

IMRO RWANDA

NEWSLETTER

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GREETINGS AND WELCOME TO OUR IMRO RWANDA QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

We are pleased to share highlights from our April to June 2025 activities. This newsletter showcases our recent projects and progress towards creating positive change in our community. Thank you for your continued support in helping us build a better future together.

TOP CONTENTS

- Kwibuka 31
- Building Compassionate and Inclusive Care for PWUD: VCAT Training for Healthcare Providers in Rubavu
- Empowering Law Enforcers and Sanitation Officers: Advancing Harm Reduction in Rubavu
- Strengthening Partnerships for HIV and TB Prevention
- Promoting a Period-Friendly World: Menstrual Hygiene Day Celebrated in Kayonza
- Championing Health Rights: Annual Advocacy Meetings for Key Populations
- Empowering Peer Educators to Advance HIV Prevention and Human Rights
- Championing Period Equity: National Dialogue on Sustainable Menstrual Health Solutions
- Promoting Safer Choices: Condom and Lubricant Distribution for Key Populations
- Empowering TB Survivors as Champions of Change
- Ensuring HIV-Free Births: Enhancing PMTCT Access for Female Sex Workers
- Ensuring HIV-Free Births: Enhancing PMTCT Access for Female Sex Workers
- Faith Leaders and Youth Unite to Prevent Drug Abuse and Teenage Pregnancy
- Standing United: Marking the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

KWIBUKA 31

On April 7th, IMRO Rwanda joined Rwanda and the world in commemorating Kwibuka 31—honoring the over one million lives lost in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

#KWIBUKA31

This solemn remembrance calls us to reflect on survivors' pain, renew our Never Again pledge, and uphold the values of peace, resilience, and unity.

#NEVERAGAIN

As an organization, we stand with survivors, champion justice, and remain committed to healing and a future of compassion. Together, let us remember, act, and ensure history never repeats.



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#Kwibuka31

www.kwibuka.rw

BUILDING COMPASSIONATE AND INCLUSIVE CARE FOR PWUD: VCAT TRAINING FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS IN RUBAVU

IMRO Rwanda launched a transformative 2-day Values Clarification and Attitude Transformation (VCAT) training for healthcare providers in Rubavu District. The training was under the Tubiteho Project, focused on equipping providers with rights-based approaches and stigma-free care for people who use drugs (PWUD).

TUBITEHO

On Day 1, Tubiteho Project Officer, gave an insightful presentation on the project's background, current interventions, and the unique challenges faced by PWUDs. He emphasized the urgent need to provide inclusive and supportive health services to this often marginalized group.

Facilitator Theogene Mporanyi guided participants through exercises that challenged their biases and encouraged them to adopt human-centered approaches. As one participant reflected, "Change starts when we ask ourselves: 'How would I want to be treated?'"

Day 2 deepened the learning with practical VCAT methods to reduce stigma and build compassionate, rights-based service delivery. By the end of the training, providers expressed renewed commitment to offering empathetic and equitable care to all community members, including PWUDs.

This training marks another significant step in IMRO Rwanda's mission to strengthen harm reduction and build a stigma-free health system that leaves no one behind.



EMPOWERING LAW ENFORCERS AND SANITATION OFFICERS: ADVANCING HARM REDUCTION IN RUBAVU

IMRO Rwanda, in partnership with the #TubitehoCoalition, conducted a transformative 2-day workshop in Rubavu District to equip law enforcers and sanitation officers with critical knowledge on adopting a human rights-based approach when working with People Who Use Drugs (PWUD).

TUBITEHO

The workshop focused on promoting harm reduction, reducing stigma, and fostering inclusive care. Key topics included Hepatitis B & C, overdose prevention, and practical harm reduction interventions to better support PWUDs with dignity and empathy.

Participants emphasized the importance of extending similar training sessions to local village leaders to ensure broader community awareness of the health needs of PWUDs.

As the workshop concluded, many expressed a strong commitment to share the knowledge gained with their institutions and integrate human rights-based practices into their daily work.

This initiative marks another milestone in IMRO Rwanda's mission to advance harm reduction and build a society where everyone has access to compassionate and equitable health services, regardless of their circumstances.



STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS FOR HIV AND TB PREVENTION

During this period, IMRO Rwanda conducted strategic advocacy and partnership meetings in Nyanza, Burera, and Rubavu Districts to bolster the implementation of the Global Fund GC7 HIV/TB Prevention Project targeting key populations.

GC7 HIV/TB

In Burera District, IMRO held a meeting with the Mayor to explore collaboration opportunities aimed at advancing equitable health services for key populations. The discussions emphasized the importance of inclusive approaches to reach those most at risk.

In Nyanza District, IMRO engaged with the Vice Mayor in charge of Social Affairs, the Director of Health, and the JADF team. The meeting focused on presenting the project's objectives and exploring ways to implement community-led, inclusive health interventions that leave no one behind.

In Rubavu District, IMRO submitted the GC7 Project Action Plan to the JADF Officer and held productive discussions with the Director of Health to ensure sustained collaboration and impactful implementation of HIV and TB prevention activities.

These advocacy engagements reflect IMRO Rwanda's strong commitment to working hand-in-hand with local leadership to advance effective and equitable health services for key populations across Rwanda.



PROMOTING A PERIOD-FRIENDLY WORLD: MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY CELEBRATED IN KAYONZA

On May 28th, IMRO Rwanda joined young sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) champions from secondary schools in Kayonza District to commemorate Menstrual Hygiene Day 2025. This year's celebration focused on creating a Period Friendly World, free from stigma and barriers that hold young people back.

The event provided a safe and open space for youth to engage in powerful conversations about menstruation, protection, and dignity. Discussions addressed breaking taboos, improving access to menstrual hygiene products, and empowering girls to lead change within their schools and communities.

This initiative reaffirmed IMRO Rwanda's commitment to ensuring that no young person is left behind due to stigma or lack of information about their bodies. Through education, advocacy, and partnerships, we continue to promote environments where youth can learn, lead, and thrive with confidence and dignity.



CHAMPIONING HEALTH RIGHTS: ANNUAL ADVOCACY MEETINGS FOR KEY POPULATIONS

During this period, IMRO Rwanda organised Annual Advocacy Meetings across Nyanza, Rubavu, and Burera Districts under the Global Fund GC7 HIV/TB Prevention Project. These meetings aimed to promote the health rights of key populations, including Female Sex Workers (FSWs), Men who have Sex with Men (MSM), Transgender persons, and Injecting Drug Users (IDUs).

Key Activities Conducted

- **Ending HIV by 2030 Presentation:** Highlighted Rwanda's national targets and stakeholder roles in achieving epidemic control.
- **Gender and Sexual Diversity Presentation:** Fostered understanding of diverse identities to promote dignity and inclusive services.
- **HIV/TB Among Key Populations:** Shared data on prevalence, risks, and tailored interventions required for KPs.
- **Intersectionality and Inclusion:** Discussed how overlapping identities increase vulnerability and the need for holistic program responses.
- **Promoting Stigma-Free Services:** Emphasized healthcare provider responsibility in ensuring non-discriminatory, client-centred care.

Outcomes

- Strengthened multi-sectoral partnerships for inclusive HIV/TB services.
- Increased stakeholder awareness on the rights and needs of key populations.
- Enhanced commitment to creating stigma-free environments within health facilities and communities.
- Identification of advocacy priorities for continued engagement with district leadership and community structures.

These advocacy meetings mark a significant step towards building inclusive, rights-based, and community-led health responses that leave no one behind in Rwanda.



EMPOWERING PEER EDUCATORS TO ADVANCE HIV PREVENTION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Under the Global Fund GC7 HIV/TB Prevention Project, IMRO Rwanda conducted capacity-building training sessions for peer educators of Female Sex Workers (FSWs) and Men who have Sex with Men (MSMs) in Nyanza, Burera, and Rubavu Districts. The training aimed to strengthen their knowledge and skills in HIV prevention, human rights, gender equity, and addressing gender-based violence (GBV).

The objective of these trainings was to enhance peer educators' capacity to effectively support HIV prevention efforts, promote human rights, and address stigma, discrimination, and GBV within their communities. Facilitators delivered comprehensive sessions covering various topics, including the guide for peer educators and interpersonal communication, HIV/TB among key populations, intersectionality and inclusion, STI symptoms, treatment, and prevention, PrEP and PEP screening and eligibility, national and global targets for ending HIV by 2030, and the minimum package of services for key populations.

In total, 150 peer educators were trained across the three districts. These sessions also improved the peer educators' ability to address gender equity, human rights, and GBV issues, while strengthening community-led responses to HIV and TB among key populations.

As a result, peer educators are now better positioned to lead referrals and establish supportive networks within their communities.

Moving forward, it was recommended that regular refresher trainings be conducted to update peer educators on evolving guidelines and interventions. Additionally, integrating post-training mentorship and supportive supervision will ensure practical application of the skills gained. Finally, it was recommended that trained peer educators be utilized in upcoming community mobilization and outreach campaigns for maximum program impact.

This training successfully built the capacity of 150 peer educators across three districts, positioning them as key agents of change in advancing HIV prevention, promoting human rights, and addressing gender-based violence among key populations in Rwanda.



CHAMPIONING PERIOD EQUITY: NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON SUSTAINABLE MENSTRUAL HEALTH SOLUTIONS

IMRO Rwanda recently hosted a National Dialogue on Sustainable Menstrual Health Solutions, bringing together diverse stakeholders to advocate for safe, affordable, and accessible menstrual products for all women and girls. The dialogue aimed to address barriers that prevent women and girls from thriving in education, enjoying better health, and living with dignity.

Throughout the session, participants emphasized that menstrual health is a human right, not a privilege. Discussions highlighted the urgent need to end period poverty by ensuring that no girl misses school due to lack of menstrual products and that all women can manage their periods safely and with confidence. Partners from public institutions, private companies, and civil society shared innovative solutions, policy recommendations, and commitments to advance menstrual health in Rwanda.

As the dialogue concluded, it was clear that every voice matters and every story counts in building a period-friendly world. Change is built one bold voice at a time, and each partner has a critical role to play in this journey towards period equity. IMRO Rwanda remains committed to fostering these conversations and driving practical actions to ensure menstrual health for all, empowering women and girls to reach their full potential with dignity and confidence.



PROMOTING SAFER CHOICES: CONDOM AND LUBRICANT DISTRIBUTION FOR KEY POPULATIONS

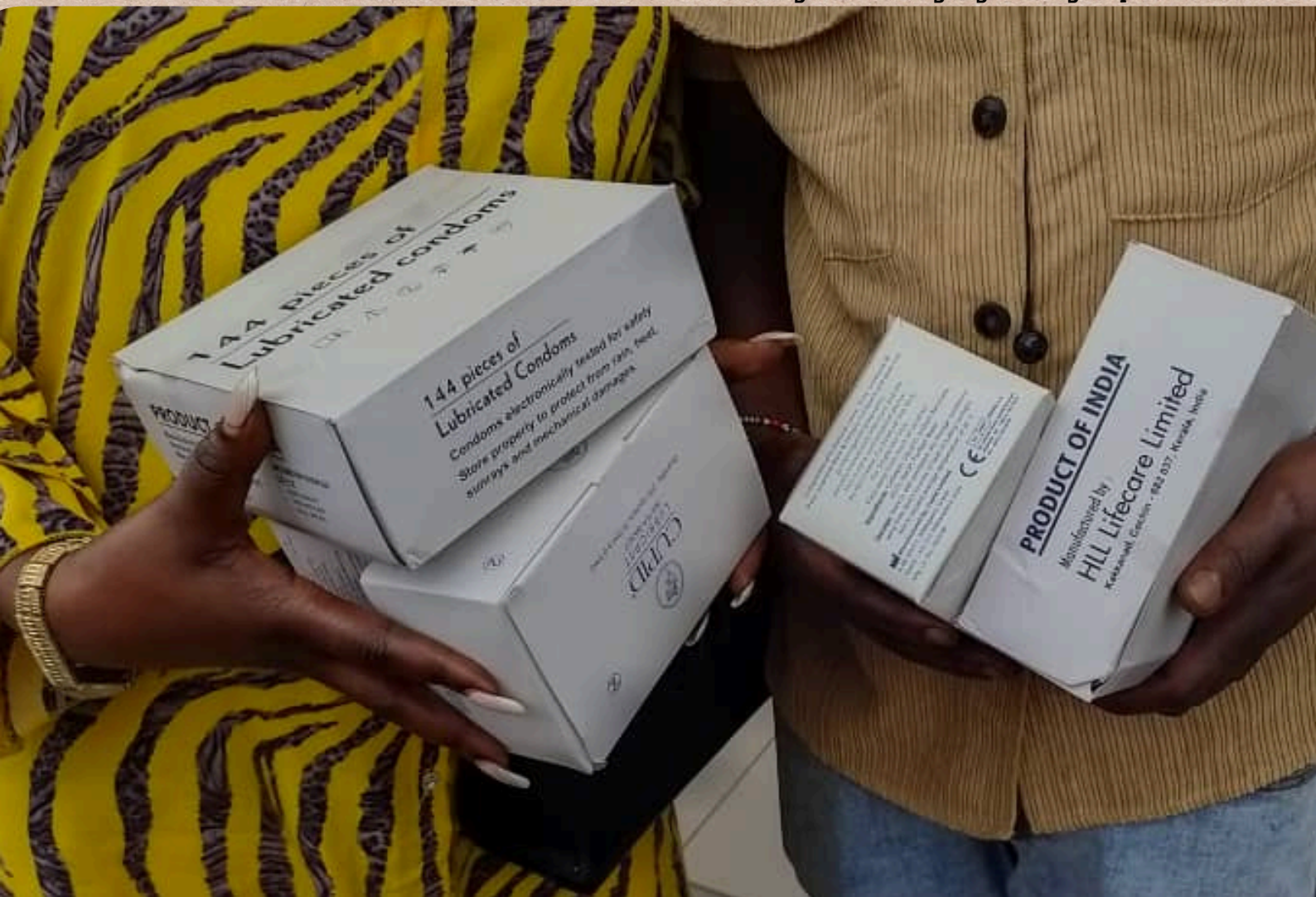
As part of its comprehensive HIV prevention interventions under the Global Fund GC7 HIV/TB Prevention Project, IMRO Rwanda conducted targeted distribution of condoms and lubricants to Female Sex Workers (FSWs) and Men who have Sex with Men (MSMs) in Nyanza, Burera, and Rubavu Districts. This initiative aimed to increase the availability and consistent use of condoms and lubricants among key populations, thereby reducing the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

This targeted distribution resulted in increased access to condoms and lubricants among FSWs and MSMs, reducing barriers to HIV prevention. Risk reduction practices were strengthened through education on consistent and correct use, and IMRO's visibility in HIV prevention efforts was enhanced, fostering trust and sustained engagement with key populations in all districts.

Overall, 43,200 condoms and 9,000 lubricants were distributed to FSWs, while 14,400 condoms and 12,000 lubricants were distributed to MSMs across the three districts.

To sustain these gains, it is recommended to maintain regular distribution schedules based on hotspot mapping data to meet ongoing demand. Promotion sessions should continue to reinforce proper use and negotiation of safer sex practices. Additionally, stock levels should be monitored closely to avoid supply interruptions and ensure timely replenishment.

This targeted distribution has contributed significantly to improved HIV prevention coverage for key populations in Nyanza, Burera, and Rubavu Districts, supporting Rwanda's national goals to reduce new HIV infections by 15% among high-risk groups.



EMPOWERING TB SURVIVORS AS CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE

IMRO Rwanda organised bi-annual coordination meetings with former TB patients (TB survivors) in Nyanza, Rubavu, and Burera Districts. These meetings aimed to empower TB survivors as community champions to promote treatment adherence, reduce TB stigma, and ultimately improve Treatment Success Rates (TSR) within their communities.

The objectives of these meetings were to strengthen the role of former TB patients in supporting treatment adherence and completion among current TB patients, facilitate knowledge sharing, peer learning, and mutual support among TB survivors, and establish TB Patients' Forums while identifying community TB champions to lead grassroots TB awareness efforts.

To sustain the impact, it is recommended to support TB champions with refresher training, IEC materials, and supervision for continued community engagement.

These meetings engaged 90 TB survivors as partners in the community TB response and established TB Patients' Forums in all three districts to strengthen peer support and advocacy. Additionally, 15 former TB champions were elected to lead community awareness and education activities. The sessions increased knowledge among TB survivors on national priorities, treatment, and symptoms screening, empowering them as peer educators.

These activities strengthened community-led efforts to improve Treatment Success Rates (TSR) by fostering adherence support and stigma reduction.

This bi-annual coordination meeting successfully empowered TB survivors as champions of change, enhancing community-led responses to TB prevention, treatment adherence, and stigma reduction in Nyanza, Rubavu, and Burera Districts.



ENSURING HIV-FREE BIRTHS: ENHANCING PMTCT ACCESS FOR FEMALE SEX WORKERS

IMRO Rwanda conducted targeted outreach and community-based interventions to enhance access to and utilization of Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission (PMTCT) services among Female Sex Workers (FSWs) in Nyanza, Rubavu, and Burera Districts. This activity aimed to improve maternal and child health outcomes by ensuring early HIV testing and prompt initiation of PMTCT services for pregnant FSWs to prevent vertical transmission of HIV.

The objectives were to increase awareness among FSW peer educators on the importance of PMTCT services, identify and refer pregnant FSWs for HIV testing and necessary care, and ensure HIV-positive pregnant FSWs are linked to PMTCT services to reduce mother-to-child HIV transmission.

Key interventions included the training and sensitization of 30 FSW peer educators per district on PMTCT services, HIV testing, and referral pathways. Pregnant FSWs were identified through peer networks and targeted outreach, referred for Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT), and then linked either to Continuous Preventive Care (CPN) if HIV-negative or PMTCT services if HIV-positive.

This activity resulted in increased awareness among FSW peer educators on the importance of PMTCT services, improved identification, testing, and linkage to care for pregnant FSWs in Nyanza and Rubavu, and strengthened collaboration with healthcare facilities to provide stigma-free PMTCT services to pregnant FSWs.

This activity successfully enhanced access to PMTCT services for pregnant FSWs in Nyanza, Rubavu, and Burera Districts through effective peer-led outreach and health facility linkages. IMRO Rwanda remains committed to ensuring that no child is born with HIV by empowering FSW communities and building strong partnerships with local health systems.



FAITH LEADERS AND YOUTH UNITE TO PREVENT DRUG ABUSE AND TEENAGE PREGNANCY

IMRO Rwanda, in partnership with Rusizi District and EAR-Bugumira, is empowering faith leaders through targeted training and awareness sessions focused on preventing drug abuse, delinquency, and teenage pregnancy among adolescents and young women. This initiative recognizes the influential role that religious leaders play within communities in shaping values, attitudes, and behaviours among youth.

The training sessions equipped faith leaders with knowledge and practical tools to address these pressing issues, fostering their capacity to guide and mentor young people towards healthier choices and brighter futures. Religious leaders committed to leveraging their platforms to create safer environments for adolescents and young women, emphasizing dignity, protection, and positive role modelling.

Following these sessions, IMRO Rwanda also facilitated a community dialogue with adolescent girls, young women, and teen mothers. The discussions created a safe space for participants to share their lived experiences, challenges, and aspirations while focusing on addressing the root causes of drug abuse, delinquency, and teenage pregnancy within their communities.

Participants emphasized the need for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, economic empowerment opportunities, and stronger community and parental support systems to reduce vulnerabilities. The dialogue reinforced the importance of multi-stakeholder approaches, combining faith-based mentorship with youth-led solutions to promote resilience, confidence, and healthier life choices among young people.

This initiative reflects IMRO Rwanda's commitment to building a safer, more supportive future for adolescents and young women by working hand in hand with faith leaders, local authorities, and communities to create sustainable and transformative change.



STANDING UNITED: MARKING THE INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING

IMRO Rwanda, together with its coalition partners, joined the world in commemorating the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. This global day, observed annually, serves as a reminder of the urgent need to strengthen prevention, promote access to harm reduction services, and build supportive systems for people who use drugs.

During this year's commemoration, IMRO Rwanda and its coalition partners called upon policymakers, law enforcers, healthcare providers, and communities to stand united in emphasizing a human rights-based and promoting prevention strategies, improving access to treatment and harm reduction services, and addressing the social determinants that drive drug use and addiction.

As IMRO Rwanda continues to implement its harm reduction programs, this day reinforced the organization's commitment to ensuring no one is left behind in Rwanda's journey towards health, dignity, and freedom from drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

The event also served as an opportunity to recognize the resilience of people who use drugs and the importance of supporting their health and wellbeing through stigma-free care, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs.



IMRO RWANDA WISHES TO EXTEND OUR HEARTFELT THANKS TO ALL OUR PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS FOR YOUR UNWAVERING COMMITMENT AND COLLABORATION. TOGETHER, WE ARE MAKING A LASTING IMPACT IN OUR COMMUNITIES.

- AmplifyChange
- Expertise France
- FXB
- GLIHD
- Global Fund
- HDI
- Médecins du Monde (MDM)
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Justice
- Rubavu District
- Kayonza District
- Rwanda Civil Society Platform
- SFR
- UNAIDS
- UNDP
- UNFPA
- UNICEF
- LAF
- GASABO DISTRICT
- BUGESERA DISTRICT
- Nyanza District
- Burera District
- MEDICAL DOCTORS FOR CHOICE
- RBC
- CCM
- RNGOF on HIV & HP



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