Deogratias Niyizonkiza, VHW Founder and CEO with his dear friend and mentor Dr. Paul Farmer (1959-2022). He was one of VHW's founding board members and was instrumental in its creation.
Dear Friends,

I hope this letter finds you and all of your loved ones safe and healthy. It is such a privilege to share with you the enclosed 2022 Q1 Impact Report.

I have just recently returned from a trip to Kigutu and have once again been inspired and energized by the activities and planning that continue. I was extremely impressed by the new colleagues who have joined our team, and the many ideas they shared with me as we continue to plan for wrapping up the long-awaited Kigutu Hospital and Women's Health Pavilion (WHP).

While in Kigutu I could not help but reflect on both past accomplishments and future plans in the light of the tragic passing of my dear friend Dr. Paul Farmer just last February. The idea that became Village Health Works grew as Paul and I worked together in Rwanda and I explained that much of what we were doing was just as necessary — if not more so — in Burundi. Paul will always be a fundamental part of the story of Village Health Works. We continue to work toward our shared dream of a healthier and more equitable world and I am reminded constantly of the path we traveled together — as well as the path that we must now find by ourselves.

I appreciate you being on this journey with us. It’s one of determination and expansion. And it needs your continued support. We are at the fulcrum of two great, ambitious projects based on an urgent vision to see every mother survive childbirth, every child able to reach their potential, and every family able to thrive.

And on this path you will meet our colleague Peris Momanyi, VHW’s new Chief Nursing Officer, whose leadership will be essential as we work to transition from a local clinic to a district-level hospital with surgical capacity — you can read about Peris and her accomplishments on page 3. It will mean working together in new ways, such as the collaboration between initiatives demonstrated by connecting KIA students with VHW’s mental health program (page 4), and working within our community to implement the adequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices that are no less critical to health than treatments at our clinic (page 5). And it will mean respecting the dignity and worth of each individual and recognizing where there is work to be done, such as our efforts on International Women’s Day, led by Lynette Injette, Chief Officer for Strategy, Programs, and Institutional Partnerships (page 6).

Village Health Works was founded on the belief that together we can overcome the terrible lack of health care, education, and basic safety that exists in Burundi — and replace it with a healthier, more informed, and more prosperous reality. When the history books are written on Burundi in the 21st century, the people of our village of Kigutu and nearby communities — and many of you reading this today — will be seen as catalysts for change and drivers of the country’s transformation. You will have believed in Burundi when it needed you most.

And I believe that social justice and human progress and prosperity all come down to how we value and honor the dignity of one another. This is the cornerstone of Village Health Works. Every program we devise, and every new step we take prioritizes the dignity, worth, and resilience of the Burundian people. This is the essence of Village Health Works — and the foundation of the Kigutu Hospital and the Kigutu Academy.

Stay with us on this journey to a brilliant future. Set your eyes on a revitalized, healthy community. Help us build a nation of fertile opportunity. Dare to hope with us.

Amahoro,

Deogratias Niyizonkiza
CEO and Founder
In Quarter 1, our staff continued to work diligently towards the opening of the Kigutu Hospital and Women’s Health Pavilion. The exterior of the hospital is completely finished and we have made tremendous progress on the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing within the building. The landscaping, access roads, masonry, water drainage systems, and security features that will protect access to and from the hospital are also in place. While our team continues to face supply chain-related challenges, our procurement and construction team have worked tirelessly to finish construction within the next few months.

Meet our new Chief Nursing Officer, Peris Momanyi

To meet the growing needs of our community, we recently hired a new Chief Nursing Officer, Peris Momanyi. Peris is Kenyan-born but has worked in multiple countries across the African continent including South Sudan, Ethiopia, Liberia, and Kenya. From treating Ebola patients in Liberia, developing maternal health programming in Ethiopia, and creating Covid-19 preparedness in Kenya, Peris has worked to provide quality care in some of the most challenging circumstances imaginable. Peris’ leadership will be essential as we work to transition from a local clinic to a district-level hospital with surgical capacity.

| 9,537 patient consultations | 25,159 home visits by Community Health Workers | 85% of malnourished children successfully cured | 86% of pregnant mothers screened for HIV and Hep B in their first antenatal care appointment | 100% of HIV patients on ARV treatment, with 97% viral load suppression |
We are extremely proud of the fantastic work that teachers and students continue to do in pursuit of knowledge and progress. Roshi Matewere, the Academic Dean of Kigutu International Academy (KIA), highlights the continued resilience and ingenuity of the students at our 9-12 boarding school: “It’s so exciting to see our students and teachers continue to explore new opportunities, overcome challenges and find new ways to express themselves. In February, we launched our school therapist program in collaboration with the VHW mental health department. KIA is an incredible place but with so many activities and classes, we want to ensure our students are receiving the mental health support they need to continue working to recognize all that they are capable of.”

Our KIA students have launched the KIA newsletter!

The KIA students are multi-talented and love to use their skills to share their various passions. One of their newest endeavors is creating a monthly newsletter that highlights all of the exciting, challenging, and novel things happening at KIA. The students involved in the newsletter use their new English skills to explore topics like sports, cultural issues, and poetry. They also like to feature interviews with their peers to continue sharing different perspectives. Below is a beautiful story by Alain Irumva, a second-year student. This was one of the creative writing pieces featured in the latest issue of the KIA newsletter.

“When I first arrived on Earth, God gave me a patient woman who contributed to my growth and responsible personality. My mother was born on May 17th, 1976, and is called Rachel Nahayo. She is the person I admire most; she is irreplaceable. She does sweet wonders for me and my siblings like her delicious dishes. I am honored to be her firstborn.”

Read Alain’s full essay in the KIA newsletter →
Nutrition & Food Security

Village Health Works continues to prioritize a holistic approach to the well-being of our community, recognizing the interconnectedness of our programs and their power to help break the cycle of intergenerational trauma and to aid in post-conflict recovery. This means that our programming doesn’t just prescribe patients medicine but works to ensure families are growing nutritious foods and eating a balanced diet that promotes a healthy life. VHW grows a myriad of different produce on-site and helps farmers with their own subsistence agriculture. VHW staff work to demonstrate to community members that all the food grown on campus can be grown on their land as well. Two times a week, patients receive training sessions. From January to March, 8532.75 kilograms of vegetables and grains, and 370.5 liters of milk were distributed to patients, saving VHW an amount of around $5,800. The nutrition and food security teamwork ensures that patients leave the hospital with the knowledge that will help them succeed in maintaining a healthy and balanced diet at home which will help prevent future illness and injury.

Meet Tharcisse Ngaruko, WASH and IPC Program Officer

March 22nd was World Water Day — a day dedicated to celebrating water and raising awareness of the 2.2 billion people living without access to safe water. Our work is dependent on access to clean water. We cannot treat patients or educate children without this vital resource. Tharcisse Ngaruko (pictured top) is the WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene) and IPC (Infection Prevention and Control) Program Officer. He coordinates with VHW staff and local community members to help sensitize them on the importance of WASH. He also makes frequent visits to our water treatment sites to monitor and evaluate the quality of the water being provided to the community.

On World Water Day, Tharcisse and his colleagues gathered over 300 community members to share tips and helpful information regarding water protection and water management to promote general health and wellness within families and communities. He also met with ECOFO students, who then helped clean the catch basins, surrounding gutters, and grass around the water tap. It was an opportunity to help them take ownership of water protection at school and at home. It was also an opportunity to sensitize teachers and encourage them to take the lead in good water management and to guide students in water protection activities.

10,426 kilograms of fresh produce farmed on campus
1,288 liters of milk produced on campus
705 inpatients served nutritious meals

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International Women’s Day

March 8th was International Women’s Day (IWD) — an opportunity to recognize and admire women’s achievements while recognizing the challenges that still prevent women from recognizing their full potential today. The women that we serve in rural Burundi face many gender-related challenges; the lack of resources in our communities disproportionately affects women. Many suffer due to a lack of access to basic healthcare such as antenatal care, family planning, birth control options, and safe childbirth care. Many women in rural Burundi are still pressured into early marriage and motherhood so their opportunities for financial independence are often very limited. This month has been an important opportunity to recommit ourselves to working towards true gender equity within our organization and throughout our programming.

IWD celebrations started with a presentation on the importance of International Women’s Day and its purpose. Staff then went into the clinic and community to visit with female patients and vulnerable women in the community. All of the activities focused on empowering and honoring the women in Kigutu and all they do for their families and communities.
Join Our Team

We are hiring for a number of positions at Village Health Works. Come join our team of dedicated and passionate individuals committed to bringing dignified and comprehensive healthcare to thousands in Burundi.

See Current Openings →

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

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