

The transformation

Issue 1, October 2015



Honorable Bernard MAKUZA looking at one of RWAMREC manuals during the official launch of the HeForShe campaign

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Editorial

Rwanda men's resource center (RWAMREC) is pleased to introduce its first issue of its newsletter to various partners in order to keep them informed about its activities.

The mission of RWAMREC is to promote gender equality and positive forms of masculinity through the prevention of gender-based violence.

To achieve gender equality, men and women need to ally and work together to promote progress in all aspects of life. Indeed, gender equality implies that everyone, regardless of their gender, is given the same opportunities, hence allowing for the knowledge and experience of both men and women to be used to achieve development.

Most initiatives directed at supporting the promotion of gender equality have placed women at the center of the problem. These anti-GBV interventions did not focus on men, yet they are part of the problems and solutions to address gender based violence. Indeed, violence against women has been classified as the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights abuse in the world. As a result, women have been the main target and focus of conventional initiatives around GBV prevention.

As such, RWAMREC's underlying principle is the notion that it is critical to support and equip men to act as leaders, role models and allies in working with other men and women to promote healthy and positive constructs of masculinity.

Ultimately, this partnership contributes to building a GBV-free society where both men and women equally contribute to development and raising strong families. Engaging men in taking ownership of the issues related to gender inequalities and behavior leading to negative masculinities has proven to be a meaningful and effective strategy to reduce violence and enhance social development.



Overview of the RWAMREC

Rwanda Men's Resource Centre was initially conceived as an exclusively men's organization striving to reach out to other men in order to promote gender equality through promotion of positive masculinities and male engagement approaches in development programs. Three major reasons prompted the creation of RWAMREC:

- An alarming situation of men's violence against women and children highlighted by various research reports, especially the reports from the National Police showed that the scale of gender-based violence and sexual violence was a serious challenge in the rebuilding of Rwanda.
- Gender equality concept remains the basis for the promotion of human rights and an important ingredient for effective and sustainable development in Rwanda. However, this concept of gender was misunderstood by many people who considered that gender issues were women's business. Some men consider that the aim of gender work is to empower women on the detriment of men and believe that it deals solely with women's agendas, men are not concerned or invited to participate.
- **Negative** masculine behaviors and practices affected the lives and wellbeing of men. Some men did not find good reasons for seeking health services for themselves or their family members. They hardly intervened in critical conditions and feared to be criticized as engaging in women's activities. There are persisting concerns over risky behaviors men are involved in such as excessive alcohol consumption habits, over speeding and careless driving, refusing to acknowledge personal weaknesses, rejecting other people's support, committing suicide, engaging in risky sexual behaviors and practices that have negative and harmful

impacts to individuals and their partners and families.

The commitment to create RWAMREC was taken within this scope, bearing in mind the purpose of empowering and reaching out to men. Since then, the interventions have focused on engaging men in gender equality practices through promotion of positive masculine behaviors, effective cross-gender dialogue in ending sexual and gender-based violence, enhanced men's understanding and support to women's empowerment initiatives, and adoption of healthy and non-violent behaviors. Men supported by RWAMREC interventions acknowledge the impact of the programs on their own development and their participation in building healthy families in Rwanda.

RWAMREC has mobilized many community members and trained around 32,000 focal persons composed especially of men and boys through different kind of interventions:

- Behavior Change Campaigns aiming at mobilizing men to take the lead in GBV prevention;
- Developing training manuals and organizing trainings on the role of men and women (boys and girls) in gender equality;
- School based dialogues to mobilize and encourage young boys and girls to fight and prevent GBV,
- Researches on behaviors and attitudes of masculinity;
- Capacity building to other organizations and partners/stakeholders so as to mainstream the MenEngage approach;
- Advocacy and dialogue with the government and other stakeholders.

RWAMREC is now active in 18 districts.

RWAMREC committed to the HeForShe campaign

On September 18th 2015, the Government of Rwanda through the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion launched officially the Heforshe campaign. The official launching ceremony was presided over by the Senate Speaker Honorable Bernard MAKUZA.

The HeForShe campaign is a solidarity campaign for gender equality initiated by UN Women. Its goal is to engage men and boys as agents of change for the achievement of gender equality and women's rights, by encouraging them to take action against inequalities faced by women and girls. Grounded in the idea that gender equality is an issue that affects all people socially, economically and politically, it seeks to actively involve men and boys in a movement that was originally conceived as "a struggle for women by women". It is therefore high time that men understand the role they need to play in supporting women's rights, and equally together with women enjoy the benefits resulting from women's empowerment.

The President of the Republic of Rwanda, HE Paul KAGAME is among ten Presidents all over the world selected by UN as one of the Role Models in gender equality promotion to initiate the HeForShe campaign in Rwanda.

Rwanda Men's Resource Center (RWAMREC) as Non Governmental organization engaged in gender equality by promoting positive forms of masculinity in Rwanda was actively involved in the preparations and the HeForShe event. More than 60 men role

models from communities (Bugesera, Kamonyi, Rwamagana and Muhanga District) mentored by RWAMREC participated in the event that took place in the Parliament Building on September 18, 2015.



The RWAMREC Executive Secretary Mr. Munyamaliza Edouard addressing the audience

RWAMREC showed its commitment to the success of the HeforShe campaign and presented during this event a list of 16,000 men who had already signed up for the HeforShe campaign.

"Join other men who believe equality for women is a basic human right that benefits us all and commit to taking action against gender discrimination and violence in order to build a more just and equal world". Subscribe now on <http://www.heforshe.org/>

Other news

RWAMREC partners with many

On August 6th and 11th 2015, a team of four American Fellows (Adin Thayer, Julie Lichtenberg, Tara Parish, Kenny Chartrand) from the Professional Fellows Program (Pro Fellows Program) visited the Rwanda Men's Resource Center on 6th August 2015 and held discussions with the Executive secretary of RWAMREC, Edouard MUNYAMALIZA, and senior staff who provided a general overview of RWAMREC work. They also visited some of RWAMREC activities. The Pro Fellow Program is an educational, professional and cultural exchange programs run by the US Department of State globally through the various US Embassies in the different countries.



The RWAMREC Executive Secretary receiving US Fellows

You can read the full story [here](http://rwamrec.org/spip.php?article157) (<http://rwamrec.org/spip.php?article157>)

Shyorongi : Parents' evening sessions,opportunities to address causes of GBV

It started getting dark along the road where the parent's evening session took place. The session started a bit late at 3:30 because the local population of Gisiza village in Shyorongi Sector attended a burial of a 7 years old child. RWAMREC staff are present to witness the power of the parents evening sessions and to evaluate the skills of the focal person RWAMREC trained to support the sessions.

Men and women arrived gradually until a large group of 50 people listened to the testimonies of Musengimana Eugene and his wife Mukahigiro Esperance. Both husband and wife did not trust each other and used to hide what they earned until the gender focal persons advised them to plan jointly and to lead a transparent life. Their testimony was supported by another one given by Mukandushabandi Clementine and her husband Biziyaremye Papias.

You can read the full story [here](http://rwamrec.org/spip.php?article164) (<http://rwamrec.org/spip.php?article164>)

Testimony

Domestic violence has kept them in utter poverty over 30 years

Murekezi Zacharie, 58 years old and his wife Mukankubito Rahabu, 54 old from Kibinja cell of Busasamana Sector in Nyanza district testify that they lived in utter poverty due to persisting domestic violence in their household. Mukankubito Rahabu declares that recurrent conflicts started during the same week they got married and this situation has persisted since then.

Murekezi and Mukankubito have decided to get rid of violence after more than 30 years of poverty

Rahabu went on saying: *"I had no honey moon with my husband because soon after the last traditional wedding ceremony performed on married couples (gutwikurura) conflicts began in this household of newly married couple."* She went on saying that one week after their wedding, the husband began to drink excessively alcohol until late hours. Whenever the husband got drunk and arrived home very late, he always looked for reasons to quarrel and to beat her. When the time came for our new couple to visit my family after the wedding ceremonies, I felt very sad because I was obliged to inform my family members that my husband was not serious at all, someone who likes fighting and an alcohol addicted person who does not have any plan for his own life."

She went on saying that she managed to expose her concerns to the family members but after careful listening, they told her that many families experience conflicts but try their best to hide them. After getting pregnant of the first

child, my husband did not change." Mukankubito added that they rented the house they lived in and the husband never cared about building their own house.



Murekezi Zacharie and his wife Mukankubito Rahabu

6 children were born in this family that experienced domestic violence over more than 30 years. Finally, these conflicts were settled through the messages and lessons taught by RWAMREC, a local organization that promotes gender equality through men-women partnership and better understanding of positive masculinity.

Rahabu declares that this organization was very active in their area, organizing dialogue sessions so as to prevent domestic violence. Her husband attended these dialogue sessions until he decided to change gradually and now he is committed to work for the family welfare. Over the last three years, conflicts have not been reported in this household, the family is no longer renting houses because the couple has built a house and still planning more family development projects.

News from projects

A fourth manual has been developed by the MenCare+

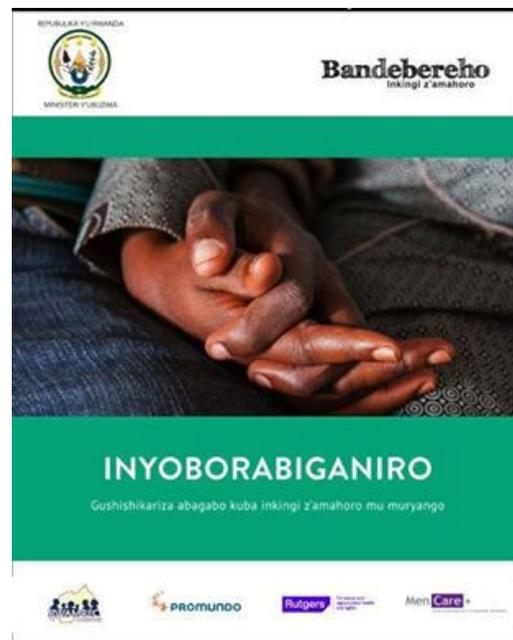
As RWAMREC experiences increases, more activities are being developed according to the needs and implemented to address gender equality and GBV issues. MenCare+ project is one of the projects that RWAMREC has been implementing since 2013. In September 2015, the MenCare+ project finalized a fourth manual which has been developed to engage fathers aged 30-45 to build peaceful homes. The module targets the whole community to ensure that men, women and children are protected against violence.

The previous three manuals were developed as part of the MenCare+ campaign to engage expectant fathers, young men and young women in sexual reproductive health and rights, in Maternal and child health, in care work and in GBV prevention.

Specifically, the first module was designed to be used in group educations involving young men aged 18-24. The second manual was intended for young women aged 18-24 years. The third manual developed in partnership with Rwanda Biomedical Center was intended for expectant fathers and/or fathers with infants under 5 and it was designed to be used in group educations so that fathers may be engaged in maternal and child health, family planning, care work and GBV prevention. In such group educations, fathers discuss also other topics such as pregnancy and raising children.

This fourth manual developed will be used by RWAMREC in education groups called 'Pillars of Peace'. The manual contains 15

sessions and group participants will be discussing issues related to GBV prevention, non violence. Sessions will be held once a week.. The 'Pillars of peace' groups are currently being run in four Districts: Karongi, Musanze, Nyaruguru and Rwamagana.



The cover page of the "pillars of Peace" manual

INDASHYIKIRWA project starts

During this year, RWAMREC has launched the 'Indashyikirwa' project whose main purpose is to contribute to bringing about positive change among couples, within families and the entire Rwandan society.

The 'Indashyikirwa' project operates in 7 districts, Rwamagana, Kayonza and Bugesera in the Eastern province; Rubavu and Nyabihu in the Western province; and Musanze and Burera in the Northern province.

Preparations of field work activities have started. The manual to be used has been developed and tested. From August 18th until 15th September 2015 RWAMREC staff tested the manual in Kibungo Cell of Ntarama Sector, Bugesera District. 15 couples participated in these testing sessions. Partners organizations such as Care International and What Works also attended these testing sessions.

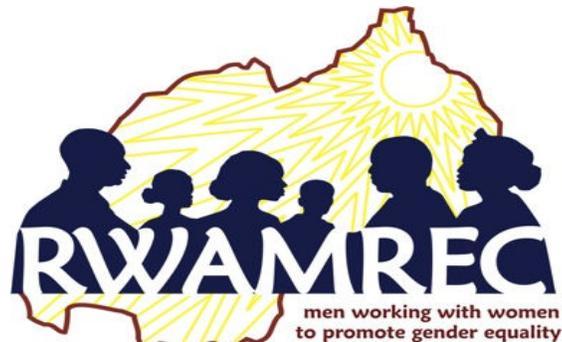
knowledge on gender so as to change the beliefs, attitudes and behavior that are potentially discriminative and abusive. Ultimately, the project will bring about equality between men and women.

This can be evidenced through the testimonies of the trainees. Indeed trainees testified that the training helped them to build their self-confidence which enabled them to freely share their feelings with their peers and partners. They also testified a better understanding of the importance of legal marriage as well as the negative effects of cohabitation; and pledged to legalize their unions, where relevant. In addition, trainees vowed to actively contribute to sensitizing their neighbors, friends and families, hence contributing to fighting against GBV and developing their communities



RWAMREC staff, partners and trainees after a test training session

From the pre-test training sessions it was established that the lessons developed in the Indashyikirwa training module are outstanding. They will greatly contribute to providing couples with the correct



The Transformation is the newsletter of the Rwanda Men's Resource Center (RWAMREC). It aims at informing the general public about the work of RWAMREC so that more people might understand more and more its objectives and activities

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