We are so grateful to the U.S. Embassy and Burundian government for working hand in hand with us to fight Covid-19 and protect our staff and community members.

– Deogratias Niyizonkiza, Founder and CEO of Village Health Works
DEAR FRIENDS,

Looking back at the many events of Quarter 3 at Village Health Works, I am struck by the way that even our remote location of Kigutu is being shaped by the large-scale interconnections that are redefining our changing world.

It was at the end of Quarter 3 when Covid-19 finally arrived at our campus, and our colleagues in Kigutu were facing the same questions and considerations as all too many other healthcare providers throughout the globe. I invite you to read more about our response, and some reflections from our Medical Director, on page 3.

At the same time, the global issues of climate change that were highlighted in the recent COP26 meeting in Glasgow, and which I addressed at a recent panel organized by the Gates Foundation, were very much present in Kigutu. We had some successes: I invite you to read how we have eliminated bush fires in our area by working directly with our community (page 6), and how we are pioneering simple but effective agricultural techniques that will make our community more resilient to drought (page 5). Nevertheless, changes in the climate are already affecting Burundi by bringing flooding and a slow increase in the water levels of Lake Tanganyika. To safeguard people around the world just like those in the community we serve, we must work together to address climate change in a way that is equitable and leaves a liveable world to our children.

Indeed, many of the stories that we are pleased to share in this report feature the next generation moving forward to create the world they wish to live in. I am incredibly impressed by the young people of our community, including an exceptional young man from Kigutu who is now studying at KIA, and the girls in the Mutima program who are slowly making the culture they live in more equal (both page 4). As a Burundian with immense pride in our unique and rich cultural heritage, I am extraordinarily proud of the young people from our community who not only represented the entire province of Bururi in the recent national competition of music, singing and dance—but won first place (page 6)!

I do not believe it is a contradiction to say that we are all together on this shared planet, experiencing the common impacts of global pandemics and climate change, while very much retaining our own hopes, dreams, beliefs, and understandings. We are all unique—and we are all together.

Turi kumwe—we are together.

Deogratias Niyizonkiza
Founder and CEO
NEARLY TWO YEARS AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC began to make its presence felt throughout the world, the first cases finally appeared on the VHW campus in late September. We quickly organized a Covid-19 Response Committee that allowed senior leadership to meet daily to coordinate a response. We worked quickly to strengthen policies and expand facilities for isolation and quarantine, and to the extent possible facilitated staff members quarantining at home. Through extensive testing efforts that included every VHW staff member, every KIA student, and every construction laborer we were able to identify more than 20 cases over the following weeks. Among the staff and KIA students, most cases seemed to have been transmitted off campus when staff traveled home; we were only able to identify two cases of possible transmission on campus. Fortunately, we saw a steady stream of cases instead of the overwhelming explosion we had initially feared, and cases proved to be mostly mild—only in one case was hospitalization required, and we are happy to report the staff member in question has since made a full recovery. Thanks to the generosity of our friends and supporters, we had no concerns about having enough PPE: even at higher rates of usage, we had enough surgical masks, latex gloves, and hand sanitizer to last well over a year. We are proud of how staff were able to take on new roles in addition to ongoing responsibilities, and of the tireless dedication and resolve of the medical staff in particular. By the end of October, ongoing testing no longer identified any positive cases—and with mass vaccination efforts finally beginning in Burundi, we are hopeful that this will continue to be the case moving forward.

OUR MEDICAL DIRECTOR SHARED HIS REFLECTIONS ON THE CRISIS:

"The recent experiences in facing Covid-19 on campus tested our capabilities and ability to react to a crisis effectively. No matter how much you plan, there are always surprises and you need to adapt to the circumstances as they are - not as you thought they would be. With actual experience in implementing our Covid-19 policies, we are all much more comfortable with them. Now everybody knows what to do when somebody tests positive and can act almost without thinking. We also have a better idea of what to do when a patient is recovering. The crisis also led to improved coordination with our local district hospital and the government, through which we received a large number of rapid tests to help our response. Nevertheless, I am very aware that had we had more cases, and more severe cases, it would have been very difficult to treat them with the limited resources we have available. Hopefully, by the time the next crisis arrives we will have the resources and capabilities of the hospital to draw upon, and we will be even more prepared."

10,174 patient consultations
23,113 home visits by Community Health Workers
85% of pregnant mothers screened for HIV, Hep B & syphilis in their first antenatal care appointment
82% malnourished children successfully cured
100% HIV patients on ARV treatment with 94% viral load suppression
QUARTER 3 CORRESPONDED WITH THE SUMMER BREAK in Burundi, with students finishing their final exams at the end of June and returning at the end of September. We are extremely proud of the achievements of our students in the 2020-2021 school year, and in particular the 98% completion rate they achieved. Athanase Niyongabo, our Assistant Education Program Manager & Access Program Coordinator, highlights another achievement for the school year: “Two years ago, we began working with the girls in our schools on life skills, building self esteem, and improving reproductive knowledge through the Mutima girls’ empowerment program. As we expanded Mutima to schools outside of Kigutu, we have continued to see impressive results at the end of the school year. For example, in Karagara, all Grade 9 girls participating in Mutima successfully passed the Grade 9 National Exam, which was not the case before. Another one of the many goals for Mutima has been reducing or eliminating pregnancies among the students at our schools. I am pleased to say that, for the first time, we did not have a single girl drop out due to pregnancy in all five schools we work with. Additionally, every single one of the girls who participated in Mutima were able to demonstrate adequate sexual and reproductive knowledge. Culture in Burundi changes slowly, but I am so proud of these girls who are leading the way towards greater gender equality in our communities!”

FROM KIGUTU TO ECOFO TO KIA

Among the second class of KIA students admitted in September was an accomplished student from Kigutu itself, who wanted to share his story:

“My name is Philbert Kwizera, and I was born and raised on one of Kigutu’s many hills. I never met my father, who died when I was still a child, and my mother raised me and my three brothers by herself. It was very hard losing our father, but my mother ensured that we all went to school. It wasn’t easy, and we had to work extremely hard to help my mother after we finished a full day of school. Eventually all of my brothers had to stop going to school in order to work and support the family, but my mother advised me to continue my studies. It was then that Village Health Works came to help. Once VHW was in charge of the ECOFO school they provided us an education with no required school fees, and gave us other support such as providing us with medicines and food at the school. VHW provided us with good conditions for studying, and I am sure that is why I am here now. I never dreamed about being at an international school like KIA. I thank my mother for her advice because even though she is not educated, she prayed to God on my behalf. VHW admitted me to KIA. I was very lucky, and will be forever grateful. I wish to encourage you to continue supporting children from families who are suffering from poverty, hunger, family separation and the loss of a parent. With the right support, I know other students can also succeed.”

QUARTER 3 CORRESPONDED WITH THE SUMMER BREAK

- 5,054 nutritious meals given to students
- 5% Global Acute Malnutrition Rate in initial screening after returning to school
- 100% girls with adequate sexual and reproductive health knowledge
- 499 boys and girls engaged in Mutima an adolescent health program
- 136 Secondary School (Grade 7-12) students
- 440 EcoFo (Grade 1-6) children
- 153 children enrolled in VHW’s on-site preschool
- 98% of students scored the minimum passing score (70%) under the ACCESS program
- 32 students completed their first year as KIA’s inaugural class
QUARTER 3 WAS MOSTLY DURING THE DRY SEASON IN Kigutu, during which it is only possible to grow crops with irrigation. As a result our overall activities in agriculture and food security were limited during this time. Nevertheless, the dry season allowed us to demonstrate the efficacy of a new system of growing crops—in this case, onions—by using recycled bags. This technique requires much less water, and we were able to produce food on land that would otherwise remain unused. Having demonstrated the success of this technique, we are hoping to be able to spread it to farmers in our community.

7,952 kg
fresh produce farmed on campus

1,512 liters
milk produced on campus

733
inpatients served nutritious meals

$7,985 USD
total monetary value of all production on VHW agricultural site

VHW’s Model Farmers are provided with improved farming skills which are applied in their own plots of land, and which then serve as an example for their neighbors. In July, VHW came to an agreement with a group of Model Farmers for them to start supplying VHW with produce such as cabbage, onions, avocados, eggs, garlic, and tomatoes, etc. Finding that demand was greater than they were able to supply themselves, the Model Farmers then began coordinating with neighbors, who also began to increase production. Model Farmers are responsible for bringing the products to VHW, simplifying coordination. VHW is now simultaneously reducing its costs for feeding staff and patients while increasing income generated at the household level which can be used for medicines, sending children to school, ensuring a balanced diet, or investing in the future through any number of ways.

Two model farmers shared their experiences.

One of the original Model Farmers, Adolphe Ndarurinze, mentioned, “I am a farmer, but I never would have known how to produce such a huge yield before. Now, I am one of those who is able to feed the people at Village Health Works. I contribute to the well-being of patients, and it gives me satisfaction to have been able to support the change that VHW provides to all of us.”

Benitha Nahimana, one of the Model Farmers in Kigutu, shared, “I started by renting a large piece of land to plant fruit trees. After the 2017-2018 training, we received cuttings of avocados, mangoes, Japanese plum, and lemon trees, which I planted in this rented land. Now these different fruits have helped me buy my own land, and now I am able to participate in the development of VHW by supplying avocados to the patients.”
Community Engagement

IN QUARTER 3 OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEAM continued their work connecting with the members of our community where they live as well as celebrating traditional Burundian music, dance and culture. In previous years the dry season has seen numerous bush fires in the hills surrounding our community as community members clear land for grazing. By organizing football and volleyball tournaments in eight collines where bushfires were prevalent, we were able to engage 176 youth participants as well as approximately 8,000 spectators with facts about the long term consequences of bushfires, which include desertification and erosion of the land they depend on for their livelihoods. We also provided Imbonezas, respected community leaders, with information about bushfires and their long-term impacts. As a result, for the first time in many years, there was not a single large bush fire that we could identify in our community."

– Emile Kwizera, Community Engagement Program Manager

169 hours of community service provided

children participated in cultural and sports activities 33,038 times
supporting community cohesion, health and wellbeing, and the continuation of Burundian traditions

4,828 community members trained in social & cultural issues

73 Twiyugurure graduates

84 Imbonezas (community leaders) were trained in best practices for water treatment
to help ensure all community members are using clean and safe water

Our community engagement team performed at a national competition where they took home first place!

Our Community Engagement team has been working for years in maintaining the culture and traditions of Burundi alive through our groups that include traditional drumming, dancing, musician instruments, and singing. The talent and skill of our young people were demonstrated this year when the VHW team was selected to represent the province of Bururi in the National Festival of Arts and Culture. It was a great opportunity for our arts and culture team to highlight their skills, and the skills of the next generation. In particular, the jury commented on the ability of an 11-year old girl playing the inanga, a traditional stringed instrument, given that these traditional instruments are not often practiced by the youth—and that this particular instrument is traditionally played by boys and men. We are proud to say that our team came in first place out of all 18 provinces in Burundi, winning a cow for our home province of Bururi—and congratulations from none other than the President of Burundi himself.
Join us on December 6th for our

8th Annual Virtual Luncheon

MONDAY, DECEMBER 6 AT 12PM EST (9AM PST)

Featuring a discussion between Dr. Teresa F. Gipson, MD, MPH, Director of Clinical Quality and Training, and Deogratias Niyizonkiza, Founder and CEO of Village Health Works.

All registrants who sign up and donate $300 or more will receive:
- an exclusive Zoom link to the program
- a boxed lunch delivered to your door on the morning of December 6 (a custom breakfast for our West Coast guests)
- a few surprises from the people of Burundi!

All donations to this event will support Village Health Works’ efforts to complete the Kigutu Hospital and Women’s Health Pavilion, which will open in June of 2022. In a country where one in 33 women die in pregnancy or childbirth, the need for this hospital is urgent.

Village Health Works is a 501(c)(3) organization based in Burundi and New York. All donations are tax deductible.*

BURUNDI
PO Box BP 1604
Bujumbura, Burundi

USA
45 West 36th Street, 8th Floor
New York, New York 10018
917-546-9219

*Tax ID # 45-0545435

FOLLOW OUR WORK

Facebook: facebook.com/villagehealthworks
Instagram: @villagehealthworks
Twitter: @VHW

Copyright © 2021, Village Health Works