



AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN LAUNCHES GENDER BASED VIOLENCE SAFE SPACE

In Mahama Camp, Rwanda



(L-R) UNFPA Representative Mark Bryan Schreiner, UNHCR Deputy Representative Barbara Bentum, JAPANESE Ambassador H. E. Takayuki Miyashita, Camp Manager Goreth Murebwayire MINEMA, ARC Country Director Bernad Ochieng Ojwang

“I’d like to thank **UNFPA** and **UNHCR** for the wonderful work they’ve done to support Burundian refugees, by using the financial support from the **Government of Japan** effectively and efficiently. I believe the **women’s safe space** is very important for vulnerable populations, especially women, girls and young mothers.” - **Japanese Ambassador to Rwanda, H. E. Takayuki Miyashita**

YOUNG MOTHERS EXPRESS THEMSELVES WITHOUT THE FEAR OF JUDGMENT OR HARM ESPECIALLY THOSE SURVIVING GBV ISSUES

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a pervasive global human rights, health and social protection issue. In Rwanda, 4 in 10 women and 2 in 10 men aged 15-49 years' report having experienced emotional, physical, or sexual violence from their spouse (DHS 2014/2015).

Inequitable gender norms and social norms that condone violence against women put girls at greater risk of unintended pregnancy. Adolescent girls in particular may be unable to refuse unwanted sex or resist coerced sex, which also tends to be unprotected. The risk of GBV during emergencies is often further heightened due to a number of factors, including the sudden breakdown of families and community structures.

Around the world, UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, joins hands with UNHCR and partners in humanitarian settings to save the lives of women and girls, with a special focus on sexual and reproductive health, and prevention of and response to GBV.



GBV SAFE SPACE

In March 2018, the **Japanese government** provided financial support to the UNFPA Rwanda country office for an amount of **300,000 USD** to “increase access to maternal, sexual and reproductive health, gender based violence prevention and response services to Burundian refugees’ women, adolescents and youth in Mahama camp”.

Through this support **UNFPA** is strengthening Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and GBV interventions in Mahama camp in partnership with the American Refugee Committee (ARC) and Save the Children International from April to December 2018.

The Ambassador is a friend of Mahama Camp

On Wednesday, 21st of November 2018, **Japanese Ambassador, H. E. Takayuki Miyashita**, visited Mahama Camp for the 7th time during his few years as Ambassador in Rwanda. The occasion for his visit was marked by the launch of the newly constructed GBV Safe Space, a space where women and girls, as well as men, feel comfortable and enjoy the freedom to express themselves without the fear of judgment or harm especially those surviving GBV issues.



Two counselling rooms are available to those who enter **the Safe Space** and health care providers can assist women and men by offering testing, emergency contraception, as well as dignity kits. A multi-purpose room in the facility serves as an open space for activities and conversations, in particular among **First Time Young Mothers**, out of which 30 have been selected as peer-mentors in their community.



“Many of us left Burundi without families, some of us have been raped and others are attracted by small gifts offered by men and got impregnated involuntary. We thank ARC for their help with teachings us how to protect ourselves from unwanted pregnancies and providing us with opportunities such as vocational training.” -
Burundian First Time Young Mother



‘IGISHYITO’

Mourning GBV victims
and raising awareness

The delegation also took the opportunity to visit the ‘fire-place activity’, one of many community mobilization approaches among those developed by **Raising Voices in their “SASA! methodology”**. As Burundian culture traditionally uses fire to mourn the deceased, community activists use ‘fireplaces’ to mourn GBV victims while raising awareness.



The fireplace offers a space for social interaction, facilitated by the testimonies of women who have experienced GBV. Theatre performances are also used to convey messages on GBV prevention and on the support available to those who suffer from it.

The Ambassador praised **UNFPA** and **UNHCR** for the effective and efficient work done to support Burundian refugees in Mahama Camp, with the financial support from the Government of Japan. **H.E. Takayuki Miyashita** highlighted the importance of **the Safe Space** to support vulnerable populations, especially women, girls and young mothers. H.E was delighted to hear the ambulance handed over by Japan in June 2018 is contributing to saving lives, with more than 400 referrals including 150 complicated obstetric cases.



“The support of Japan is enabling UNFPA and partners to reach more than 50,000 adolescents and young people with SRH information including HIV, family planning and GBV prevention and management.” - **UNFPA Representative, Mr Mark Bryan Schreiner**



To learn more about the Ambassador’s visit to Mahama camp: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYxv-mmmJBg>