Founder’s Letter

Dear Friends,

One of my most vivid memories of 2018 is from the summer, which I spent working with the Kigutu community to build a new primary school. There were some who said that it wasn’t possible to build a 10-classroom school in three months. I knew, based on our fourteen years working together, that we could do it. With very little money (less than $200,000), we gathered daily to clear new land, pour foundations, build light-filled classrooms, a teachers’ meeting room and director’s office, and install running water and bathrooms—yielding a facility five times the size of the dilapidated structure that used to house over 500 students in the Kigutu community school.

I beam with pride every time I see another picture of school children who themselves are radiant with joy, focused on their work, growing more confident, more inquisitive, and happier before our eyes. They are the future—and the future is full of hope.

Part of that hope is another landmark project, the Kigutu International Academy, our grade 9-12 boarding school slated to open in the fall of 2020, bringing to Burundi an innovative curriculum and experiential learning that will produce a new generation of problem-solvers, change-makers, and entrepreneurial leaders. (See the beautiful renderings on pages 18-19.)

Our growth is happening every day, as demonstrated by the Kigutu Hospital and Women’s Health Pavilion. 2018 has been a year of steady progress and palpable promise for this transformative project. By 2020 we will be seeing our patients in this state-of-the-art teaching hospital under construction in one of the poorest and most remote places on earth. How can we not take enormous pride in that? All of us! When I see the second floor slab taking shape, or the intricacies of the lab being designed and outfitted, I can easily imagine the daily life-saving activities and training of local healthcare professionals that will soon be a reality.

Think of what you are helping us to accomplish—and the impact we are making together!

As you read this annual report and see the photos of our team and community, I am hoping you will have a picture of the hard work we have accomplished this past year. I’m thinking of Dr. Jean Baptiste, treating Alice, a woman who walked 25 miles to be seen at our clinic by someone she trusts and cherishes (see p. 19). Gerard, who over five years has been a beekeeper supported by Village Health Works, who not only teaches others but successfully supports his family with the proceeds of honey sales (p. 23). And Dr. Tarek, bringing decades of hard-won field experience and zeal to prevent women from dying needlessly in childbirth and to scale our clinical capacity for generations to come (p 15).

To all of you who sustain us with your skills, your counsel, your sweat and hard work—and your generous financial resources—I say thank you from the bottom of my heart. I also ask you to stay with us to ensure our limitless potential in this fight for dignity and hope.

Our focus is on training future generations of leaders for Burundi and beyond. With your compassionate support we will continue down the road towards that future. Please know that your involvement is much appreciated!

With gratitude and admiration,

Deo
Village Health Works’ mission is to provide quality, compassionate health care in a dignified environment while also addressing the root causes of illness, poverty, violence, and neglect.

Our Mission

Where We Work

Village Health Works operates in Kigutu, Burundi. Our campus is 7 miles from the nearest paved road and 3 hours south of Bujumbura, overlooking Lake Tanganyika. We serve a population of approximately 200,000 people. Our team strives to provide those in our catchment area and beyond with quality health care, education, food security and opportunities for better economic outcomes. Village Health Works’ success is dependent on our approach to care which is community centered and driven, and so ensures the needs of the community are met effectively and with compassion. The people of Kigutu are integral to every area of our work, and allow us to meet our common goals of confronting extreme multidimensional poverty and building a vibrant and peaceful society.

Our work is in service to one of the most remote and resource-deprived communities in the world and founded in the belief that quality, dignified health care should be a human right.

What We Believe

Lack of access to quality health care and education is the greatest threat to human development and peace.

Improving the physical and mental health of our most impoverished and marginalized fellow human beings is not only possible, but absolutely essential to sustainable development.

Education based on critical thinking, from early childhood onward, is the foundation of a healthy and just society.

We learn as much from the communities we serve as they may learn from us.

We must act with boldness, compassion, and humility to achieve our goals.

Any work done on a small scale can produce waves in the surrounding communities, countries, and world.

The true measure of our success is the pride, hope, and boundless resilience of our community as a result of the work we do together.

Burundi At-A-Glance

11.8 million
population as of 2018

$727
per capita GDP (PPP) as of 2018, the lowest in the world

185/189
Human Development Index as of 2017

55.9%
child stunting levels, the highest in the world

Key Problems

Health
One in 23 women in Burundi will die during pregnancy or childbirth.
The infant mortality rate in Burundi is 67 per 1,000 live births, one of the highest in the world.
56% of the population is chronically malnourished.

Education
Only 10% of children have access to pre-school education.
The average primary school classroom has 59 children with the annual government expenditure equivalent to less than $100 per student.
Less than 20% of youth attend school beyond grade 9 and only 5% complete secondary school.

Poverty
Nearly 60% live in extreme poverty, earning less than $2 per day.
WHEN WE FIRST OPENED OUR CLINIC MORE THAN A DECADE AGO, we quickly understood that health care alone could not treat the symptoms of multidimensional poverty. We realized that children needed education to thrive, farmers needed to learn new techniques to feed their families, and our community needed economic opportunity to build a better life. Most importantly, we knew community engagement would be essential to helping repair a broken society and bring stability and hope to the people of rural Burundi.

Today our programs utilize a holistic approach that not only provides healthcare, but also trains teachers and feeds students, supports farming and livestock co-ops, and sustains community economic cooperatives—programs that help create opportunities and provide the tools necessary to lift participants out of poverty. This is how we deliver health and hope to Burundi.
“To be successful we must look beyond health, to the underlying determinants of health.”

—Dr. Tarek Meguid
Healthcare

WE WORK IN AN AREA WHERE THE LACK OF ACCESS TO ROUTINE procedures, basic sanitary and reproductive health education, and health personnel often leads to preventable and premature deaths. Our health care programs confront those challenges through prevention and treatment by our experienced clinical team and throughout the community by the 250 community health workers who provide daily care in the villages we serve. Our clinical programs are centered on five departments: maternal and infant health, child health, non-communicable diseases, infectious disease, and mental health.

In 2018, we continued to see an increase in patients, further emphasizing the need for the Kigutu Hospital and Women’s Health Pavilion. As the number of patients increases, we are investing significantly in our monitoring and evaluation capacity to improve our interventions and design new programs to address community needs.

60% of women in our catchment area are making 4 OR MORE ANTENATAL VISITS compared to the national average of 49%, often indicating a healthier pregnancy.

“I make this journey because at the Village Health Works clinic no one shouts at you, they don’t bump into you or shove you, and they treat you like a human. Your campus is beyond my expectations, people are happy and receiving treatment for their conditions quickly and with respect. When the hospital is finished it will bring me joy and comfort. I know that I will be taken care of for this child and every child I have.”

—Alice, who walked two and a half hours uphill while three months pregnant to receive care at the Village Health Works clinic.
Kigutu Hospital and Women’s Health Pavilion

After slightly over a decade of work, we have made substantial progress on our ambitious goal to provide access to dignified health care to those who live in our catchment area and the surrounding region. Despite these successes, we currently lack the surgical capacity to adequately care for patients requiring emergency surgery, in particular women facing complications during delivery. In the case of a difficult delivery or a life-threatening accident, the only options are a 45-minute ride to a hospital often lacking essential services, such as electricity and water, where a surgeon is likely not present, or a three-hour journey over extremely rough terrain to the capital city. In these conditions, patients we are unable to help frequently do not survive. We are building the Kigutu Hospital and Women’s Health Pavilion to stop these premature and preventable deaths.

The hospital is a 150-bed, 85,000 square foot teaching hospital and is scheduled to open in 2020. When it opens it will provide inpatient medical and surgical care for 10,000 more patients and be able to safely deliver 2,000 babies every year, immediately saving lives. Our future plans include the introduction of clinical services not readily available in Burundi, such as cancer care, and the development of medical specialties like cardiology and neurology, while maintaining a continued focus on maternal health and strengthened surgical capacity. We will set a new standard for care in Burundi by ensuring that the services we provide are dignified and patient-centered. This will include private delivery rooms, supporting fathers to contribute to the care of mothers and newborns, and social work and mental health services. This higher level of care will dramatically reduce mortality, lead to healthier babies and children, and build stronger family bonds.

We will also use the hospital to train and educate the future of Burundian medicine. Today, post-graduate medical education is not widely available in Burundi, leading to the emigration of too many talented doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers. Our hospital will offer clinical professionals the opportunity to receive hands-on training and gain critical skills in their own country. These activities will evolve into accredited medical education programs to address the lack of physician specialists, midwives, and allied health professionals. Connections between graduates will grow into a network of practitioners working together to improve the health care delivery system in Burundi.

EXPANDING OUR REACH

The hospital will be at the center of an effort to transform Burundian medicine through creating, and then leveraging, clinical partnerships. We will:

- Provide training and education for the next generation of doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals while creating a platform for collaboration with other centers of care.
- Provide ongoing professional skills training for regional healthcare professionals.
- Create local jobs for more than 200 health staff and provide invaluable training, education, and continual professional development for doctors and other healthcare workers.

DR. TAREK MEGUID, AN OBSTETRICIAN, GYNECOLOGIST AND SOCIAL Justice advocate, joined Village Health Works in 2014 as Country Director and Chief Medical Officer. Dr. Meguid brings more than two decades of working in hospitals in Malawi, Namibia, and Zanzibar. He is now applying this experience to prepare the clinical infrastructure and team for the opening of the Kigutu Hospital and Women’s Health Pavilion. He strongly believes that “to be successful we must look beyond health, to the underlying determinants of health. With its holistic approach, VHWW has the potential to deliver high quality healthcare.”

To prepare for the opening of the hospital, Dr. Meguid has been working with local medical centers in Burundi to build clinical partnerships and train Burundian doctors in modern surgical techniques. Dr. Meguid will help us deliver essential care to our community that is patient-centered and based on respect, dignity, and accountability. He says, “what VHWW wants to achieve is dignified health care of the highest possible quality. That is a very high bar. We should first aim to reach that. We absolutely need to think about the bigger potential impact, but first we need to deliver for our community.”

Bottom image: The Kigutu Hospital and Women’s Health Pavilion is scheduled to be completed in 2020.
“Being able to serve a cause that matters beyond oneself is a privilege, and an honor. It surely has been one I am most proud of.”

-Dericklass Nzigonkiza, Co-Founder and CEO
Education

In a country with some of the lowest education levels in the world, we have created a model of success in Kigutu. Working in partnership with the government school, we have improved learning and health outcomes for over 700 young people through a wide range of programs that include health care screenings and a feeding program, ongoing professional development for educators and regular parent engagement. Together with the community, we work hard to continually upgrade the education infrastructure. We also supplement classroom learning with a vibrant preschool, the Girls’ Empowerment Program, the English Access Program for high school students from across the region, and more. Planning is underway for a secondary boarding school and teacher training institute that will expand our footprint to students and teachers from across Burundi.

In 2018, Village Health Works and the Kigutu community came together to build a new school. With their own hands, community members cleared and leveled the land, made bricks and even constructed the furniture. In just three months the new school building went from being a dream to becoming a reality. In September of 2018 the school doors opened with 12 new classrooms, which allows for reduced class sizes.

“With the new school, we are happy because there has been a significant improvement in terms of infrastructure, increased number of classrooms, and improved hygiene.”

—Aquiline Nyanzima, School Director

Over 100 hours of Teacher Training provided to 45 pre-school, primary, and secondary teachers

8% Dropout Rate versus 47% at the national level

1.7% acute malnutrition rate for children in VHW Feeding Program, versus nearly 5% at provincial level

94% passing rate for 9th grade national exam in 2018, up from 49% in 2016.
Kigutu International Academy

Alongside our state-of-the-art hospital, VHW is launching the Kigutu International Academy (KIA), a grade 9-12 boarding school that will produce a new generation of problem-solvers, change-makers and entrepreneurial leaders for Burundi.

KIA will provide an outstanding secondary school education for youth from across Burundi. KIA will recruit a diverse cross-section of boys and girls with strong academic performance and a track record of leadership in their communities, including young people from Kigutu.

Using innovative curriculum and world-class instruction, KIA students will gain preparation in core academic subjects as well as develop vital 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, entrepreneurship and leadership. KIA plans to welcome its inaugural class of 50 students in September 2020.

Architectural plans are in place for KIA’s initial building—the Knowledge Commons—an innovative learning environment that will house science labs, a maker-space and flexible spaces for classes, group work and school-wide gatherings.

KIA will extend its impact through the Teacher Leadership Institute (TLI). The TLI will offer a range of short courses for teachers and school leaders in Burundi and beyond using KIA as a lab school where educators can observe and practice innovative teaching techniques. The TLI will also draw upon the local Kigutu school as an important model of improved teaching and learning.

**WORLD CLASS INSTRUCTION**
- Active teaching with students at the center of learning
- Technology tools to individualize learning
- Interdisciplinary and experiential learning

**PATHWAYS TO UNIVERSITY**
- English as the primary language of instruction
- Small classes taught by experienced international educators
- Solid grounding in traditional subjects

**WE WARMLY WELCOME CLARE KORIR AS EDUCATION PROGRAM MANAGER**
Clare hails from Kenya and brings invaluable experience, having graduated from Barnard College and taught at African Leadership Academy and African Leadership University. Clare joins Liz Gips, the Executive Director of KIA, in bringing the Kigutu International Academy to life. Clare believes young people in Burundi are eager to make a difference in their communities, but lack the tangible skills needed to reach their full potential. She explains, “KIA will be a great place to gain practical experience as an entrepreneur. We will have a large school farm that will both provide much of the school’s food and give students opportunities to start small agri-businesses.” Liz adds that VHW will provide unique opportunities for hands-on learning: “Imagine KIA students learning physics at the VHW hydropower plant or partnering with VHW’s Monitoring and Evaluation team to learn how to interpret data...the possibilities for experiential learning are endless.” The hallmark of KIA will be innovation, with instruction in English, a strong emphasis on science and math and pathways to university.
Community Engagement

Village Health Works was founded with the aim of facilitating trust and empathy among the people in our catchment area and beyond. Through agricultural cooperatives, community volunteer days, activities run by our Community Health Workers, and the learning done inside and outside the classroom, we seek to heal divisions and promote peace. Over the last decade, we have watched interconnection and civic engagement grow among community members, from our local leadership to the children of Kigutu.

In 2018, our community worked together to improve water and sanitation in their homes and villages, create running clubs and participate in the first Kigutu road race, and volunteer time maintaining our campus and the roads leading up to it. Through our community’s shared commitment to our mission we have expanded our reach, improved infrastructure, and promoted reconciliation and peace.

Emile Kwizera recently became the director of the Community Engagement Program after serving in the department since 2016. Emile is a poet and musician and believes strongly in keeping the traditions of Burundian culture alive. He is committed to helping the people we serve improve their living standards but believes that to be successful they need to have a solid understanding and grounding in their own culture. He said, “When our culture is weak, we move where the wind blows us. If we do not know where we are from, we cannot know where we are going.” Emile is committed to continuing to build the community spirit that is essential to our work in the belief that “Uvue seclage alimwa le ari wwe nekeneke,” which translates to when your friend gets hurt, you feel pain too.

Performances are held regularly, including at our Annual Meeting and Education Forum, Deepening the Community’s Understanding of its heritage and helping spread awareness of VHW’s Mission and Values.
Food Security and Economic Development

MALNUTRITION, POOR HEALTH, AND ECONOMIC DISENFRANCHISEMENT are inherently intertwined. In Burundi, limited access to nutritious food compromises health and makes it challenging to build the foundations of a healthy economy. Village Health Works helps people break out of this vicious cycle by promoting cooperative agriculture and enterprise programs. The products of our co-ops increase food security for our community members while also helping to feed patients in our clinic and students in our school. Community members obtain the skills they need to provide for themselves as individuals, and even launch small businesses. We teach sustainable and productive farming practices, baking, fishing, beekeeping, sewing and more through these co-ops. With their basic needs better met, community members can dedicate time to learning and building a livelihood. Since our founding, we have seen a significant increase in the small enterprises present around our campus, manifesting a rapidly scaling economy.

95% of farmers adopting NEW AGRICULTURAL METHODS
60 acres of land under IMPROVED AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT
47% of the direct beneficiaries of our program are WOMEN

5 distinct types of ECONOMIC COOPERATIVES built to support local economic growth:

9 FARMING COOPS
8 BEEKEEPING COOPS
17 FISHERY COOPS
18 PEOPLE TRAINED AT SEWING COOPS
48 PEOPLE TRAINED AT BAKING COOPS

Village Health Works fosters economic development in our community through cooperative agriculture and trades programs coupled with educational and financial skills training. Gerard Nzigyimana, the leader of the beekeeping collective, has been supported by Village Health Works since 2014 and today he sells 356 kilos of honey at market each year. “These bees allow me to support myself and my family. Education about the proper beekeeping practices helped me build hives properly, make enough money to sustain myself, and, now, even start a business!”
PATRICK GRACE BECAME THE CHAIR OF OUR BOARD IN 2018, BRINGING both nonprofit and business experience to the role. Patrick has been a Board member since 2017 and a generous donor before that. Today, Patrick is the President & CEO of the Grace Institute Foundation, the principal funder of Grace Institute, a tuition-free workforce development program for women in New York City founded in 1897. Recently, Deo and Patrick sat down for a conversation about Village Health Works’ future.

DEO This has been a year of great momentum—and enormous promise.

Since the founding of Village Health Works, I have witnessed how a shared vision can serve to unite former enemies. It was the spirit of collective action when, starting from scratch, our community came together and carried bricks they had made, built roads, and showed newfound care and concern for their neighbors. This vision of collaboration and cooperation is why and how I founded Village Health Works. What stands in Kigutu today is a place of healing and the promise of a brighter future.

PATRICK Indeed. Our mission begins with dignified health care for the individual and yet also spans wide to include a broad definition of health and sustainability that encompasses the overall health of the community and the region. Every day we’re cultivating the social, educational, economic, and agricultural health of Kigutu alongside our health programs that have touched the lives of so many.

With the unfailing support we receive from courageous, generous individual philanthropists and foundation partners, we have been able to take the risks necessary to forge ahead. Our iterative community-building process has yielded the greatest positive impact for the people of Burundi. Anyone who visits Village Health Works can attest to this.

DEO Yes! And the other reason we have been able to carry out our mission is because of our unique identity as a community-driven organization. Many nonprofits are community-focused; however, I think we are different. We have a special kind of codependence—in the best sense of the word—with the people of Kigutu. The underlying impetus for Village Health Works’ success is our community in Burundi; it is they who constructed the groundwork of our organization, with their very hands, and now they directly inform our path through discussion and council. They help us understand firsthand the needs of the region, and we respond.

Our initial success has led to an ever-growing level of community involvement, demonstrating that the best way to achieve scalability is to harness community and foster a sense of shared ownership. As a result of this relationship, we have consistently been able to deliver on goals that many believed to be risky, even unattainable.

PATRICK Deo, you remind me of Robert F. Kennedy’s mantra when he famously paraphrased George Bernard Shaw and said “Some men see things as they are and say, why? I dream things that never were and say why not.”

DEO That’s very generous of you, Patrick. I have to say this past year we have made substantial progress on the funding and construction of our secondary school, the Kigutu International Academy, and—I’m proud to announce—the Kigutu Hospital and Women’s Health Pavilion will be opening in 2021.

I want to extend my gratitude to every person who have their hands in these transformational projects. All of this has been done while we have bolstered growth in our Community Health Workers program, agricultural co-ops, clinical capacity, and many other areas of our operation.

PATRICK Absolutely. The progress we make in Burundi is only possible because of the unwavering support of so many tremendously gracious members of our network of donors and friends. Without them, none of this would be possible. They constitute the foundation of our vibrant and driven community. Our passionate supporters have brought dignified and empathetic care to the most remote and in-need population in the world. Without them, we would not be able to deliver services anywhere near the magnitude we have been able to establish in the region.

DEO Maybe more importantly, our greatest impact will be the empowerment of the people of Burundi within our catchment area and beyond as a sustainable and scalable future for Village Health Works will always be dependent on the strength of our community in Kigutu. And, I can assure you that the resilience and commitment of the Burundian people is unparalleled.

“Our iterative community-building process has yielded the greatest positive impact for the people of Burundi. Anyone who visits Village Health Works can attest to this.”

PATRICK GRACE
Financial Summary

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

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In May 2018, Guillaume Fournelle, Farah Fournelle, Golden Kasangad, and Nicolas Sagna of the Phare Foundation visited Village Health Works to see our work first hand. They spent several days touring our campus and visiting the construction site for the hospital. After the visit, the Phare Foundation made a generous donation of $3 million to help us complete the construction and support the first four years of operations. In addition, we agreed to develop a partnership that will build a network of similar organizations in Eastern Africa and facilitate learning exchanges. We are beyond grateful for the support of the Phare Foundation.

We make every effort to assemble this list accurately. If we made an error with your name or listing, please contact us at info@villagehealthworks.org. All gifts under $1,000 will be listed on the VHW website. Thank you.
In December, board members Sharon and Bill Jacob hosted the 5th annual holiday fundraiser at The Loeb Boathouse in New York’s Central Park. The event, which was attended by 200 friends of Village Health Works, including many of our board members, featured remarks by Deo, Sharon, Ali Wentworth, and Liz Berry Gips. The sunny winter day made for a beautiful view of the park and attendees were able to purchase artisanal gifts made by the sewing collective in Kigutu. The event helped to support the salaries of our Kigutu staff.
Village Health Works is a 501(c)(3) organization based in Burundi and New York. All donations are tax-deductible.*

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Village Health Works would like to thank William Bullard for his photographic contributions to this publication

Designed by Danielle Alling, Kali Creative