I feel so lucky to teach such kind, thoughtful and driven young men and women."

"Teaching at KIA has been an incredible experience so far and one that is challenging me in the best ways. I’ve worked in many different countries but this is a really unique opportunity. I feel so lucky to teach such kind, thoughtful, and driven young men and women. They are very intelligent but more than that they are very enthusiastic and recognize the incredible opportunity before them. It’s been encouraging to see them learn in a different context than what they are used to. For the first time, they are being considered as individuals; we ask for their opinions. The schools that they have come from are quite different and they are delighted to be pushed to think creatively and critically. KIA really feels like a family, especially since we are all living in the same space. The students know we are always available which creates a wonderful sense of solidarity. It’s been beautiful to see the students work to master their English. Those that are more fluent have been assisting the others with their lessons and encouraging them to practice. I was so excited to see that one of the students who has been struggling with her English has decided to be a lead speaker at our next assembly. This type of courage and willingness to be uncomfortable is truly what makes KIA so spectacular."
DEAR FRIENDS,

As I write this letter, the sights and experiences from my recent trip to Kigutu are still fresh in my mind, and I am energized by the incredible progress I saw there.

Behind each of the numbers in this impact report are the dedicated efforts of our colleagues in Burundi. Despite the many challenges we, and many others, have faced during these strange times, we have many more successes than we can share in this short summary.

One inescapable difficulty is the sad fact that COVID-19 is making its presence felt in Burundi. I heard many stories of patients arriving at ill-equipped hospitals, suffering from this awful virus and not receiving the care they need. These circumstances highlight the importance of completing the Kigutu Hospital and Women’s Health Pavilion (WHP), which will finally allow us to provide a full continuum of care—from c-sections to treatment of COVID-19. Of course, the ongoing mission of providing dignified healthcare to patients has not stopped. I was inspired by the incredible work of our nurses, doctors, lab technicians and others at our clinic—and moved by the tireless efforts of our Community Health Workers (CHWs), such as Mariam (who you can read about on page 3). Together, this continuum of care will support a stronger health system for Burundi.

The school children were on vacation during my visit, but I heard so much about the progress at KIA. As you read on the cover page in the interview with Matt du Aime, KIA’s head teacher, the students of KIA are thriving. KIA students are connecting with supporters from far away through conversations and presentations by guest speakers on Zoom, and student-led initiatives such as sports teams and clubs dedicated to hiking, robotics, and the newspaper are creating a strong and vibrant community. The students are conducting hands-on community-based research as well, such as analyzing the soil on campus to help identify the types of crops that VHW could grow to meet the dietary needs of patients at the clinic. I remain impressed with the progress being made in our other education initiatives, both at the preschool and in the programming of the ECOFO. These schools continue to be a place of growth and learning for so many of the children living throughout our catchment area. In addition, our newly expanded feeding program now features a new cafeteria and is better able to ensure our students are not only well read, but also well fed.

With the understanding that outdoor settings pose less of a risk for COVID-19, we have continued our off-campus activities—you can read about one of VHW’s successful Food Security and Economic Development programs on page 5. These activities are not always easy at this time of year, however, and torrential rain and overflowing rivers have caused damage to many community farms. We have continued to plant thousands of trees on the steep slopes surrounding our campus to help stop soil erosion and other long term environmental impacts. At the same time, our on-site gardens, fish ponds and animal husbandry seem to be more impressive every time I visit! We have begun rethinking the possibilities of what we grow on campus and are evaluating alternatives to increase yields and use what we produce locally more effectively.

It always feels incredibly rewarding to return and see up close what has been accomplished, as well as meet the team to discuss successes and challenges alike. As we celebrate our successes, I know well that they would not have been possible without our many friends and supporters like you. Working together, I also know that we will be able to overcome the challenges now before us. I hope one day you can see with your own eyes what we have been able to do together in Kigutu—and the plans that are unfolding for everything that is yet to be done.

Turi kumwe—we are together,

Deogratias Niyizonkiza
Founder and CEO
Every day we reduce suffering, promote dignity, and advance hope through preventative and treatment strategies. While the hospital is not yet open, hospital leadership is using this time to train staff and build capacity. We recently started using electronic medical record systems which will improve our efficiency and expand our abilities to provide dignified and compassionate care.

11,287 patient consultations

16,805 home visits by Community Health Workers

85% of pregnant mothers screened for HIV, hep B, & syphilis in their first antenatal care appointment

100% malnourished children on treatment with 91% success rate

100% HIV patients on ARV treatment with 100% viral load supression

Everyone at the Kigutu Clinic treated me with kindness and compassion. After the birth of my child, they covered my baby with a warm blanket, fed me and ensured I was fully taken care of. I received all of the attention a new mum and her baby may need. I will not go anywhere else for the next antenatal care or delivery. When my neighbors ask for advice on seeking care for their own deliveries, I tell them to go to Kigutu because I’ve experienced this incredible care firsthand.”

Mariam Horizana

Meet Solange Musaniwabo

Mariam Horizana is a Community Health Worker who lives in the Mutambara peace village, where people repatriated from Tanzania and some indigent residents were given shelter. Mariam has worked for the Community Health Workers program from its beginning. She has just spent over 11 years being a Community Health Worker with Village Health Works. She has three children and all of them are well thanks to the knowledge she has gained from her profession. “It is for this reason that I am dedicated to teaching others in my community so that all of us can have better health for the development of our country. Very early one morning, I saw a phone call, and I heard the voice of my neighbor Solange Musaniwabo, who is pregnant telling me that she is not feeling good. I rushed to her house to see if she had any other discomfort and assess her state. Once I evaluated her and determined how her labor was progressing, we headed to the clinic in Kigutu where she had received prenatal care.”
The Kigutu International Academy officially opened in October 2020. Since then, the 32 students in the inaugural class have grown personally and academically. The students recently attended a Special Guests talk with entrepreneur Andrew Heinrich, the founder of Project Rousseau. When he asked the class what changes they would like to see in Burundi, they responded:

"I wish people in Burundi could normalize conversations around mental health. In Burundi, there is a stigma associated with anything mental health-related, which means that people do not get the help they need when they’re struggling with mental health problems. I would like to get a degree in psychology and do therapeutic counseling."
- Nathalie

"Right now there is a lot of pollution that affects especially the waters of Lake Tanganyika. I would like to make people aware of this problem, encourage and teach them techniques that are not harmful to the environment (like recycling) to protect Lake Tanganyika."
- Christaella

"I would like Burundi to be one of the leading countries in the healthcare field. At the moment, Burundians suffering from chronic diseases have to be evacuated to other countries because Burundi does not have proper infrastructures or qualified doctors. I would like to make Burundi one of the best countries in the world when it comes to healthcare services."
- Guy Mike

We are particularly excited by the creativity, passion, and ingenuity that Nathalie, Christaella and Guy Mike are displaying here and we look forward to cultivating these ideas further in our Entrepreneurial Leadership class, a KIA Signature Course that gives students the skills they need to become successful entrepreneurs and leaders in their communities.
Food Security & Economic Development

WE GIVE COMMUNITY MEMBERS THE SKILLS and tools to start small businesses. Cooperatives and on-campus agriculture generate income as well as provide nutritious food to patients, students, and communities.

4,477 kg fresh produce farmed on campus
1,215.5 liters milk produced on campus
709 inpatients served nutritious meals
$3,012 USD total monetary value of all production on VHW agricultural site

Dukoribikorwa is a fish farming coop, where 18 members (10 female and 8 males) came together and built 3 fish ponds. Each fish pond can provide over 120kg of catfish. 20% of the harvest is shared between members for household consumption and 80% is sold. The income generated can then be used for daily expenses.

The association has grown in numbers thanks to VHW technical support in terms of fish food supply and larvals for the ponds. The food security program has played a vital role in the growth of these community-led fish farms that serve as production centers as well as demonstration models for the communities trying to solve problems related to malnutrition.

Despite the limitations imposed by COVID-19, Village Health Works has still been able to help community members continue their efforts to provide for themselves and their families. Adopting appropriate safety protocols has allowed certain off-campus activities to continue. These income-generating endeavors provide essential help to the most vulnerable populations.
Village Health Works Impact Report  •  Quarter 1, 2021  •  Page 6

Community Engagement

VHW WAS FOUNDED WITH THE AIM OF facilitating trust and empathy among the people in our catchment area and beyond. Through our community’s shared commitment to our mission we have expanded our reach, improved infrastructure, and promoted reconciliation and peace.

Despite challenges caused by COVID-19, the Village Health Work community has continued to show up and show their support in whatever capacity they can. In the past few months, this has meant cleaning up the campus and renovating the roads that lead to the campus.

“We always want to show our gratitude in everything this clinic does for us. Before Village Health Works, everyone would have to find the money to care for their family. It was a situation where every member of the community should contribute if necessary so that just one family member could receive care. I’m not even talking about a woman who is going to give birth by cesarean section. I’m talking about treating a simple disease like malaria. I am always excited to show my appreciation through participating in this community work,” said Chadrack Habonimana.

Esther shared, “I am a Community Health Worker. I am always excited to participate in any Village Health Works activity. When an opportunity to engage presents itself, community members don’t need to be asked to help; they volunteer their time enthusiastically because they recognize all of the incredible help that this organization has provided and continues to provide for our community.”

Community members mobilized to provide 12,303 hours of community service

Children participated in cultural and sports activities 37,368 times, supporting community cohesion, health and wellbeing, and the continuation of Burundian traditions

3,150 community members trained in social & cultural issues
Looking Ahead

WHP Update

Despite incredible progress in many areas of hospital construction, the increasing impact of COVID-19 on the African continent has started to complicate ongoing work to finish the hospital. Procurement times for essential materials can now at times be double what they were before, and the movement of people continues to be hampered by quarantine requirements. Our construction team continues to push as hard as they can in these altered circumstances, but after careful evaluation we have come to the conclusion that the most responsible use of resources is to recognize that our previous timetable is no longer feasible in this new environment. While we are expecting completion of the hospital in March/April of 2022, we are now planning to open the entire hospital—all 150 beds, all four operating theaters—at that time.

Joining CHIC

The Community Health Workers (CHW) program continues to play a crucial role in improving community health within our catchment area. In the last three months, CHWs visited 16,805 households, providing general health and malnutrition screenings. In addition, VHW has continued to use Medic Mobile, an app for updating CHWs, on a regular basis. During this pandemic, VHW has included COVID-19 remote learning on Medic Mobile to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. Furthermore, since January 2021, VHW has joined forces with many other organizations working with CHWs in a coalition called Community Health Impact Coalition (CHIC). CHIC will help VHW not only improve our Community Health Workers program, but also provide access to evidence-based research, which will help us make decisions based on better knowledge and help improve community health care.

Our Strategic Plan

As the world continues to confront the many consequences of COVID-19, we are recommitting to the ambitious goals we have set at Village Health Works. We would like to share these goals for the next five years, as well as the plans we have developed to bring them to reality in Village Health Works’ Strategic Plan: An Envisioned Future: 2021-2025. Over the next five years, we intend to dramatically expand our reach and our capacity to make change while developing a new generation of leaders who will continue to drive our vision forward. We are starting on this pathway to possibility hand in hand with all of our supporters—both the community members in Kigutu who have been with us from the beginning and our friends living far away from Burundi. Together, we have overcome many expected and unexpected difficulties, and the lessons of those experiences have prepared us to confront even greater challenges. As we grow, we are looking forward to sharing that hard-won understanding by serving as a model for others who also wish to make change.

READ OUR STRATEGIC PLAN >

We’re hiring!

If you’re interested in joining an innovative and creative team dedicated to helping others, please consider applying to one of our open positions. If you know someone who would be interested in these opportunities, please pass them along.

• Director of Operations, Burundi
• Senior Biomedical Engineer, Burundi
• EMR Specialist, Burundi
• Senior Staff Anesthesiologist / Chief of Anesthesia, Burundi
• Senior Staff Internist / Chief of Medicine, Burundi
• Senior Staff Pediatrician / Chief of Pediatrics, Burundi
• Senior Staff Physician / Chief of Outpatient and Community Health Services, Burundi
• Volunteer Supply Chain Analyst, New York City, USA
• Volunteer Clinical Operations Officer, Burundi
• Warehouse Manager, Burundi

SEE CURRENT OPENINGS >
IN MEMORIAM

We are deeply saddened to mark the passing of two colleagues this quarter. Jean Manirakiza (right) served as a Vehicle Driver for Village Health Works from the day he joined in June 2014, and passed away following a road accident on March 4, 2021. Jean-Berchmans Masabo (left) had been an integral part of Village Health Works’ Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) efforts since 2017, and had recently become the head of our M&E team when he passed away in an accident at home on March 7, 2021. We honor their lives, their commitment, and their dedication. They will be deeply missed.