDA
- PLAN INTERNATIONAL RWANDA
- PSA
- RNGOF
- RWANDA CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM
- RWANDA SOCIETY OF OBSTETRICIANS AND GYNECOLOGISTS
- RWANDA BIOMEDICAL CENTER
- RWANDA EDUCATION BOARD
- RWANDA GOVERNANCE BOARD
- RWAMREC
- SFH
- SISTERLOVE INC.
- SOCIETY FOR FAMILY HEALTH
- STEPHEN LEWIS FOUNDATION
- STOP TB PARTNERSHIP
- THE CENTER FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS
- THE DAVID AND LUCILE PACKARD FOUNDATION
- THE EMBASSY OF SWEDEN
- THE EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF NETHERLANDS
- THE GLOBAL FUND
- THE NEWTIMES
- UHAI-EASHRI
- UNAIDS
- UNFPA
- UNICEF
- VSO
- WELLSPRING PHILANTHROPIC FUND
- WEMOS
- WHO
- WOMEN'S LINK WORLDWIDE

