

POWER **in** PEOPLE

Newsletter July - December 2019



ActionAid Rwanda addressing VAWG through women's empowerment and calling for action to end teen pregnancies

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FOREWORD

Our dear Readers,

Welcome to the issue of the ActionAid Rwanda Newsletter for July - December 2019 and greetings from ActionAid Rwanda to you all our esteemed supporters, partners and stakeholders.

We appreciate and thank you all for our cooperation in the fruitful year 2019, which ended on a high note with celebrations of many achievements you have all contributed to in various ways.

This issue highlights some fascinating stories of our work to address Structural causes of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and empower them to ensure that they have access to secure livelihoods and enjoying a life of dignity free from any form of violence. You will find stories about the positive impact of the trainings on Human Rights, Women's rights, SRHR advocacy and business management skills, provided by ActionAid Rwanda to women and girls and other programme Right Holders through our projects.

In this newsletter, you will also find stories highlighting increased Communities' awareness of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) as a Human Right as well as citizens' inclusiveness through our annual Participatory Review and Reflection Process (PRRP) geared for review and reflection on how AAR has performed through first-hand feedback and to inform planning and budgeting with priorities from right holders (beneficiaries) for transparency and effectiveness of the programme implementation processes.

We also highlight appreciation of federation members' induction and experiential learning organized and facilitated for teams from ActionAid UK (Girish-Executive Director with Jillian, SLT member and Marie, Chair of Board) and ActionAid Hellas (SLT member, Dimitra, Nefeli and Nikos, Assembly Members) as a dual citizenship contribution to the federation.

In this issue, you will learn more about their visit to activities and cooperatives supported by AAR.

We appreciate the collaboration and close partnership with national and local authorities as well as AAR Partners who made the programme implementation easy and sustainable, and looking forward to sustenance of such well nurtured collaboration in national development and to achieve social justice for all!

Enjoy reading the stories of how our works in various parts of the country contribute to change in people 's lives making them more resilient.

Your Comments and feedback are very much valued, therefore, please feel free to share them with us.

We wish you a Happy and Prosperous New Year 2020.

Have a pleasant read.




Josephine Irene Uwamariya
Country Director




Isaac Nyarwaya
Board Chair

EUGENIA & PAPIUS - GBV FREE LIFE JOURNEY



Eugenia & Papius cheerfully pose for a photo together in their backyard

Eugenia Nyirarukundo, 34, is a mother of two children. She is married and lives with her children and husband, Papius Rucogoza. She lives in Musanze district with her husband. Eugenia's marriage was characterized by violence and abuse until her and her husband were approached and trained by ActionAid's Amplify Change project.

Eugenia and her husband narrate their GBV journey and how they managed to overcome it, below;

Before trainings, we were always fighting. I would sleep at my marital home like only twice in a week. My children and I would sleep outside because of the torture we were facing. My husband would come back drunk and he would hurl insults at me and beat me up. Our neighbors were also tired of us because of all the violence in our home. I went to hospital several times because of beatings and bruises from my husband. He would come home, and the children would run away to hide because they were scared of him. He wouldn't even provide for the family then, yet I wasn't working too. I even ended up with some health complications because of violence. My two children and I were traumatized. Life was so tough then because of Gender Based Violence.

EUGENIA & PAPIUS START A NEW GBV-FREE LIFE

Life continued to be hard until ActionAid through the Amplify Change trained us on what Gender Based Violence (GBV) is and how to deal with it. We were taught about what Gender Based Violence is, its dangers, prevention and how to deal with it. Today, our home is very peaceful because we were empowered with knowledge and information about our rights and GBV. My children are happy and are now free with their father. My husband and I happily work together and support each other. We plan for our family together and everything seems much better than before simply because we are on the same page and respect each other. I wish for more people in my community to take part of these trainings and this way, many families that face a challenge of Gender Based Violence will be helped to overcome violence in their homes.

My husband and I were greatly helped, and we want to keep sharing about GBV in our communities too, so people can live violence free lives.

44-year-old Papius Rucogoza, husband to Eugenia, also narrates below, how he stopped violence and how it helped him and his family in general;

There was no peace in our home. I was always drunk and harassing my wife all the time, my children were afraid of me too. I used to be very abusive and just couldn't stop. My wife and I were trained about Gender Based Violence and its dangers. Gradually, the situation kept on changing through the trainings we were receiving.

Today I am a very peaceful man who respects my wife and children. I no longer violate their rights and we are living peacefully. Now we work and plan together. I have a good relationship with my wife and children.

Eugenia and Papius are among the several members of the community in Musanze district that were trained about Gender Based Violence through the Amplify Change Project. The goal of the Amplify Change project is to strengthen the effectiveness of 15 women's organizations' advocacy strategies and actions in the area of Sexual and Reproductive and Health Rights and Sexual and Gender Based Violence.

ACTIONAID HELLAS MEMBERS APPLAUD PEOPLE FOR THEIR RESILIENCE & HARD WORK



ActionAid Hellas General Assembly members visit Gitesi sector office (Photo | ActionAid Rwanda 2019)

ActionAid Rwanda recently hosted two members of the ActionAid Hellas General Assembly and a staff member from the ActionAid Hellas. Dimitra, Nefeli and Nikos visited Muko sector in Musanze district where they met and interacted with several community members. The trio visited an Early Childhood Development center, a Girls' Club and two Women farmers' cooperatives, all supported by ActionAid

The ActionAid Hellas General Assembly Members also visited Gitesi & Murundi sectors in Karongi district. During the community visit, they were able to see a few cooperatives and schools that are financially supported by Greece. Among those they visited, included Tuzamur'agaseke, Ter'imbere, Tujjurane and Duhagurukir'amajyambere cooperatives. They also visited Gitega and Muvungu schools, which were supported by Greece through building more classrooms, girls' rooms & latrines at the respective schools.

During the visit, the Greece team interacted with the rightholders who shared their stories of their journey with ActionAid.

43-year-old Pelagia Nyiransekanabo shared her story of how she thought her life would amount to nothing and didn't ever imagine that she would make any contribution to her family and community.



Rightholders in Muko sector cheerfully appreciating AA Hellas for their support.

“I was living an impoverished life and I was unable to provide basic needs for my family and I. When I joined an ActionAid supported cooperative, I was empowered with skills in sustainable agriculture and other income generating activities. Today, i can take my children to school and one has completed high school. Now I can afford mutuelle-health insurance for my whole family. Demand for our agricultural products has also risen and we are economically growing. If it wasn't for ActionAid support, my family and I couldn't be where we are today,” Pelagia narrated.

Dimitra, one of the visitors from Greece applauded the community for their resilience and great achievements.

“It's so great to hear all your wonderful stories and how you have been empowered. You have inspired us so much too and we want to share these stories and lessons when we get back home,” she said.

Nikos, the team leader for the Greece team stressed that if you want to build a nation, empower communities first.

“We have witnessed first-hand, the great work these communities do, how they have been empowered and been able to transform their lives and communities. We want to come back and see the cooperatives expand even further with more achievements,” Nikos noted.

Josephine Irene Uwamariya, ActionAid Rwanda's Country Director appreciated the Greece team for their contribution to changing lives in Rwanda.



Members of Tuzamur'agaseke cooperative based in Karongi District present gifts to ActionAid Hellas Members (Photo | ActionAid Rwanda 2019)

OVER 30 CHILDREN IN NYANZA DISTRICT GRADUATE FROM ACTION-AID'S SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM



Graduation: Sponsored children who recently graduated, receiving goats given by ActionAid Rwanda as a symbol of appreciation for their role in the community.

ActionAid Rwanda sponsorship program works with children in five districts across Rwanda. Children are linked to sponsors between the ages of 3-6, and have correspondences from the start, twice a year, through child messages and photo updates. This goes on until the children turn 19 and are considered adults; and that is when they graduate out of the sponsorship program.

A graduation ceremony was recently organised for over 30 children in Nyanza district. These children were being supported by ActionAid Rwanda since 2005, when they were all around 5 years old.

The graduates were given materials such as books, T-shirts and livestock such as goats as a symbol of appreciation for their role in the community. The parents of the graduates were also present at the graduation event and appreciated ActionAid's support to their children and the community as a whole.

19-year-old Thierry Mugisha, one of the graduates, appreciated her Sponsors, Mama Sabrina and her daughter Alice for the support they rendered to him and the whole community.

"Through ActionAid's sponsorship support, I have been able to get an education and am almost completing my high school. ActionAid has been providing us with scholastic materials too and I am so grateful for their contribution to me and my community," said Mugisha.

Josiane Tuyishime, one of the graduates too said that she is so glad to have been among those who would receive scholastic materials from ActionAid.

“I used to receive scholastic materials from ActionAid, and these were very helpful for me in my education. Much as we are graduating now but I am thankful that ActionAid has continued to support us for instance today I was gifted with a goat and other scholastic materials that will be very helpful for me,” she added.

Halleluya Mabokoyimana, 18, also expressed her gratitude for having been supported by ActionAid’s sponsorship program.

“We used to get uniforms and scholastic materials from ActionAid, and these would help us attain our education without a worry. Classrooms and ECDs for our young siblings were constructed. I have gained a lot. I will miss writing letters to my sponsor but am happy and thankful for all the support they gave to me and my community,” stated Halleluya.



Tuyishime poses with her goat that she received after graduating from ActionAid’s sponsorship program



Graduation: Sponsored children who recently graduated, receiving bags from ActionAid Rwanda

According to Janet Murungi, the Local Rights Program Manager for Nyanza district, the children in sponsorship program, work as ambassadors of their communities because funds received from their sponsors don’t directly benefit them rather benefit the whole community through the community interventions that ActionAid provides such as building schools, building Early Childhood Development centres, supporting women cooperatives in different domains both capacity building and financial empowerment.

“When children turn 18, they are considered adults and are removed from the sponsorship program. This is because most of them are no longer living in Action Aid communities of interventions as they move out of their communities to look for jobs while others join schools outside their communities. This makes it hard to retain them, so we then give other little ones a chance to also join,” she explained.

ARISTARICO'S PROGRESS AFTER 9 YEARS IN PRISON



Semutakirwa, an ActionAid rightholder, radiating with joy as he carries baskets woven by him

Aristarico Semutakirwa is a 72-year-old man, and a resident of Karongi district. Aristarico had been imprisoned for 9 years and was released in 2006. After serving his sentence, he thought life outside prison was going to be even harder because he didn't know what to do or where to start from.

He is married with 3 children. He was afraid of not being able to feed and fend for his family. He was encouraged to join Tuzamur'agaseke, one of the cooperatives supported by ActionAid Rwanda. Aristarico did not hesitate because he wanted to acquire a skill that would enable him to meet the needs of his family now that he was out of prison.

"I joined a cooperative where I enhanced my basket weaving skills. In the cooperative we learn new skills, share ideas and are empowered with knowledge and different skills. I was able to take my children to school. I even have livestock now from which I get manure for my garden, milk for my family thus living a healthy life. Through weaving baskets, I have

earned income that I used to buy hens. I was able to buy a garden and bought maize," Aristarico narrated.

Aristarico said that if it wasn't for the cooperative, he wouldn't have achieved all that he has been able to accomplish in life. He further noted that through the cooperative, they have learned about human rights and now they respect their wives and no longer beat them up or abuse them in different ways.

He appreciated ActionAid for including men in the cooperatives, stressing that there is a lot men benefit from the cooperative and he concluded with a call for more men inclusion in empowerment programs.

KEY STORY OF THE QUARTER

NYIRAMPORE TRIUMPHING A PAST OF TORMENT, FORGIVING AND REGAINING TRANQUILITY

On first impression, Immaculee Nyirampore passes for a well-to-do businesswoman, with a huge account in her possession, a great achiever whose life has had a few if any worries.

The impression is true; she is doing perfectly well and has many achievements to count in her life, except for the part on her past which she describes as a dark history she oftentimes covers up with laughter to avoid a trip back in time, perhaps 10 years ago or more.

But for the interview's sake and for the purpose of sharing a story she believes can potentially speak to a fellow woman somewhere who might be going through or just emerged from a similar circumstances; she opens up her yesteryears, narrating a story of torment, and unending suffering that almost costs her life; first at the hands of the tormentor, but also at her own when she narrowly survives an attempt to end it and put a stop to the misery.

Imaculee's story goes back 20 years ago during the genocide in which all her family was wiped except herself and a younger sister.

As she opens up the dark pages in her life story, it stirs storms of emotion that make one hate that person they have never and may never meet; the person who could go so far to harm another that deep.

In 1995 just after the genocide, 20 years old Imaculee met up with an ex soldier, John Gahima, who shortly after proposed her for marriage.

Yes was a much easier answer for the emerging adult, as she saw an opportunity to find love again, and have a family to cherish and console her. Little did she know she was signing up for life, with a man who would later turn into her tormentor for almost a decade.

In just a few months of accepting Gahima's marriage proposal, the two got married and set up their home in Gahengeri, Rwamagana District, Eastern Province.

But unknown to Imaculee and kept as a mystical secret, Gahima now 60 years old, had had two wives and twelve children, before the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi; but all were wiped out during the 100 days when Hutu militiamen and mobilized civilians went on rampage as though possessed by the devil itself, massacring over a million people, including many innocent children.



Nyirampore practices her tailoring skills after actionAid's empowerment (Photo | ActionAid Rwanda, 2019)

But as goes the saying, “evil prompts evil”, Gahima’s dark past did not take long to surface.

Only after two months from the day they tied the knot and consummated their “I do” vows the person Imaculee had married changed, and with the change ended her wild expectations of new happiness found in marriage.

“I was beaten, tortured, humiliated as my body became a punching bag each day. I didn’t know I would live again. I was married to an abusive, monstrous husband, and not a day goes by that I do not regret the time I spent with him,” she laments.

“First, he banned visitors from home, never wanted me to talk to anyone in the village, all in efforts to cover up his sad past, as I would later learn.”

She adds, “I could neither visit nor be visited. He would beat up anybody he found at our home, saying he was beating ‘the rumours in them’ and not the person. On slight intervention during his sporadic beatings, he could beat us both to pulp. He was habitually drunk. Mine was a fenceless prison, not a home.

“Any slight provocation, even a joke, could start a war. My hope was miserably melting into despair. So in late 1996 I decided to call it quits. I went back to my family home in Nyanza.

But she was pregnant.

As she tells the story, Imaculee makes efforts at turning some details into jokes, but her face fails her intentions; it is clear she is trying to avoid digging deep into this miserable past.

For the child’s sake, Imaculee decides to go back to her marital home; but finds her husband had already brought another wife, and she becomes an attendant to the lovers; exacerbating her already sore heart.

“We were staying in the same house. I could wake up and prepare breakfast for them, but their honeymoon did not last as the woman fled after Gahima had started mistreating her too.”

On one fateful occasion, during the pregnancy of her second daughter, Imaculee contemplated suicide.

“I tried to kill myself, for life had become tasteless and I was just too tired.” She says she could not see any possibility of her miserable life ever changing, after the hope of finding happiness in marriage had also been marred.

A mother of three, two girls and a boy, she avoids talking about marriages and has decided she will never get married again.

For 10 years, she endured the torture and pain that she was subjected to almost every day, but finally gathered the courage to quit for good.



Nyirampore, an ActionAid right holder feeding her cow that she got through ActionAid Rwanda empowerment



Nyirampore fetching clean water from her water tank given by ActionAid's POWER project

She leaves her marital home then but manages to officially divorce her husband in 2010, after which she decides to head back to her family home in Nyanza, starts a new life together with her children.

For a little while after leaving Gahima, life got a little tough for Imaculee and the children, but only for a short while.

"In 2007" she narrates, "ActionAid came to my rescue".

"We received a donation, together with other women, which we used to collectively start a bee farming project in 2010. After this each individual followed their passion into business".

For Imaculee, the choice was tailoring. "I sew trousers, shirts and blouses, kitenge clothes in different styles, uniforms for secondary school students, and embroidery."

She continues "Under the auspices of ActionAid Rwanda, we were trained on human rights, children's and women's rights, legal provisions that defend an abused woman, business management skills, and saving among others."

Imaculee's life, eight years after walking out of a marriage that had become hell, has now blossomed into happiness, with a focused life of hard work.

"I bought the sewing machine that I use in my work and ActionAid gave me a cow, to which I added another on my own to make them two," she smiles as she makes counting gestures with her fingers; of her achievements.

"I also have four goats."

Armed with knowledge about her rights as a woman, Imaculee went to courts of law and secured a share of their land with Gahima in Rwamagana. Her part is valued at about Frw5million.

"I have some money on the account from my monthly savings of at least Frw20,000," which she puts aside for future investments and consumption from her profits that average Frw100,000 per month.

"I have put all my kids back to school. The first two are in primary six while the last one is in level five." Photo: 03061

She says she forgave her ex husband, who she thinks had been traumatized by the demons in his past, which cost him all his first family prior to the genocide, demons he had not managed to rid himself of and were controlling his emotions, driving him to animosity.

Besides a dream to give her children the best education, Imaculee intends to invest in bee-keeping and other activities in the near future, plus spend more time advising other rural women on how to empower themselves; a gift she freely got and is willing to give to others.

AMPLIFY CHANGE PROJECT IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS OF FEMALE SEX WORKERS THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING

Cecile is a member of Tubusezerere Twihangire Umurimo Cooperative based-a cooperative for Female Sex Workers who are on a journey to come out of sex work and engage in other Income Generating Activities. She is one of the beneficiaries of the AmplifyChange Project who are advocated for and trained by the project.



AAR CD addressing participants at a training of WROS on financial management and resource

Through AmplifyChange project, Cecile and other members of her cooperative were taught about Sexual & Reproductive & Health Rights (SRHR) and GBV, accounting and financial management. They were also taught about cooperative Management, organization and team work.

"We knew nothing. We had no voice. It felt like no one cared about us. All we knew was our trade, not knowing that we had potential to also contribute positively in our communities. AmplifyChange started supporting us with capacity building and training and now I am empowered. I have personally developed and in the cooperative through financial management empowerment. Now am a Leader in my Community where I play a Lead Role in the Parents' Evening sessions and in another small group in my community commonly known as Isibo. Through the trainings we received, we were able to also sensitize over 700 girls about SRHR," Cecile recounted.

Teenage mothers below the age of 18 and sex workers were empowered with information on their rights, SRHR, GBV and family planning.

Imaculee, another member of the cooperative stated that she used to face a lot of abuse from men who would beat them up but now she knows her rights and she can now stand up for her rights. She was also empowered with knowledge that has built her confidence. She adds that her cooperative has also shared ideas with other networks thus learning from each other and sharing experiences.

Imaculee is now a Leader in her community-She empowers girls in the market by bringing them together and empowering them to develop themselves.

Bridgette, one of the Female Sex Workers too hails the Project for the difference it has made in her life.

"My self-esteem has increased. I am not just a Sex Worker but a confident woman who contributes positively in the community, through empowerment from AmplifyChange project. Today, am a Community Health Worker who helps sick people in my community and I can confidently speak in meetings. I and other sex workers can now access loan to empower ourselves financially. Almost all of us now have leadership roles in our community and we are agents of positive change unlike before where we were only known for sex work," Bridgette narrates.

Claudine, another Female Sex Worker, says she used to live a life of discrimination too and suffered a lot but now her life is changing, and she is grateful to ActionAid's AmplifyChange project for the impact it has had in her life.

"Before, I was voiceless. My self-esteem was low, and I was discriminated by people in my community. They wouldn't even let us rent houses because we were labelled prostitutes. Through Advocacy and empowerment from AmplifyChange, our story has changed. Currently, I was elected as a Leader in my village and confidently lead meetings. I also mobilize young girls in this kind of work and urge them to go for health check-ups, HIV testing & family planning. We are now starting a joint fish selling business to financially empower ourselves," mentioned Claudine.

This cooperative was also able to do their own advocacy and today they are able to access treatment from San Francisco and over 40 Sex Workers now get health services and check-ups every six months from San Francisco.

AmplifyChange project together with it's partners, works with Female sex workers, among others to increase their awareness on SRHR, GBV and human rights, advocate for them and transform social norms.

AMPLIFY CHANGE PROJECT INCREASING AWARENESS OF SRHR AS A HUMAN RIGHT FOR GIRLS

Divine gave birth at the age of 22. The Father of the child run away yet he had promised her he would provide support for her and the baby. Life was tough for her until Humuriza Tamari Foundation, that receives capacity building from AmplifyChange, empowered her with some support.

“Humuriza Tamari advocated for me and got me into a tailoring school. Now people give me tailoring jobs where I make dresses and other types of tailored fashions for them. Through this, I am able to meet my basic needs. They also sensitized me about SRHR and now am also able to meet my basic needs without waiting on anyone. I also advise other girls to make the right decisions pertaining their lives but also not accept to be lied too with material things,” Divine noted.

Chantal, who is 20 years old has also benefited from Humuriza Tamari Foundation sensitization and support. She joined Humuriza Tamari Foundation in 2018 and she says that her and many other girls and are now informed about SRHR, their rights and how to prevent early pregnancies.

“Many girls in my age range and below would be pregnant and drop out of school, and they face challenges such as men enticing them with material things that the girls can't

afford. Tamari Foundation has equipped us with knowledge on our rights and now are able to make informed decisions thus preparing us for a bright future,” said Chantal.

According to Albertine Nyiraneza, the Founder of Humuriza Tamari Foundation, noted that her foundation sensitizes girls on SRHR and GBV and the situation is getting better.

“I am glad that girls are nowadays making the right life decisions, therefore our awareness raising work is paying off. We are also involving slightly older girls, so they can also sensitize the younger ones in their communities. We receive capacity building from AmplifyChange and we also use this provision and knowledge to empower other vulnerable people especially young girls in the communities,” added Nyiraneza.

ActionAid Rwanda, through it's Strengthening Women's Advocacy Project funded by AmplifyChange, works with several women's rights organizations by building their capacity in areas of women's rights, inclusiveness, Sexual and Reproductive and Health Rights, and Gender Based Rights.



Members of Humuriza Tamari Foundation pose for a photo in front of their office in Karongi district

MOST VULNERABLE WOMEN GROUPS AT RISK OF GBV AND HARASSEMMENT



Participants to a training on the use of community scorecards evaluating GBV advocacy services

Female Sex Workers in some parts of Rwanda, and across the world face a lot of discrimination, harassment and abuse from people within their communities. Some of them accept to live a life of abuse, harassment and discrimination because they aren't empowered enough and don't know their rights.

Among those supported by the AmplifyChange project includes Female Sex Workers in four districts across Rwanda. They are supported and empowered with knowledge about their rights.

Jackie, one of the Female Sex Workers based in Musanze district said that it was hard for her and other sex workers to get birth registration for their children because of the discrimination they get. She added that they weren't even aware of the process of how they can do it. Those that have children that are HIV positive also didn't know how to communicate to their children about this, but they were taught through the AmplifyChange, and now they are able to register their children, and talk to them about their HIV status in a way that doesn't live them distressed.

Chantal, another Female Sex Worker stated that because of their kind of work, they face a lot of issues.

"Before we were empowered, our clients would force us to have sex with them without condoms. We would face a lot of sexual violence, but now we know our rights. We received capacity building through AmplifyChange project and now we know our rights. We no longer allow the men to use us whichever way they want. There must be mutual consent," noted Chantal.

She further added that she was empowered with knowledge about her rights and how to deal with cases in case of abuse.

Alberte, one of the Female Sex Workers said that she was taught about family planning through AmplifyChange project. She noted that she was ignorant about family planning and how she can access family planning services but through the AmplifyChange project, she now knows about family planning and can easily access its services.

"We would suffer lots of abuse. Some men would sleep with us and refuse to pay us after. At times we would end up pregnant and when we go for antenatal care services, the Medics would ask us for to come with our husbands. Failure to turn up with a husband would lead to denial of receiving medical services. So, we would be required to hire men to pretend to be our husbands, so we can receive medical services. Our unborn children's rights were **also** being abused whenever the hospitals would deny us treatment. We would just endure all of this but ever since we started receiving trainings from AmplifyChange, the trend is changing. Now we know our rights and can't easily be violated. The AmplifyChange Project has supported us and done Advocacy for us," she added.

Among the target groups supported by AmplifyChange through the Strengthening Women's Advocacy(SWA) project, commonly dubbed as AmplifyChange(which funds the project), include Female Sex Workers in three districts, where the project and its partners supports them in doing Advocacy, and empowering them with knowledge on their rights.

IMPUHWE ASSOCIATION ADDRESSING GBV & EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES WITH KNOWLEDGE ON SRHR



Impuhwe is an association of women who came together to empower themselves and support and empower the communities in Karongi district. Impuhwe is one of the women groups that receives capacity building support from AmplifyChange Project.

Francoise Niyoyita is a member of Impuhwe Association who happily speaks about how AmplifyChange has been of great support to her and others. According to her, through AmplifyChange Project, she has received training on Sexual & Gender Based Violence (SGBV), Sexual & Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), human rights, financial management, leadership, Income Generation, Resource mobilization, good governance, use of social media for advocacy and communication, and score card among others.

“We were trained on so many topics that have enables us to grow in different aspects. We are now passing on this knowledge to other members of our network and the children too. We also visit homes in our communities and tell them about GBV and how they should prevent it. We are empowering the teenagers including those who gave birth already. Cases of GBV is now reducing in homes and more men are learning to respect the rights of women and live together peacefully,” Niyoyita explained.

18-year-old Ernestine Uwineza gave birth at the age of 15 and dropped out of school for a couple of months. Through Impuhwe Association, her life's story is changing.

“My Father was so angry at me when I got pregnant at 15, and I have no mother. I didn't know where to run too & it felt like there was no light at the end of the tunnel. Luckily for me, Impuhwe came to my rescue and also gave me knowledge and skills about SRHR and GBV. I was able to go back to school and am completing high school this year. If I had gained this information and knowledge earlier in life, I most likely wouldn't have ended up pregnant at a tender age,” Uwineza narrated.

Donata Dusingize, a member of this association stated that she has learned how to do Advocacy through AmplifyChange trainings.

“We have learned how to do advocacy and under the Wiceceka network umbrella, we now do advocacy for the vulnerable. There are children who are victims of abuse and police wasn't following up on their cases. We did advocacy for them and their issues were followed up and resolved. Lately, Leaders call us to sensitize girls & I personally recently spoke to over 500 girls following invitation by the Leadership body in my district,” Dusingize stated.

Dusingize noted that they also advocated for 30 girls out of school to have vocational education and learn welding too and thus financial empowerment for them.

Jean D'Arc TwambajeMariya, one of the members also mentioned; “Our minds are now open. Each of us now knows we have a role to play to end GBV and sensitize the children. The children and youth in our communities are now more informed to make the right decisions for their lives and GBV cases are now being addressed.”

Impuhwe Association is an agent of change in society. They receive capacity building from AmplifyChange Project and also pass it on to others.

ACTIONAID RWANDA CONDUCTS THE ANNUAL PARTICIPATORY REVIEW & REFLECTION PROGRAM EXERCISE



Representatives of women cooperatives review and reflect on ActionAid Rwanda operations in their communities

The ActionAid Rwanda (AAR) team was recently on ground in all the communities where AAR operates, for the annual Participatory Review & Reflection Program (PRRP) exercise. These areas include Nyanza, Gisagara, Nyaruguru, Karongi and Musanze districts.

ActionAid Rwanda carries out this exercise every year to get first-hand feedback from right holders(beneficiaries) as to the effectiveness of the activity implementation processes.

The AAR team also provides feedback to the right holders on how previously identified issues were identified. Through this participatory approach, AAR is able to come up with a clear need's assessment of the people in the communities AAR works with. AAR is committed to being accountable & transparent at all levels. The PRRP exercise is carried out together with the partners who include Faith Victory Association (FVA), Duhozanye Association and Tubibe Amahoro.

The team engaged with the right holders(beneficiaries) to get feedback concerning the effectiveness of AAR's implementation processes and also get their views on what they think we should have done better or differently. ActionAid conducts the Participatory Review & Reflection Program (PRRP) annually and bases on the information they get from the right holders in the planning for the following year.



Women providing feedback during one of the PRRP sessions

ACTIONAID RWANDA AND PARTNERS ADVOCATE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHT AT THE 34TH SESSION OF GIMAC

With an aim to further advocate for women's rights, ActionAid Rwanda staff, partners and a woman from a cooperative supported by ActionAid participated in the 34th Session of the Gender Is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) meeting from 29 to 30 June 2019 in Niamey, Niger. The 34th GIMAC Session was organized under the African Union Summit theme, "Towards Gender-Responsive Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement" and was a follow-up to the GIMAC 33rd session that took place in February 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Participants to this session encouraged African Union (AU) Member States to hold National Dialogue Forums to enable Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), private sector and professional bodies representing interests of vulnerable groups dialogue on policy and advocacy issues for the inclusion of women and girls refugees, among other recommendations.



Representatives from ActionAid Rwanda and Partners attending the 34th GIMAC Session in Niger

At this session, representatives from Rwanda shared Rwanda's successful experiences and interventions to promote agroecology and address unpaid care work issues as well as violence against women and girls.

ACTIONAID UK CEO AND SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBERS HAILS ACTIONAID RWANDA'S WORK

From 13th - 18th October 2019, ActionAid Rwanda hosted three members of ActionAid UK (AAUK), namely the Chief Executive Officer of AAUK Mr. Girish Kumar Narayanan Menon, the AAUK Director for Policy, Advocacy and Programmes Ms. Jillian Emma Popkins as well as the AAUK Board Chair Ms. Marie Rita Staunton.

Their visit aimed at gaining more understanding of the existing partnership between ActionAid Rwanda (AAR) and AAUK as one of the funding affiliates for AAR. The visit was also intended to learn more about AAR's work in promoting women's rights as well as deepen their understanding on how AAR works with the wider ActionAid Federation.

Girish, Jillian and Marie Rita visited the Busasamana Early Childhood Development Centre (ECD), Nyanza District and a Girls Room at a primary school in Nyanza District, both supported by ActionAid Rwanda with funding from ActionAid UK.

They also joined communities in Mukingo Sector, Nyanza District in the International Rural Women's Day celebration and participated in the inauguration of Kigogo Selling Point built in Nyanza District with support from ActionAid Rwanda. The selling point is a secure marketplace for members of the local women's cooperative to sell their agriculture produce.

At the end of the 6 Days visit to different AAR activities, members of AAUK appreciated the work being done by ActionAid Rwanda to promote women's rights and improve livelihoods.



AAUK CEO and board members visiting AAR Musanze Office to learn more about AAR work

The trio also visited Hugukirwa Muko Cooperative, a women's cooperative supported by ActionAid Rwanda which produces handcrafts in Muko Sector, Musanze District as well as a women's savings group under ActionAid Rwanda programme supported by Flow II Project. Through the saving groups, women discuss issues of Gender Based Violence, income generation and accessing Government's programmes.

“Great to see the amazing work done by ActionAid Rwanda with the support from ActionAid UK. We learnt a lot and one thing I really liked about ActionAid Rwanda’s offices is the Accountability Boards that clearly display what AAR commitments are to the local community! Mr. Girish said.

Adding to Girish words, Jillian said “The trip was invaluable for my learning and I am so impressed by AAR team, AAR work and Rwanda itself. I also appreciated being accompanied to the genocide memorial”.

Marie Rita Staunton also said “It was very helpful to meet AAR Board members and impressive to see how programmes work crosses over to governance with five members of beneficiary communities serving on the Assembly.’

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN RWANDA TRAINED ON BUSINESS PLANNING AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT



Participants to the 1st Batch of the training pose for a group photo

ActionAid Rwanda in partnership with the Arab Bank for Development in Africa (BADEA), with support from the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) trained 40 women entrepreneurs in Rwanda on Business Planning, Financial management, Marketing and Customer Services. The training was done in 2 batches, the 1st batch of 20 women took place from 11th - 13th November 2019 while the 2nd batch of other 20 women went from 14th – 16th November 2019.

This training aimed at equipping women entrepreneurs with critical skills to effectively manage their businesses and improve their business environment.

Angelique Uwamahoro, Managing Director of Octo Promede, a local company specialized in the manufacture of artificial limbs for persons with disabilities was one of the women entrepreneurs who attended the said training. She states that the training was very useful for her especially regarding business planning and financial management.

“We started our company in 2017. I am specialized in orthopedics but have little knowledge on business planning and financial management, yet I’m entrusted with managing the whole company. This training helped me to improve my knowledge on best ways to manage a big business like this and I also learnt different ways on marketing. Therefore, this will help me to manage well Octo promede and make it more lucrative.” Uwamahoro said.



Angelique Uwamahoro receiving her training certificate from AAR Country Director and Cynthia Nyam, Program Officer of ACBF

AAR BOARD MEMBERS CONDUCTS A LEARNING VISIT TO AA GHANA TO LEARN FROM THEIR BEST PRACTICES

In a bid to acquire further knowledge and skills about how other ActionAid Members do their businesses as well as get exposed to the work that they do, from 28th June – 3rd July 2019, members of AAR Board of Directors together with AAR Country Director conducted a learning visit to ActionAid Ghana as an older and strong Affiliate of ActionAid International Federation in Africa.

This study visit centered on different focus areas, including:

1. Broad perspective of the General Assembly (GA) and Board's ways of working, Functioning of Governance Committees, challenges faced, and key strategies undertaken,
2. Board engagements in Fundraising, Programme Quality, Policy & Campaigns, WR Programming and relationship building at national and other levels,
3. Role of Board in providing adequate and quality oversight support to ensure effective Governance systems, organizational development and Sustainability,
4. Managing of Relationship of GA, Board and Management plus other Federation members.
5. Board Treasurer support in Finance Management, monitoring of implementation of Audit recommendations, Risk Management and Financial Sustainability.



Sylvie Muteteli, AAR Board member engaging with women from Tamale, Ghana supported by



Josephine Irene Uwamariya, AAR Country Director speaking to women from Tamale, Ghana supported by ActionAid

Speaking about this learning visit, AAR Country Director, Josephine Irene Uwamariya said “This study visit gave us an opportunity of learning from different countries’ experience through discussions on issues, challenges encountered and ways of dressing them. The explored areas were mainly the risks facing governance related to frequency of turnover of workers and board members, Fraud, corruption and procurement process.”

As noted by ActionAid Rwanda Board members, their engagement with ActionAid Ghana Board, GA and Senior Management Team (SMT) was a good opportunity for them to learn from them especially on the following best practices:

- Regular meeting, strict measures for absenteeism where 3 absences lead to loss of board membership.
- The built trust and engagement between board, SMT and GA
- Improved communication to enhance transparency
- Inclusion of GA members in committees for succession planning
- Strong monitoring of compliance to financial policies
- Succession planning, working with each other to ensure that there is successful succession to avoid leadership crisis

AAR JOINS THE WORLD IN THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM CAMPAIGN 2019

From 25th November 2019 to 10th December 2019, ActionAid Rwanda joined the rest of the world in the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence Campaign 2019. This year, the worldwide campaign ran under the theme, “Orange the World: Generation Equality Stands against Rape!”. In Rwanda, the 16 Days of Activism Campaign was marked under the theme, “Educate Rwandan Children while fighting child defilement”.

As part of the 16 Days of Activism Campaign 2019, ActionAid Rwanda conducted different activities calling for action to end Violence Against Women and Girls as well as Teen Pregnancies.

AAR Joins AAR Federation members in the “190 Women, 190 Reasons to Ratify the ILO C190” Activity

On 25 November 2019, the first day of the 16 Days of Activism Campaign 2019, ActionAid Rwanda joined other ActionAid Federation members in a joint activity for the 16 days of activism 2019 called “190 Women, 190 Reasons to Ratify the ILO C190”.

During this activity, ActionAid Federation members profiled 190 women – young women, grassroots women, community leaders, activists – with their photos and messages on their reasons to ratify the International Labour Organization Convention 190 (ILO C190)! A wave of photos for the “190 Women, 190 Reasons to Ratify C190” initiative were posted on social media platforms of AA Federation members to call for the ratification of ILO C 190.

ActionAid Rwanda’s women right holders from Nyanza Local Rights Program participated in the initiative and were profiled among the “190 Women, 190 Reasons to Ratify ILO C190”.



Members of Abanyamurava Mu Iterambere Co-operative supported by AAR in Nyanza District, Rwanda calling for the ratification of ILO C190.

AAR Participates in the National Walk Against Child Defilement



Representatives from Government institutions, partners, ActionAid and stakeholders participating in the walk against child defilement held in Kamonyi District, Rwanda on 25th November 2019

In Rwanda, the 16 Days of Activism Campaign 2019 was launched on 25 November 2019, with a countrywide walk under the theme, “Educate Rwandan Children while fighting child defilement”.

ActionAid Rwanda joined representatives from involved Government institutions, partners and stakeholders in this walk against child defilement which, on national level, took place in Kamonyi District, Musambira Sector.

AAR CONVENES ROUNDTABLE CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON GBV AND SRHR ADVOCACY

As part of the 16 Days of Activism Campaign 2019, ActionAid Rwanda through the “Strengthening the Effectiveness of Women’s Rights’ Advocacy” Project implemented by ActionAid Rwanda with Support from Amplify Change, organized a Roundtable Consultative Meeting on Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Sexual, reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Advocacy, under the theme “Expanding Networks for GBV and SRHR Evidence-based Advocacy”. The meeting took place on 19th November 2019 and brought together representatives from Government institutions, Civil Society, etc.

The roundtable consultative meeting aimed at harnessing advocacy actions around the nexus between GBV and SRHR and exploring synergies for effective advocacy around related issues.

As noted by participants, the meeting strengthened collaboration and coordination between Government institutions, civil society and other stakeholders in promoting SRHR and fighting GBV and came up with recommendations for improving GBV and SRHR policies implementation.



Participants to the roundtable consultative meeting recommended the improvement of GBV and SRHR policies’ implementation.

GITESI SECTOR RESIDENTS URGED TO FIGHT AGAINST TEEN PREGNANCIES

On 10th December 2019, last day of the 16 Days of Activism Campaign 2019, ActionAid Rwanda in partnership with Karongi District conducted a walk against Violence Against Women & Girls in Gitesi Sector, Karongi District. The walk was under the 16 Days of Activism Campaign 2019 theme at national level “Educate Rwandan Children while Fighting Child Defilement”, with special focus on fighting against Teenage Pregnancies and Gender based Violence (GBV).



Participants to the walk against VAWG in Gitesi Sector, Karongi District calling for action to end VAWG in their community.



Through sketches and songs, women and girls denounced different forms of VAWG in their community.

After, the walk against Teen Pregnancies and GBV, communities in attendance gathered to reflect on how to end teen pregnancies as well as Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Karongi District, Western Province, Rwanda.

Through sketches and songs, women and girls who attended this campaign denounced different forms of violence against women in their community and called for action to end VAWG.

TEEN MOTHERS FROM GITESI SECTORS TRAINED ON GBV PREVENTION AND SRHR

ActionAid Rwanda as an organization that promotes women’s rights and fights against Gender Based Violence in Rwanda, from 10th – 12th December 2019, organized a camp for teen mothers from Murundi and Gitesi Sectors of Karongi District, to facilitate teen mothers’ rehabilitation and help them think for their bright future.

The campaign was an opportunity to have a session with parents of the teen mothers in order to sensitize them about their children’s rights and show them that even though the teen mothers have given birth early, they still deserve care from their parents and justice for those that have been violated.



Participants to the Teen Mothers Camp posing for a group photo



Munyaneza Mathias, Director of Social affairs in Karongi District, addressing participants to the teen mothers’ camp

During the three days camp, teen mothers were trained on GBV Prevention and referral pathways as well as sexual reproductive health and rights, while their parents were trained on types of GBV, consequences of traumatizing teen mothers and positive parenting.

“This training helped me to know how to say no when a man proposes me to have intercourses which I don’t want. I also learnt consequences of unprotected intercourses and different service providers working on addressing GBV issues” Said Nyirabatsinda Jane, a teen mother from Gitesi Sector, Karongi District

RIGHTHOLDERS COMMEND THE GBV / VAWG DIGITIZED REPORTING TOOL DEVELOPED BY AAR

ActionAid Rwanda through Flow II Project has developed a Gender Based Violence (GBV) / Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) digitized reporting tool.

This GBV / VAWG digitized reporting tool is expected to contribute to GBV reporting and response mechanisms existing in Rwanda as well as break the culture of silence in VAWG cases reporting among GBV/VAWG victims.

The digital GBV/VAWG cases tracking tool is also intended to facilitate women and girls break the culture of silence for VAWG reporting to ensure privacy and confidentiality in GBV cases reporting but also facilitate GBV service providers to timely receive and handle GBV incidences. The System will also directly send GBV cases to Government institutions in charge of handling GBV through mobile phone’s SMS or notifications of GBV incidences with details on victims to facilitate quick response.

In meetings organized from 10th - 18th December 2019 by ActionAid Rwanda to present to communities across different districts of the country the GBV / VAWG digitized reporting tool and sensitize them to use the said tool,

ActionAid Rwanda’s right holders especially GBV survivors welcomed the digitized tool and affirmed that it will help them to timely report GBV / VAWG cases.

These meetings were also an occasion for ActionAid Rwanda to distribute mobile phones to community facilitators who will support in the sensitization of other community members to use the digital GBV / VAWG cases tracking tool & web-based application system in reporting GBV cases.



The representative of the National Women Council in Gisagara District handing a mobile phone to one of the community facilitators.

STAKEHOLDERS DISCUSS THE IMPACT OF AGROECOLOGY ON ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT FOR WOMEN SMALLHOLDER FARMERS

On 28th November 2019, ActionAid Rwanda through FLOW II Project and in partnership with Rwanda Organic Agriculture Movement (ROAM) convened a National Dialogue on Agroecology & economic empowerment for Women smallholder farmers in Rwanda.

The dialogue brought together key stakeholders to discuss the practicability of agroecology technologies and access to markets in response to economic empowerment for rural women smallholder farmers in Rwanda.

Participants to the dialogue also discussed about findings from the survey done by ActionAid Rwanda on linkages between agroecology and economic empowerment for smallholder farmer groups in Rwanda.



AAR Country Director delivering opening remarks during the said dialogue



A member of Tuzamurane Cooperative explaining to the learning visit's participants how the pineapple organic farming is done.

To help participants especially smallholder farmers better understand the rationale for agroecology, ecological organic agriculture and climate change adaptation measures, the dialogue was preceded by a learning visit to best practices of agroecology at Tuzamurane cooperative implementing a pineapple organic farming and value chain in Kirehe District, Rwanda.

BEST MEDIA ARTICLES AND STORIES ON UNPAID CARE WORK AWARDED

In December 2019, ActionAid Rwanda through the FLOW II Project supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, organized the yearly Unpaid Care Work Media Awards. 28 contestants from different local media outlets operating in Rwanda participated and 5 best media articles and stories on unpaid care work recognition, redistribution, reduction, representation & reward in Rwanda were awarded on 12th December 2019.

During the award ceremony, Cyprien Niyomwungeri from IGIHE online media operating in Rwanda emerged the winner and was awarded 400,000 Frw (approx. 430\$), a certificate and other in-kind prizes. Niyomwungeri's article which emerged the best among other submissions is titled "Imirimo ikorwa n'abagore ariko idahabwa agaciro ikeneye kwitabwaho byihariye? (Issues related to Unpaid Care Works need a special attention)

NKURUNZIZA Pacifique from Radio Ishingiro emerged the 2nd while Juventine Muragijemariya from TV10 won the 3rd place. They were awarded 300,000 Frw (approx. 320\$) and 200,000 Frw (220\$) respectively, plus certificates and other in-kind prizes.

Kwigira Issa from Flash FM secured the 4th place and Scovia MUTESI from MamaUrwagasabo online media won the 5th place. They were awarded 150,000 Frw and 100,000 Frw respectively, certificates and other in kind prizes.

The Unpaid Care Works Media Awards organised on annual basis by ActionAid Rwanda through Flow II Project (also known as POWER Project) aim at reinforcing the critical role of the media in doing advocacy for recognition, redistribution, reduction, representation and reward of Unpaid Care Works in Rwanda.



Winners of the Unpaid Care Work Media Awards 2019 posing with officials from AAR and partners

WOMEN EMPOWERED BY ACTIONAID RWANDA PARTICIPATE TO THE EAC TRADE FAIR

Women from cooperatives supported by ActionAid Rwanda participated to the 20th Edition of the annual East African Community Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSEs) Trade Fair, formerly known as JuaKali Nguvu Kazi Exhibition which took place in Kigali, Rwanda from 14th – 22nd December 2019.

At the trade fair, Stephanie MUKANTWARI from Abadahigwa Pottery based in Murundi Sector, Karongi District; Hilarie MUJAWAMUNGU from Hugukirwa Muko Cooperative based in Muko Sector, Musanze District and Scola MUKAKALISA from Umucyo Nyanza Cooperative based in Nyanza District, showcased and sold handcrafts made by their cooperatives.

As they testify, the EAC SME's Trade Fair provided them with a unique opportunity to engage with artisans from other EAC partner States, hence an occasion for learning and expanding their clients' network.

"In this trade fair, I got many clients than other trade fairs I used to attend. For example,

"I brought items worth 184,000 Frw (approx.200 \$) and all of them were bought in less than 8 days. This was not the case in other trade fairs I used to take part in. I also got many purchase orders, therefore, back home, I and other members of the cooperative will have to produce more earthenware so that we satisfy the demands got from this trade fair." Said Stephanie MUKANTWARI, Chairperson of Abadahigwa Pottery made of women empowered by ActionAid Rwanda.

This trade fair also provided me with an occasion to learn new pottery styles from other potters from the EAC partner states and this will help me and our cooperative to improve our pottery and make more money." Mukantwari added.

The 20th Edition of EAC SMEs Trade Fair themed "EAC@20: Building EAC through Micro and Small Enterprises" was jointly organized on a rotational basis by the EAC Secretariat, the East African Confederation of Informal Sector Organization (EACISO) in collaboration with EAC Partner States. It brought together 1,300 artisans and exhibitors from the six EAC Partner States comprising Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.



Stephanie, Hilarie and Scola posing with the AAR Country Director after receiving certificates of recognition for their attendance to the EAC SMEs trade Fair.

SCHOOL CLUBS' FACILITATORS PLEDGES MORE EFFORTS IN REPORTING GBV

School Clubs' Facilitators affirm that mobile smart phones they recently received from Speak Out Project will help them to effectively report Gender Based Violence (GBV).

The smart phones distributed by Speak out Project to a hundred teachers who facilitate sessions in school clubs are meant to support them in reporting, taking activity photos and sharing experience among themselves.

Speak Out! Project is a project implemented by ActionAid Rwanda with support from UKaid which addresses Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and Gender-Based Violence in Rwanda.

Speak Out! project targets girls and Women's Rights Organizations with the aim of increasing girls' confidence and knowledge of their rights, ability to claim their rights, have control over their bodies and take their own decisions. To increase girls' knowledge on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and reporting channels, girls are given sessions by mentors in safe spaces but also get more sessions in clubs where they are mixed with boys. Sessions in school clubs are facilitated by teachers who are referred to as club facilitators.



School clubs' facilitators posing in a group photo after receiving the smart phones from Speak Out project

ACTIONAID RWANDA SAFEGUARDING POLICY FRAMEWORK

We commit to uphold human rights and promote social Justice while we safeguard and protect the dignity of ALL by ensuring confidentiality in Response, Prevention, Reporting and Access to adequate support



Rwanda National Police

Emergency: 112
Child help line: 116
Fire Brigade: 111
Anti - GBV: 3512
Isange One Stop Centre: 3029

Gender Monitoring Office: 5798
MIGEPROF Toll Free line: 2560
Office of the Ombudsman: 199

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