

FOREWORD



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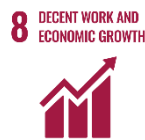
Welcome to IOM Rwanda’s first quarter of 2022 Newsletter!

This edition features two stories reflecting IOM Rwanda’s commitment to leaving no one behind, by **empowering local communities – specifically women and youth – as agents of change.**

From strengthening social cohesion and psychosocial well-being of cross border communities to fostering local development and protecting the environment through innovative business projects, these stories have one feature in common. They put women and youth at the center, giving them spaces to voice their needs and expectations, actively participate and gain tools and skills to thrive. Empowerment starts with participation and generates innovation and change.

Read our stories to know more!

For additional information please contact IOM Rwanda Public Information Unit at pir@iom.int



Strengthening social cohesion and psycho-social well-being in Rusizi and Bukavu



Discussion with women benefitting from mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) interventions in Rusizi.

Cross-border trade can be a powerful multiplier of wealth. However, too frequently, small-scale cross-border traders and border communities encounter major challenges in benefitting from it.

IOM Rwanda is working to strengthen social cohesion and psycho-social well-being of border communities, small scale cross-border traders and porters.

A baseline assessment was conducted in Rusizi (Rwanda) and Bukavu (Democratic Republic of Congo) between 2019 and 2020 and its preliminary findings discussed with local communities, authorities and partners.

The assessment highlighted the challenges experienced particularly by women working as cross-border traders and porters, as well as the criticalities of their psycho-social distress. It also paved the way to an operational plan for an intervention aimed at addressing the specific vulnerabilities of cross-border traders and porters working in Rusizi and Bukavu.

In September 2021, IOM's implementing partners started providing **psychosocial support** to the most vulnerable actors at the border. In Rwanda, activities ranged from training sessions for community psycho-social workers, to individual, couple and group counselling and advocacy meeting to discuss with relevant authorities the challenges encountered by cross-border traders and porters in their work and daily life.

Activities funded by the European Union.

Voices from the field

"I used to be angry at my business partner as I saw she always quiet and seemed not happy to work with me as she was so bad tempered.

It started after she lost her husband and a child, she kept on changing in behaviors and attitudes, but I could not realize, and we started conflicting and our business started failing too.

After this training, I realize that she may be having trauma caused by the death of her husband and child, as she almost had all the symptoms described, just that I never realized. Now I have the skills to listen to her and from here, I intend to approach her in order to be able to explore her problems and help her and also improve communication for our business to go well."

Anonymous
Participant in MHPSS interventions

Fostering local development and protecting the environment through innovative business projects



Participants attending the training on briquette production in Nyamagabe district. IOM Rwanda's interview with Dr. Concorde NSENGUMUREMYI (on the left)

Protecting the environment through the engagement of local communities is a key driver to ensure sustainability of interventions.

IOM Rwanda sponsored an innovative project aimed at tackling deforestation and boosting local development through the involvement of youth and women.

Dr. Concorde Nsengumuremyi is passionate about environment. He hopes to **reduce deforestation** and carbon emissions by investing in briquette production – a clean and cost-effective source of cooking fuel made of eucalyptus leaves and red soil – all while generating **new job opportunities for local communities**. To achieve this, Dr. Concorde is following a twofold approach: sensitizing community members – youth and women specifically – on the adoption of environmental-friendly energy production sources as well as training them in briquette production.

As part of these interventions, around 30 residents participated in the briquette making training that took place in Kitabi in July – August 2021. The training provided participants with hands-on skills and paved the way for discussions on the establishment of a local-based briquette making cooperative, which is now underway.

This project is one out of the ten small-scale initiatives sponsored by IOM Rwanda in areas such as clean energy, infrastructure development, and agriculture.

Activities funded by the Government of Belgium.

Voices from the field

“Protecting our environment is my passion, my belief. I have seen overcutting of trees for charcoal and firewood production which can lead to land degradation and climate change in the long term. I wanted to mitigate these risks but also contribute to the improvement of the communities’ wellbeing. [...] the prices of charcoals and gas are expensive and job opportunities are limited in our community. From the waste that nobody used before, this project can provide solutions to these challenges. Young people are the future decision-makers and the ones who will transform Rwanda. In our community, women often make and use fire for cooking at home. That’s why targeting youth and women in the project was crucial.”

Dr. Concorde NSENGUMUREMYI
Innovator/project developer