

# UBUZIMA



April 2023

NEWSLETTER

Vol:



**Health Minister,  
U.S. officials  
explore new  
partnerships in  
global health  
security**

Ministry staff sensitized on remembrance of 1994 Genocide against Tutsi

Health Minister dispels UK writer's claims on risk of malaria variant in Rwanda

Rwanda edges closer to medical hub as Masters, PhD programs in Biotechnology are launched at UR

# Content

- Health Minister, U.S. officials explore new partnerships in global health security** 3
- Ministry staff sensitized on remembrance of 1994 Genocide against Tutsi** 3
- Health Minister dispels UK writer’s claims on risk of malaria variant in Rwanda** 4
- Rwanda edges closer to medical hub as Masters, PhD programs in Biotechnology are launched at UR** 5
- Malaria incidence decreases by 81% in Rwanda** 6
- More HIV/AIDS awareness targeting youth launched** 8
- RBC commemorates 1994 Genocide against Tutsi** 10
- Rwamagana youth commit to fight HIV/AIDS** 11
- Health Ministry to step up vaccination, deworming activities during Maternal and Child Health Week** 12
- Parents urged to look out for red flags in children to fight AIDS** 13

# Editorial

**Dear Reader,**

Welcome to our latest edition of Ubuzima Newsletter.

This month’s issue of the Ubuzima Newsletter focuses on progress made in rolling back malaria in the country, awareness campaigns to tackle HIV/AIDS, extension of mental health services to health centers near people as well as Maternal and Child Health Week.

Tremendous progress has been made in regards to fighting malaria.

In Rwanda malaria incidence per 1000 decreased from 409 in 2017 to 76 in 2023, a decrease of 81%.

However, the disease continues to pose a threat to life and worry to parents and their children. We therefore urge the public to seek timely treatment for the unfortunate malaria infections as well as tighten the fight to make malaria history through embracing preventive mechanisms.

\*\*\*\*\*

In the fight against infectious diseases, the Rwanda Biomedical Center (RBC) will in May mark the Maternal and Child Health Week during which vaccination campaigns for children will be carried out.

While the national uptake is high with the vaccination rate at 96%, we insist that no child should be left behind.

Parents and other caregivers should mind taking their young children for immunization because vaccinations are important in protecting Rwandan children.

\*\*\*\*\*

On mental health, the Rwanda Biomedical Center has extended mental health services to health centers around the country. However, reports suggest that many people may be reluctant to seek mental health services due to related stigma. RBC advises the public to always seek timely treatment for mental health cases.

# Health Minister, U.S. officials explore new partnerships in global health security



**Health Minister Dr Sabin Nsanzimana met with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Deputy Secretary Andrea Palm.**

The Minister of Health Dr Sabin Nsanzimana conducted a working visit to the United States of America from April 14 to 18.

During the visit, Dr Nsanzimana met with leaders from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services led by its Deputy Secretary Andrea Palm and officials from the U.S. National Institute of Health (NIH), U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centre for Diseases Control (CDC).

They discussed existing cooperation and explored new partnerships in global health security, regulatory affairs, research and development.

The minister also visited the University of Michigan Medical School's Global REACH, where he met with the Provost and leadership team.

They discussed expanding partnerships, including in renal transplant at King Faisal Hospital, advanced medical care and teaching.

Dr Nsanzimana also delivered a public lecture at Harvard Medical School on building a healthcare system in Rwanda and interacted with faculty and students. Harvard University has a long history of partnering with Rwanda through Partners In Health and University Global Health Equity.

## Ministry staff sensitized on remembrance of 1994 Genocide against Tutsi

As part of the 29th commemoration of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, the Ministry of Health organized a discussion on the importance of commemoration.

Professor Francois Masabo from the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagements led the discussion chaired

by the Minister of State for Health Dr Yvan Butera.

The discussion focused on the importance of remembering the victims of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, fighting genocide ideology and denial in order to ensure the notion of never happen again.

# Health Minister dispels UK writer’s claims on risk of malaria variant in Rwanda



Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana, Rwanda’s Health Minister

Claims that asylum seekers coming to Rwanda from the United Kingdom (UK) are at risk of “a deadly malaria variant,” are exaggerated, the Minister of Health Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana said.

He was responding to claims published on April 21 in an opinion piece by Prof Elspeth Webb, in The Guardian newspaper of UK.

Webb, who has reportedly worked as a paediatrician in Kenya claimed that Rwanda has the high malaria transmission of the most deadly malaria variant, in all areas, in all seasons, and cast doubt on the country’s capacity to “meet the healthcare needs of its own citizens” including preventive antimalarials like insecticide-containing nets, and quick curative antimalarials.

“Rwanda has a comprehensive and extraordinarily effective malaria-prevention and response program, which has achieved one of the fastest-recorded decelerations in malaria transmission in history: severe cases dropped from 13,844 to 1,831 between 2016 and 2022. This is an almost 87% reduction of cases,” the letter reads in part.

However, in the rebuttal published on April 27, Dr. Nsanzimana said Prof Elspeth Webb’s assessment of the risk of malaria to those coming to Rwanda is exaggerated.

“Rwanda has a comprehensive and extraordinarily effective malaria-prevention and response program, which has achieved one of the fastest-recorded decelerations in malaria transmission in history: severe cases dropped from 13,844 to 1,831 between 2016 and 2022. This is an almost 87% reduction of cases,” the letter reads in part.

The minister explained that every resident of Rwanda is within 1km of a community case-management-system centre, meaning 70% of malaria diagnosis and treatment is provided rapidly at the community level.

“Everyone living in Rwanda, including asylum seekers, has full access to this healthcare, and to preventive and curative antimalarials,” he continued.

“Indeed, Rwanda’s malaria response has been so exemplary that the World Health Organization, in its World Malaria Report 2022, highlighted Rwanda as one of only eight countries in Africa on track to achieve the target for reducing the incidence of malaria set in the WHO Global Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016-2030.”

# Rwanda edges closer to medical hub as Masters, PhD programs in Biotechnology are launched at UR



Minister of State for Health Dr. Yvan Butera during the launch

The new Masters and PhD programs in Biotechnology launched at the University of Rwanda will boost efforts for Rwanda to attain its vision of becoming a regional medical hub, the Minister of State for Health Dr. Yvan Butera said.

Minister Butera made the remarks during the launch of the first Master in Science and PhD programs in Biotechnology at the University of Rwanda, in Kigali on April 5.

He highlighted that the program comes to “strengthen existing initiatives for Rwanda to become a

medical tourism hub and a knowledge-based economy.”

Dr. Butera also noted that the program will support the government of Rwanda’s strategic initiative to establish a biomanufacturing plant to supply the country and continent.

According to the minister, the knowledge acquired through the programs will have a growing impact on climate change and climate-resilient agriculture.

The courses, supported through the Kwigira program of the European Union in Rwanda and Enabel, the Belgian development agency, will be implemented in partnership with different European universities and other global academic and research networks.

Didas Muganga Kayihura, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Rwanda described the launch as another milestone achieved by the university. He stressed the importance of advanced knowledge in conducting research.

At least 100 students (medical doctors, biologists, pharmacists) will pursue the MSc program in four years while five PhD candidates will also be supported by the Kwigira program.

The courses, supported through the Kwigira program of the European Union in Rwanda and Enabel, the Belgian development agency, will be implemented in partnership with different European universities and other global academic and research networks.



Gicumbi residents during World Malaria Day on April 25

# Malaria incidence decreases by 81% in Rwanda

As Rwanda marked World Malaria Day on April 25, the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC) noted 81% decrease in the disease incidence in the country.

According to the RBC latest updates, there were 998,874 simple malaria cases in 2021-2022 compared to 3.9 million cases in 2018-2019.

The number of severe malaria cases stood at 1,831 compared to 7,054 in 2018.

With the various government

interventions, RBC says malaria-related deaths reduced by 73%, from 264 to 71 deaths between 2018 and 2022.

In Rwanda Malaria incidence per 1000 decreased from 409 in 2017 to 76 in 2023, a decrease of 81%, the data showed.

The Ministry of Health remains committed to working closely with residents to end malaria through research-based interventions and other innovative approaches, Gallican Rwibasira, an official

According to the RBC latest updates, there were 998,874 simple malaria cases in 2021-2022 compared to 3.9 million cases in 2018-2019.



**Health Ministry official, Gallican Rwibasira**

from the Ministry said during the World Malaria Day national commemoration event in Bukure sector, Gicumbi District.

The day was marked under the theme: “Time to deliver zero malaria: invest, innovate, implement.”

It featured an exhibition of innovative mechanisms adopted to fight malaria in the country such as drones used in spraying mosquito breeding grounds.

The sectors of Bukure, Giti, Mutete, Rutare and Rwamiko take the lead in the number of malaria cases in Gicumbi District, according to the Mayor, Emmanuel Nzabonimpa.

The mayor appealed for indoor residual spraying measures in the district to fight malaria.

The residents also committed to reinforce the fight to end malaria by embracing preventive measures.

Speaking as the chief guest, Dancille Nyirarugero, the Governor of the Northern Province called on residents to implement malaria prevention measures in order to sustain progress in the disease reduction.

Malaria accounts for roughly 600,000 deaths globally each year, mostly children who are vulnerable, and sickens more than 200 million people, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

She advised Rwandans to sleep under treated mosquito bed nets, erase stagnant water sites around homes, clear bushes and seek timely treatment whenever one feels the malaria symptoms.

The Rwanda Biomedical Centre attributes the decline in malaria incidents to early diagnosis and treatment of malaria at the community level, distribution of insecticide treated bed nets as well as indoor residual spraying among other interventions.

Community health workers treat more than half of all malaria cases in Rwanda.

Robin Martz, the health office director at USAID Rwanda described it as extraordinary Rwanda’s success in combating malaria.

From 2018 to 2022 there was a reduction of malaria of 76%, which has never been achieved in any other country, she said at the event.

“Investments in malaria prevention and treatment tools, along with the training and equipping of health workers, have advanced Rwanda’s progress against the disease while strengthening the country’s health system,” Martz said.

Martz noted that countries such as Rwanda are using proven and cost-effective methods to keep people safe from malaria and help families forge a healthier and more prosperous future.

Malaria accounts for roughly 600,000 deaths globally each year, mostly children who are vulnerable, and sickens more than 200 million people, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

# More HIV/AIDS awareness targeting youth launched



Artists were used in awareness campaigns.

There is a need for greater awareness of HIV/AIDS among Rwandan youth because young people remain one of the most vulnerable groups, according to Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC).

With over 65% of young people accounting for new HIV infections, according to latest figures, more awareness and empowerment is essential.

This was highlighted during HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns targeting youth in Eastern Province.

The community awareness conducted from April 21 to 30 targeted youth in Nyagatare, Gatsibo, Kayonza, and Rwamagana districts.

It began in Nyagatare District, one of the districts with a high number of new HIV infections.

Despite availability of HIV/AIDS prevention services countrywide the uptake among youth remains a challenge, said Aime Ernest Nyirinkindi, HIV Clinical Mentor at RBC.

The awareness campaign is aimed to raise awareness about the disease in order to reduce its prevalence and increase the uptake of related services among young people, he said.

In Rwanda, HIV prevalence in the population has stagnated at 3% over the past more than 15 years

With over 65% of young people accounting for new HIV infections, according to latest figures, more awareness and empowerment is essential.



Aime Ernest Nyirinkindi, HIV Clinical Mentor at RBC

among people aged 15 years and above.

The data shows that adolescent girls and young women are twice as much affected by HIV compared to their peers, the adolescent boys and young men.

The prevalence of new HIV infections decreased from 0.27% in 2010 to 0.08% in 2019.

The awareness campaign was done through entertainment to attract more young people.

Nyirinkindi said young people are encouraged to embrace HIV preventive measures including abstinence from sex and proper condom use.

The young people were also encouraged to seek regular HIV testing and get circumcised as a preventive measure.

Nyirinkindi called on parents to get involved in educating their children about HIV/AIDS.

The data shows that adolescent girls and young women are twice as much affected by HIV compared to their peers, the adolescent boys and young men.

At Rukomo market in Nyagatare District, Diane Kamusiime, a trader said the problem is that young girls are lured by older men with fancy materials to engage in risky sexual behaviors which expose them to HIV infection.

She urged young girls not to be taken by temporary pleasures at the cost of their lives.

Meanwhile at Karangazi Secondary School, Mathieu Gatungo Rutanga, the school's head teacher said anti-AIDS clubs in schools should be promoted through which youth can learn values and morals.

Yvonne Murigirwa, a student, said increasing condom use requires more awareness and making them easily available in public places such as schools.

Other districts, where the campaign was carried out include Ngoma, Kirehe, and Bugesera as well as the City of Kigali, with plans to extend it to other parts of the country.

# RBC commemorates 1994 genocide against Tutsi



She urged collective efforts to sustain the country's achievements in terms of genocide survivors' resilience, unity, and reconciliation.

Valens Bimenyimana, the policy strategy analyst at the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement (MINUBUMWE), also urged health professionals to play their role in countering genocide ideology and genocide denial in view of the fact that some health professionals were involved in the genocide against the Tutsi.

Bimenyimana said remembrance is a powerful tool against those who trivialize genocide against the Tutsi.

"Health professionals committed genocide against the Tutsi yet they were intellectuals that had to save the lives of people. Before starting their jobs, they vow to save lives; it is the right time that they vow to save people from genocide ideology and genocide denial," he said.

During the event, Bimenyimana cited different names of prominent health professionals who actively took part in the genocide.

"There is a long list of health professionals who committed genocide. Those who plan genocide, also plan how to deny it. It is time for health professionals to engage in fighting genocide deniers and genocide ideology. They can do so by using books, social media and other channels," he said.

Health professionals in the country have been called upon to take steps to counter genocide denial and genocide ideology.

Officials made the call during the 29th commemoration of the 1994 genocide against Tutsi organized by the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC) in Kigali on April 27.

"The battle against genocide ideology and genocide denial requires reinforcing efforts and health professionals are strong pillars to do so. Commemoration of 1994 genocide against the Tutsi is a strong tool in this battle," Noella Bigirimana, the Deputy Director General of RBC said.

"Health professionals committed genocide against the Tutsi yet they were intellectuals that had to save the lives of people. Before starting their jobs, they vow to save lives; it is the right time that they vow to save people from genocide ideology and genocide denial."

# Rwamagana youth commit to fight HIV/AIDS

Students from different secondary schools in Rwamagana District committed to take measures to avoid contracting HIV and transmission through behavior change, regular testing, abstinence and use of other preventive methods.

They made the pledge during HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns organized by the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC) in Rwamagana town recently.

Jean Ndizeye, a student said after knowing the HIV infection figures he resolved to step up the preventive measures to avoid contracting and transmitting the virus to others.

He urged fellow students to avoid sexual relations at a tender age.

Fatuma Isheja Shakula, another student, said abstinence is the best option to avoid contracting HIV.

Isheja, whose three peers dropped out of school due to unplanned pregnancies also appealed to fellow students to avoid sexual relations before marriage.

She said if youth adhere to parental and leaders' advice the world could end HIV/AIDS.

More than 38 million people were infected with HIV in 2021, the majority in Sub Saharan Africa.

In Rwanda, HIV prevalence in the population has stagnated at 3% over the past more than 15 years among people aged 15 years and above, according to RBC.

The data shows that adolescent girls and young women are twice as much affected by HIV compared to their peers, the adolescent boys and young men.

HIV is a global burden but the efforts Rwanda has put in place to fight the virus are paying off as the infection has stagnated at 3% in the past 15 years yet in other countries it stands at 25%, Dr. Gilbert Mutuyimana, in charge of epidemic diseases at Rwamagana Hospital said.

He told the students that the infection rate among youth stands 33% which he said was threatening.

He hoped that more efforts in educating youth could lead to behavior and mind set change about the virus among the youth.

Dr. Mutuyimana informed the students that 95% of HIV infection is transmitted through unprotected sexual intercourse.

Meanwhile, Jeanne Umutoni, Rwamagana District Vice Mayor in charge of Social Affairs, urged youth to circumcise as a preventive measure against HIV, saying circumcision services are offered free of charge at health centres across the district.

Circumcision is said to reduce the risk of contracting HIV by up to 60%.

Only 56% of males have undergone voluntary medical male circumcision, according to Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey 2020.

HIV is a global burden but the efforts Rwanda has put in place to fight the virus are paying off as the infection has stagnated at 3% in the past 15 years yet in other countries it stands at 25%.

# Health Ministry to step up vaccination, deworming activities during Maternal and Child Health Week

Health workers will offer vaccination to children who might have missed routine vaccination during this year’s Maternal and Child Health Week in May.

Dr. Hassan Nsabimana, the head of vaccination unit at the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC) outlined the activities ahead of the launch of the annual event, which would see malnutrition screening for children aged 6-59 months, provision of vitamin A supplements to children aged 6-59 months and supply of deworming tablets to children aged 1-15 years.

He stressed the catch-up vaccination for children who missed routine doses will be conducted countrywide.

With vaccination rate at 96%, only 0.8% of children are not vaccinated due to different reasons.

Some parents are still reluctant to take their children for vaccination, while others are recently returned children who were born outside the country, Dr. Nsabimana said.

During the week conversations about family planning measures will be discussed as well as nutrition, hygiene and sanitation.

Nsabimana said Rwanda Biomedical Centre is embarking on digitalization linked to birth registration as part of efforts to ensure universal coverage of vaccination.

HIV is a global burden but the efforts Rwanda has put in place to fight the virus are paying off as the infection has stagnated at 3% in the past 15 years yet in other countries it stands at 25%.

In the meantime we get contacts of mothers such that we can reach out to them on phones to remind them to take children for immunization, the doctor said.

Immunization prevents between 3.5 million and 5 million deaths every year from diseases like diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, influenza, and measles, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

The Maternal and Child Health Week aims to take preventative measures to improve maternal and child health to the public.

The 2020 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) showed that the number of women who die while giving birth was 203 per 100,000, while the infant mortality rate was 19 per 1000 births.

Odette Abayisenga, a community health worker in Gatsibo district said the week presents an opportunity to step up mobilization efforts to improve health outcomes among residents.

“As RBC we appeal to parents to prioritize vaccination of their children because the vaccines are available. It is a parent’s responsibility to ensure every child is vaccinated as it is helpful in preventing recurrent disease outbreaks,” said Nsabimana.

He thanked parents and community health workers for their roles in ensuring successful vaccination programs, attributed to the government’s commitment.

He explained that the immunization week in Rwanda is combined with the Maternal and Child Health Week to reinforce efforts to inoculate all infants, adding that vaccination has played a critical role in reducing child mortality rate in the country.



Students at Umutara Polytechnic Gakoni in Gatsibo district during an HIV awareness campaign on April 25.

# Parents urged to look out for red flags in children to fight AIDS

Parents are being urged to sensitize their children about HIV/AIDS in order to help stem new infections among young people.

The Rwanda Biomedical Center (RBC) and local leaders in Gatsibo district said instability in homes could spur HIV among young people if not addressed.

Parents remain critical in preventing HIV among children, Dr. Mireille Joyce Umurerwa, senior officer in charge of HIV prevention methods at RBC said during a recent awareness campaign in Gatsibo District.

Umurerwa cited some “red flags” that parents and schools should

look out for such as erotic videos that can tempt teenagers to indulge in unsafe sexual relations.

Youth have many tools at their disposal to prevent contracting HIV, she said, citing condoms and voluntary circumcision services at every health centre.

However, she noted that men 50 and above find difficulties accessing these services which she said requires more awareness.

Marceline Mukamana, the Vice Mayor of Gatsibo District in charge of Social Affairs, said family conflicts are spurring HIV spread among young people in the district.

Youth have many tools at their disposal to prevent contracting HIV, she said, citing condoms and voluntary circumcision services at every health centre.

Speaking at Kabarore TTC, Mukamana said nearly 900 teenage pregnancies were recorded in the district between July and December 2022, among mostly girls between 14 and 19 years.

She agreed that parents need to care for their children, providing them guidance and basic needs, especially girls to protect them from the temptations of being lured by men who expose them to unprotected sex and HIV.

“Responsibility to children starts with parents even when we can all come together to raise awareness,” said Mukamana.

She encouraged health authorities and leaders to sustain awareness campaigns targeting young people in order to address the root causes of the virus transmission.

Mukamana called on the students to refrain from sexual relations that contribute to HIV risk.

Jean Damascene Habimana, a tutor at Kabarore TTC and the

chairperson of the school's Anti-AIDS club said the wider community should not turn a blind eye to erotic videos and films that spoil young people in Rwanda.

Habimana challenged TV stations to avoid playing music videos that promote sexual activity.

The Anti-AIDS club Kabarore TTC educates students to adopt preventive measures to fight HIV/AIDS such as abstinence and proper condom use when necessary.

Meanwhile at Umutara Polytechnic Gakoni on April 25, Melon Mbabazi, a student, acknowledged that watching erotic films tempts young people to engage in risky sexual affairs.

She said the risks of students are higher during holidays which call for parental guidance.

The HIV awareness campaign ran until April 30 in the Eastern Province, targeting Nyagatare, Gatsibo, Kayanza, and Rwamagana districts.

... parents need to care for their children, providing them guidance and basic needs, especially girls to protect them from the temptations of being lured by men who expose them to unprotected sex and HIV.



Jean Damascene Habimana, a tutor at Kabarore TTC and the chairperson of the school's Anti-AIDS club



# Icyumweru cyahariwe gukingirwa 2023

**Nta rukingo na rumwe umwana agomba gucikiriza kuko byamushyira mu kaga ko kwibasirwa n'indwara ahanini zihitana ubuzima.**

#### **Akivuka akingirwa:**

- Igituntu n'Imbasa

#### **Afite ukwezi n'igice n'amezi abiri n'igice akingirwa:**

- Imbasa,
- Impiswi ziterwa na Rotavirus,
- Kokorishi,
- Mugiga ishobora guterwa na microbe yo mu bwoko bwa hemophilus Influenza,
- Tetanosi (Agakwega),
- Akaniga,
- Umwijima wo mu bwoko bwa B
- Umusonga uterwa na Pinemoko

#### **Afite amezi atatu n'igice akingirwa:**

- Imbasa (jibityanga n'urushinge) bOPV&IPV
- Kokorishi,
- Mugiga ishobora guterwa na microbe yo mu bwoko bwa hemophilus Influenza,
- Tetanosi (Agakwega),
- Akaniga,
- Umwijima wo mu bwoko bwa B
- Umusonga uterwa na Pinemoko

#### **Afite amezi icyenda akingirwa:**

- Imbasa
- Iseru na Rubeyole

#### **Afite amezi cumi n'atanu akingirwa:**

- Iseru na Rubeyole

#### **Umukobwa ufite imyaka cumi n'ibiri akingirwa:**

- Kanseri y'inkondo y'umura



114



@RwandaHealth

www.moh.gov.rw



April 25

# WORLD MALARIA DAY

TIME TO DELIVER  
**ZERO MALARIA**



**ZERO  
MALARIA**  
STARTS WITH ME.



Republic of Rwanda  
Ministry of Health



Rwanda  
Biomedical  
Centre

Healthy People. Viable Nation