

Special Bulletin on the Visit to Burundi of the UNFPA Regional Director for East and Southern Africa

October, 2024

## **Lydia ZIGOMO**









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# THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR AT THE HEART OF AFRICA: A VISIT TO BURUNDI

On October 6, 2024, the UNFPA Regional Director for East and Southern Africa visited Burundi, where she was warmly welcomed by the UNFPA Burundi team. She was one of the distinguished guests of honor at the High-Level Forum of Women Leaders, organized by the Office of the First Lady for Development.

This annual event, which was themed "Investing in Early Childhood to Build Strong Human Capital for Life" aimed to emphasize the critical importance of investing in children's development to ensure a sustainable future. The visit also included a focus on the country office's activities, both in and outside of Bujumbura.





## HIGH-LEVEL FORUM OF WOMEN LEADERS



On October 7th and 8th, the 5th Edition of the High-Level Forum of Women Leaders was held in Burundi, under the high patronage of His Excellency President Général Major Evariste NDAYISHIMIYE, and chaired by Her Excellency First Lady Angeline NDAYISHIMIYE. Several foreign delegations, led by First Ladies, also participated in the event, including delegations from Nigeria, Serbia, Gabon, and the DRC. The event was attended by government officials, including the Prime Minister and Ministers, members of Parliament and the Senate, the accredited Diplomatic Corps in Burundi, and the United Nations System, including UNFPA.

Other high-ranking authorities and government entities were also present.

The event, organized by the Office of the First Lady for Development (OPDD-Burundi), was structured around the theme: "Investing in Early Childhood to Build Strong Human Capital for Life." This theme underscores the importance of strategic actions for early childhood development (ECD). Multi-sectoral collaboration is key in Burundi to effectively coordinate efforts and address the diverse needs of children. All speakers emphasized the critical need to invest in early childhood, maternal health, and human capital to secure a better future.



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Family planning, including the use of modern contraceptive methods, remains a critical factor that significantly contributes to ensuring a healthy early childhood. It is essential that we continue to join forces to increase our chances of ensuring successful and healthy early childhood development.



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Early childhood development **begins way before birth**, which is why investing in human capital is so
important. In Burundi, young girls are at risk of
unintended pregnancies, which impacts their futures.
Every child deserves to grow up in an environment **free from gender-based violence** and in a
harmonious home.



These were the remarks made by Ms Lydia ZIGOMO during the opening of the forum and her participation in a panel discussion.



A successful early childhood begins long before birth. Thus, maternal and child health, which encompass the mother-child pair, remains a crucial aspect of early childhood development and ensuring a better future for Burundi. In her opening remark, she emphasized the importance of modern contraception, particularly immediate postpartum contraception, as a key factor in safeguarding the health of both mother and child. Furthermore, during the panel discussion, the Regional Director highlighted five key points, namely:

- The provision of sexual and reproductive health services, such as prenatal care
  and deliveries attended by qualified staff in well-equipped healthcare facilities,
  ensures effective monitoring for a safe and healthy pregnancy;
- Increasing the use of voluntary family planning reduces unmet needs for family
  planning among women of reproductive age, enables birth spacing, and thereby
  ensures the health and well-being of both mother and child;
- Addressing the specific needs of adolescents and youth;

- The effects of climate change, humanitarian crises, conflicts, and post-conflict situations hinder progress in reducing maternal and neonatal mortality. These circumstances make women, adolescents, and children more vulnerable.
- A society where women's rights are respected and gender-based violence is combated is a healthy society. In such a society, the well-being of all is assured, including that of children and youth.

This initiative marks an important step forward in mobilizing resources for the well-being of future generations. Following the forum, the Regional Director met with beneficiaries to assess the results achieved in collaboration with our partners and the Government of Burundi.



BENEFICIARIES: OUR PURPOSE AND MISSION



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baby kits and dignity kits distributed at Mubimbi and HUMURA Center

## **Mubimbi IDP Site**

The Regional Director visited the displaced persons' site in Mubimbi, in the Bujumbura Rural Province. She commended the economic empowerment initiatives, as well as the integrated services for the management of gender-based violence (GBV), and acknowledged the needs of adolescent girls and women of reproductive age. This visit underscores our organization's continued commitment to addressing the needs of displaced populations and promoting the rights of women and girls.

## **Humura Center**

At the Humura Center in Gitega, dedicated to the integrated care of GBV survivors, the Director inquired about the social, economic, legal, and medical services provided, reflecting a holistic approach essential for helping survivors rebuild their lives and regain their dignity. She witnessed the efforts made by the center and listened to the testimonies of several survivors who, by breaking the silence, advocate for advancing the cause of women and girls' rights.







## VISIT TO MATERNAL HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES: BRINGING HEALTHCARE CLOSER TO COMMUNITIES

## **Umugiraneza Foundation and Urumuri Center**

The Regional Director, accompanied by the First Lady, visited the Umugiraneza Foundation and the Urumuri Center in Gitega. She praised the clinic's efforts in addressing maternal health, girls' education, nutrition, and the fight against early pregnancies and poverty. This visit highlighted the government's commitment to improving the well-being of vulnerable women. She was particularly moved by the unique stories of each woman and commended the services dedicated to survivors of obstetric fistulas.

## **ABUBEF**

At the ABUBEF (Burundian Association for Family Wellbeing) center in Buyenzi, the Regional Director engaged in discussions with service users and providers on approaches to improving access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. The center operates a mobile clinic to reach remote populations.

She commended the involvement of male champions in promoting family planning, including vasectomy, as well as the communication efforts aimed at fostering respect for reproductive rights and contraceptive choices.



rovider, right, during their visit to ABI

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In this IDP site, my husband squandered all the family's money and mistreated me. Thanks to **the legal assistance** I received here, I was able to take steps to protect my rights. Today, he no longer mistreats me, and our situation has improved



Testimony of a beneficiary

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I already had four children and sought information on modern contraceptive methods. I explained it to my wife but she had her reservations. Later on,I discovered that there are **modern contraceptive methods for men such as vasectomy**. Today I am happy to have a thriving family.



Testimonies from beneficiaries during the visit to ABUBEF and the displaced persons' camp in Mubimbi.



Testimony of a beneficiary





## MEETING WITH HIGH AUTHORITIES: A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

## **Meeting with the President of the Republic**

During the audience granted by the President of the Republic of Burundi to the UNFPA Regional Director, a fruitful exchange took place regarding the vision for an emerging Burundi in 2040 and its full development by 2060. This was an opportunity to discuss the government's commitment to the national census, a crucial exercise for strategic planning and collaboration with development partners. UNFPA reaffirmed its determination to work closely with the government to ensure the empowerment of women and youth, which is essential to unlocking the country's economic and social potential. The Director expressed her willingness to actively advocate for resource mobilization to support the financing of the National Development Plan and the 2040-2060 Vision.

## **Meeting with the First Lady of the Republic**

The Regional Director was received in audience by the First Lady of the Republic of Burundi, Her Excellency Mrs. Angeline NDAYISHIMIYE. During their meeting, they discussed the challenges surrounding maternal health in Burundi, including the necessary actions to address these issues and improve the care for women living with obstetric fistulas. Their conversation also focused on the goal of achieving zero obstetric fistulas. Additionally, they addressed topics related to girls' education and nutrition.









## ENGAGEMENTS WITH SECTORAL MINISTRIES: ADVANCING THE ICPD AGENDA

The points discussed with Her Excellency Dr. Lydwine Baradahana, Minister of Public Health and the Fight Against AIDS, focused on efforts made in financing the health sector. The Regional Director commended the government's leadership and commitment to the Compact, encouraging its continuation through renewal. The Compact ensures access to quality contraceptive products and essential maternal healthcare, contributing to universal access to health services. Additionally, the Minister of Health highlighted advancements in family planning, particularly the recent validation of the multisectoral family planning strategy, which is a key policy to ensure the availability and the demand for reliable contraceptive methods, enabling individuals to make informed decisions.





The Regional Director met with Dr. François Havyarimana, the Minister of National Education and Scientific Research, to discuss UNFPA's commitment to promoting comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education in schools, as well as efforts to prevent teen pregnancies. During the discussions, the two interlocutors also addressed the importance of supporting technical and vocational training to combat unemployment, improve youth employability, and ensure the availability of skilled workers. UNFPA offered to facilitate South-South cooperation, which could provide an opportunity for sharing experiences and knowledge with other African countries in this field.

In conclusion, the Regional Director met with a team from the Ministry of National Solidarity, Social Affairs, Human Rights, and Gender, led by the Permanent Secretary. The discussions focused on the partnership between UNFPA and the Ministry, particularly on issues of gender, GBV, and indigenous peoples, as well as social protection and its connection to census data. UNFPA expressed its commitment to strengthening its involvement in these critical areas.



# AN INSIGHTFUL MEETING WITH OUR PARTNERS

The UNFPA Regional Director met with the country office's partner organizations. During this fruitful exchange, she emphasized the critical role of civil society in accelerating progress toward achieving the three transformative results: zero unmet need for family planning; zero preventable maternal deaths; and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices. The need to strengthen civil society's involvement in collective efforts was highlighted.

The discussions also covered several other key topics, including the importance of integrating social and gender norms as levers to mitigate their impact on program outcomes.

In addition, given the context of reduced funding, various solutions were discussed to mobilize additional resources, particularly domestic ones, to move forward toward our shared goals.

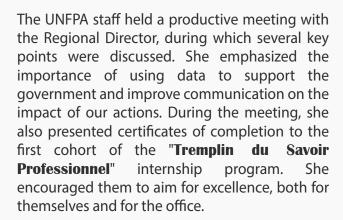








## MEETING WITH UNFPA BURUNDI STAFF: A RENEWED COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE



This meeting reinforced the commitment to collaborate and innovate in addressing the urgent challenges facing Burundi, particularly in terms of youth engagement and gender issues.









## **MEDIA COVERAGE AND SOCIAL**

## **MEDIA ENGAGEMENT**

#### **UNFPA Burundi:**

- https://x.com/UNFPABurundi/status/1842926292481802264?t=O\_gicRnuOOggT9KiHYdh6A&s=19
- https://x.com/UNFPABurundi/status/1843284060699054227?t=uGu-sHOenxsAx975GEn\_VA&s=19
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- https://www.facebook.com/100064820105288/posts/pfbid0racmRm3hnt6r3fk9taSreGzeR38q2uYYmKmMptEcV2d5hdabd5pTfVpuSN6uWjTul/?app=fbl https://www.facebook.com/100064820105288/posts/ofbid02xAruWFxOh4AveuecE5H5xaeJaaxGbanvh3G6d5huv6PPxs6vLfrsaKCULNXiveKAJ/?app=fbl
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## **Ministry of Public Health Burundi:**

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## **BUMWE**

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## **LE RENOUVEAU**

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#### **UMUGIRANEZA FOUNDATION**

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#### **AKEZA NET**

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