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SUGIRA MURYANGO: SUCCESS STORIES



FXB RWANDA

BOSTON COLLEGE
School of Social Work
RESEARCH PROGRAM ON CHILDREN AND ADVERSITY

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NYANZA DISTRICT



GAINING FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE AND POWER

By: Ndagiwenayo Felicien

In Kibilizi Village, Nikuze Emilienne and Uwizeyimana Jean Baptiste live together with their four children, between the ages of 2 and 16 years old. Before the Sugira Muryango intervention, the family had been living in impoverished conditions and faced difficulty in finding employment or income. They did not have their own land to cultivate and secure food to be able to feed their family.

They had been working as farmers cultivating on a nearby plot of land to earn income, however, the money they were receiving was insufficient to cover the cost of food, pay rent, buy clothes, and cover other expenses. In 2007, the caregivers enrolled in a community savings group, but as they contributed a small amount of money, they were not able to save enough money for all of their expenses.



In 2020, the family's living conditions continued to worsen as they found it increasingly difficult to bring in any money at all. Fortunately, they were supported by the local government which built a house for them. After Nikuze gave birth in 2020, they were encouraged to join Sugira Muryango. The caregivers promised themselves to actively participate in the program, having heard the potential for a strong positive impact on them both as caregivers and partners.

Beginning in Module One, "The Family Narrative," Nikuze and Uwizeyimana recognized their strengths as caregivers and were empowered to make a plan for their family's future goals. They appreciated the IZU for helping them to understand that through working together in harmony, they will be able to achieve prosperity through resilience, patience, and perseverance, even using the small means that they have.

With encouragement from the IZU and Cell Mentor, the family joined a savings group together with other Sugira Muryango participants and started saving a small amount of money. The amount saved combined with money they earned as farmers enabled them to buy a sewing machine in June 2022 which increased the family income. Additionally, as a victim of the 1994 Genocide Against the Tusti, the IZU helped Nikuze access mental health services at the Kanombe Military Hospital, visiting on a semi-regular basis.

His mental health has also improved since participating in Sugira Muryango because he was able to discover more effective ways to communicate with his partner and children.



Nikuze and Uwizeyimana have seen vast improvements to the family's livelihood and financial situation. They are able to attend to basic needs while saving and learning new skills as caregivers to improve the lives of their children. "We have been empowered with new skills through Sugira Muryango and are now able to solve our everyday challenges by working together. I used money I saved in a savings group to buy a sewing machine and have been increasing my monthly income like never before! My family has become very resilient. All these positive impacts could not have been achieved without our participation in the program, " Nikuze said to an IZU after a home visit.



SUGIRA MURYANGO SPARKS A PATH TO A NEW LIFE

By: Mariam Uwizeyimana

In Murehe village, lives Ndutiye Emmanuel and his wife Bucyezeza Lydie with their 8 year old daughter and 4 year old son. Before Emmanuel and Lydie's marriage in 2011, Emmanuel experienced a long period of time where he struggled with drug addiction. Following their marriage, some of Emmanuel's struggles with substance abuse were reflected in the way he negatively treated his wife, Lydie. Oftentimes Emmanuel was arrested and faced years of imprisonment for his actions and multiple offenses, consequently leading to an absence in his family life and their continuous poverty.

In 2016, Emmanuel was arrested due to his misconduct and later released. Reflecting on this time period, Emmanuel shared, "I have decided to give up alcohol and other drugs that used to cause me to commit misconduct in the community". However, even after giving up drugs, Emmanuel continued to struggle to support his family financially and did not include Lydie in any financial decisions about family spendings.

In 2018, after two years of not using drugs, Emmanuel was hired by Sugira Muryango during the Cluster Randomized Trial (CRT). He took part in various trainings and the program helped him make changes in his life by providing him with a support system and strong community relationships.

"I was changed by the Sugira Muryango sessions that taught me how to behave to change my family for future development" said Emmanuel in 2019 after one year with Sugira Muryango.

In 2020, Emmanuel was promoted to Cell Mentor during the Sugira Muryango expansion in Mukingo sector. Being promoted to Cell Mentor was highly beneficial for Emmanuel as it allowed him to be trained in various modules of Sugira Muryango that gradually supported behavior change away from many of his bad habits.

During the intervention, Emmanuel also contributed to IZU training where he facilitated multiple sessions, including Module 9 on the topic of the important role everyone plays in child development.

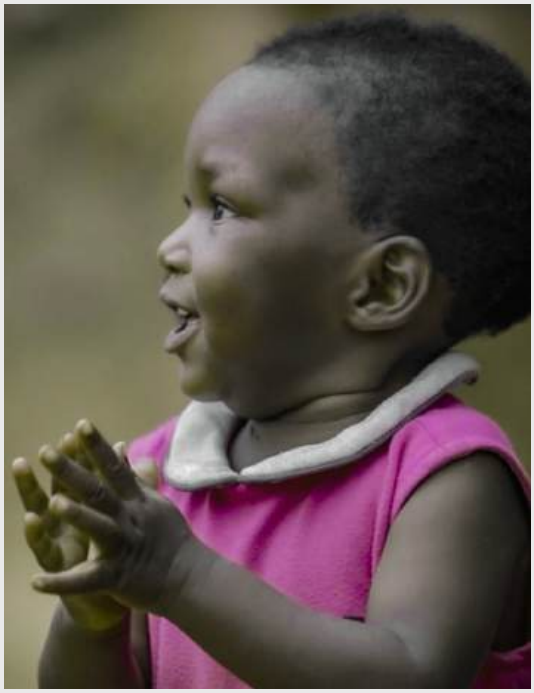
Emmanuel shared that what he learned in Module 9 resonated deeply in helping him realize the importance of healthy parenting and shared household responsibilities in caring for children. After reflecting on the skills that he learned during the program, Emmanuel had a full circle moment in which he decided to talk to his wife about sharing the family financial decision making power and various other family responsibilities and chores. Since then, Emmanuel has realized how important his wife's opinions and ideas are and how crucial they are to the development of their family.

In 2021, Lydie experienced a medical complication that resulted in her being hospitalized for 3 months. During this time, Emmanuel cared for Lydie's health and the children's wellbeing while completing his assigned work for Sugira Muryango. This proved that he was committed to caring for the family and he became well known in his community for his efforts. When Lydie returned home, she was astonished to find out that everything was well organized and that Emmanuel was engaged with the care of their children. He had been washing both his wife's clothing and his children's clothing while also taking care of other household responsibilities.

After this experience, Emmanuel started engaging in other activities to support his family, such as buying livestock and doing at-home arts and crafts related to his work with Sugira Muryango. Emmanuel is extremely thankful for Sugira Muryango. The program gave him the opportunity to serve vulnerable populations while not only earning an income but building skills that were beneficial for him and his family. "Thanks to Sugira Muryango, my behaviors have absolutely changed."

SHARING PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES

By: Ndagiwenayo Felicien



In Kiruhura village, Karimunda Emmanuel lives with his wife Nyiramanywa Pascasie and their daughter and two sons. Emmanuel grew up without either of his parents and Pascasie grew up with a single parent. As a result, after the two married, it was very difficult for them to live harmoniously since neither of them grew up with a role model for a healthy relationship. Emmanuel started struggling with alcoholism which led to him mishandling his family's properties and mistreating Pascasie. He didn't seem to care about sharing the family responsibilities and often left Pascasie alone to tend to their home and take care of their children. Emmanuel's alcohol addiction worsened his family's financial situation, and made him aggressive, often returning home from local bars drunk and verbally abusing Pascasie. The situation steadily worsened and Emmanuel's drinking habit eventually forced his family into extreme poverty.

In June of 2021, Emmanuel and Pascasie were introduced to Sugira Muryango. The program helped Emmanuel gradually change his relationship with his wife and seemed to become the answer to many of the family's struggles. After the Sugira Muryango group welcome session, the IZU assigned to Emmanuel and Pascasie's family began delivering the Sugira Muryango modules during their in-home visits. The IZU made a point of emphasizing key messages from Module 8 to help the family solve their conflicts surrounding Emmanuel's drinking and subsequent aggressive behavior. The IZU highlighted key points from Module 9 which focuses on the role each family member plays in raising a child well and the importance of sharing responsibilities. After engaging in these lessons, Emmanuel and Pascasie started dividing up family responsibilities equally including sharing their ideas with each other and making decisions together. Emmanuel also started treating Pascasie better and they are now able to maintain a healthy and intimate relationship.

This shift in Emmanuel's habits changed the dynamic of their family dramatically and improved the couple's relationship. Emmanuel now takes care of his children and works together with Pascasie to provide for the family. The couple has even joined a savings group created by Sugira Muryango where Emmanuel is learning to save their money instead of spending it on alcohol.



Pascasie is thankful for the Sugira Muryango program and the positive changes it has made to her husband's behavior and the dynamic of her family.

"LIFE COULDN'T BE BETTER NOW THAT WE HAVE RECEIVED THIS PROGRAM. I AM VERY HAPPY WITH THE CHANGE IT HAS BROUGHT ABOUT IN MY FAMILY SUCH AS SEEING MY HUSBAND CARING FOR OUR CHILDREN AND ENGAGING IN DIFFERENT PLAY ACTIVITIES. I WILL ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL FOR THE PROFOUND IMPACTS THE PROGRAM HAS HAD ON MY HUSBAND AND THE CHANGES IT HAS MADE IN HIS BEHAVIORS. THE START OF THE PROGRAM IN JUNE 2021 WAS THE START OF A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH MY HUSBAND. THIS HAS BEEN A YEAR OF MUCH HAPPINESS" SHARED PASCASIE.



The Sugira Muryango program completely changed Emmanuel's attitude towards his family. He has started a new chapter in life in which he supports his wife and provides for his family by tending to chores at home such as bathing the children, preparing meals, and washing the children's clothes.

"WHEN I WAS SINGLE AND LIVING WITH MY GRANDMOTHER I DID NOT LIKE COMPLETING ANY HOUSEHOLD CHORES. I THOUGHT THAT WHEN I FINALLY GOT MARRIED THAT WOULD BE THE BEST TIME FOR ME TO RELAX. AFTER MY MARRIAGE, I FELT THAT ALL HOME RESPONSIBILITIES WERE FOR ONLY MY WIFE. I THOUGHT THAT MY ROLE WAS JUST TO IMPREGNATE HER AND RELAX BY DRINKING LOCAL BEERS. I WOULD BUY MY BEERS USING THE MONEY I GOT FROM SELLING THE HARVESTED CROPS IN MY HOME AND EVEN THE MONEY I EARNED FROM WORKING ON OTHERS' LAND. THIS LED TO CONFLICTS WITH MY WIFE. FORTUNATELY, THE SUGIRA MURYANGO PROGRAM HELPED ME LEARN TO ENGAGE IN EVERY HOME RESPONSIBILITY AND CHILD CARE AS WELL, SOMETHING THAT I WAS NOT ACCUSTOMED TO FOR A VERY LONG TIME."

Expressed by Emmanuel

STIMULATING CHILD DEVELOPMENT THROUGH POSITIVE PARENTING

By: Assumpta Benimana





In Gihimbi Village lives a family with three children across the ages of 30 months, 14 years, and 16 years. Their youngest child was experiencing mobility and speech challenges and although the children's caregivers, Devotha and Clever, traveled to hospitals in Gatagara and Kanombe seeking treatment for their child, they were not met with much success.

Fortunately, this family enrolled in Sugira Muryango and attended the program's welcome session where they shared such concerns with an IZU. The same IZU started delivering the program sessions to the family and continued home visits to share advice related to the early brain stimulation of their child. At the end of the intervention, between Module's 10 and 11, the child struggling with mobility began expressing herself with gestures and even began walking! From then on, they followed the IZU's advice and continued to engage with their child in activities to stimulate her brain development and mobility.

During the closing session, Devotha shared with other participating households how happy and full of positive emotions she was with her daughter's improvements. After engaging in Sugira Muryango, there have been numerous positive changes in her daughter's life – she can call her siblings by their names and is now able to walk by herself! It was truly fantastic for her parents to see their child learn to speak and walk more than before. After the intervention, her parents promised to continue to help her develop. Her mother shares, ***"I have hope that there will be a time when I will see my child living a good life without the complications."***



THE SUCCESS OF A REFERRAL WELL FOLLOWED

By: Assumpta Benimana

In Uwabushingwe Village, lives Sikubwabo Emmanuel, his wife Mushimiyimana Clenia with their three-year-old daughter, Ikaze Niyibikora Chanceline, and her grandmother, Liberata. When Clenia was pregnant, she experienced some complications that resulted in a late birth and some signs of neonatal asphyxia when Chanceline was born. Chanceline was Clenia and Emmanuel's first child and they loved her unconditionally. Chanceline grew steadily and to Clenia and Emmanuel, she never showed any signs or symptoms of developmental delay.

In June 2021, Emmanuel and Clenia joined Sugira Muryango's intervention and received their first home visit with their IZU. During their first few sessions, which consisted of play activities, the IZU, and Clenia noticed that Chanceline was showing signs of a developmental problem. "During the period of 15 minutes of play, we noticed that Chanceline's movement was not enough considering her age." The IZU expressed that Chanceline was probably experiencing a developmental delay in terms of movement. "The IZU and a community health worker from the village advised me to take Chanceline to the health center" Clenia, Chanceline's mother, shared. Chanceline received a consultation and the nurse recommended that she be transferred to a different hospital where she would receive further treatment and support.

While following up on module delivery, it became apparent that this family had been missed from the home visitation due to Clenia and Chanceline's extended visit to the Hospital. During the fifth module, the Mukingo Sector Level Associate made arrangements so that the entire module could be delivered in the hospital.



Meanwhile, Emmanuel and Liberata received these sessions from home. After two months, Clenia and Chanceline were finally able to leave the hospital, but the Sector Level Associate continued to follow up with them and advocate for further treatment of Chanceline. In October of 2021, the Sector Level Associate advocated to the Child Protection Welfare Officer to support Chanceline's medical bills for her specialized care. As a result, the family was provided with the funds to continue her therapy.

The Sugira Muryango program positively impacted Chanceline's life through numerous referrals among different stakeholders. As of now, Chanceline is seldom moving, but Clenia assures there have been many improvements in her development since when they first noticed something was wrong. Chanceline can now steadily sit on a chair which is something she was unable to do prior to the intervention. Clenia shared that "there has been a change and I have hope that my child will be good and will be able to speak. Even though she doesn't speak properly, Chanceline knows everything, she is open and she is aware of saying Papa and Mama. I have hope that one day she will speak."

The family is very grateful for the role Sugira Muryango Program has played in their lives because it has taught them to interact with their child and has connected them with people that have given their child the support she needs.

"I NOW KNOW HOW TO STIMULATE MY CHILD DUE TO THE SKILLS I'VE GAINED FROM SUGIRA MURYANGO AND FROM THE GATAGARA HOSPITAL WHICH BOTH HELP ME INTERACT WITH MY CHILD THROUGH PLAY. I HAVE A HOPE THAT MY CHANCELINE WILL FINALLY BE GOOD ONE DAY."
SAID BY CLENIA.



NGOMA DISTRICT



NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE

By: Clementine Mukaneza

In Nyagasenga Village lives the family of Habimana Straton and his wife Mukadusabe Francine. They married in 2005 and welcomed their first child, Odille, in 2006 and soon after, they had three more children. Before the Sugira Muryango intervention, Straton and Francine did not help each other raise their children or with different household chores. Straton admits that he was irresponsible and this resulted in domestic disputes and often, Francine accused Straton of being the main cause of their stressful life. Luckily, this family was enrolled in the Sugira Muryango program.

In June 2021, when an IZU called Vedaste, delivered Module 1, Family Narrative, Straton realized that not only did they not share household responsibilities, but they did not pay health insurance in a timely manner, they had no pen for domestic animals and no kitchen garden, and they had poor household hygiene. The family lived in an unsafe environment as Francine was overloaded with all of the household responsibilities and therefore could not properly tend to each of them alone. Straton did not have a real understanding about gender equality and this was the main reason why he never helped his wife with various household responsibilities.

After Vedaste collected information during his delivery of the family narrative, it was time for him to begin providing advice for Francine and Straton on what they needed to adjust in order to live in a united, clean, and healthy environment. While he was providing advice according to the Sugira Muryango content, Vedaste noticed again that Francine was overloaded. He took the initiative to provide Francine and Straton with knowledge and skills and he especially highlighted the importance of sharing household responsibilities and gender equality in every module. Vedaste continued to deliver different modules in this household as intended and watched as Francine and Straton started to improve their physical household by renovating their toilet, using a tippy tap to wash hands, building a kitchen garden and sweeping both inside and outside of the house.

In August 2021, Vedaste visited Francine and Straton to deliver Module 9, the important role that everyone plays in raising a baby well. Vedaste had a short conversation with both Francine and Straton on gender equality to ensure they were keeping these principles in mind.



Francine said that she was happy with the skills they learned in Sugira Muryango because she and Straton started to share household responsibilities and she was no longer overloaded. Straton added that they joined a Sugira Muryango savings group and the earnings that they gained from this group helped them both buy yearly health insurance for all of their family members and build a pen for their domestic animals. Vedaste encouraged them to continue helping each other in every activity and practicing all of the skills they had learned during the program as this would be the key to happiness in their family.

In January 2022 when Vedaste and the Cell Mentor, Anualita came back to Francine and Straton's family to deliver a 3 month booster session, Vedaste realized that the lessons he had taught this family had created a deep change. Within the three months after they had completed the program, Francine and Straton had given their house a new coat of paint. While Vedaste was talking to Francine, Straton and their family, Straton took the time to thank Vedaste and Sugira Muryango for the skills they provided him and his family:



"NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE! I HAD A BAD UNDERSTANDING ABOUT GENDER EQUALITY AND BEFORE, I KNEW THAT MEN ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING FOR HIS FAMILY ONLY, WHILE ALL REMAINING HOUSEHOLD DUTIES WERE ADDRESSED TO WOMEN BUT I APPRECIATED SUGIRA MURYANGO ON THE CRUCIAL LESSONS THEY TAUGHT US. WITHOUT HESITATION I HAVE CHANGED MY MINDSET AND NOW I'M PROUD TO WASH MY KIDS, HELP MY WIFE COOK, AND WE WORK TOGETHER ON DIFFERENT HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES. WE ARE A HAPPY AND UNITED FAMILY."

(RECORDED BY ANUALITA (CM) ON 21 JANUARY 2022 WHILE VISITING THE FAMILY)

A NEW ROLE MODEL FOR FELLOW FATHERS

By: Mvuyekure Patrick



When Elias and his wife Priscila were married in 2015 they were very poor. They had no shelter, no plots for farming, and they had to get all of their food and other necessities through cultivating on the land of their neighbors and community members. Now that they have two young children, Aliane and Crispin, the couple continues to struggle to adequately provide for their family.

On June 1, 2021, Elias participated in a Sugira Muryango group welcome session for caregivers that was being hosted in the village he was living in. As a caregiver who was experiencing hardships with his family, Elias attended the welcome session hoping to learn how Sugira Muryango would help him solve his family's struggles. Elias soon realized that Sugira Muryango would not be supporting him and his family through financial compensation and decided to drop out of the program.

When the IZU, Dativa, first visited Elias and Priscila's family to deliver the Family Narrative module, Elias did not attend the session. Dativa noticed his absence and asked Priscila why Elias was not there. Priscila explained that if Sugira Muryango was not going to provide their family with money, Elias did not want to participate.

Dativa decided to bring a male IZU, Emmanuel, with her to the next session to help address this challenge. Together, the two IZU's urged Elias to participate in the Sugira Muryango curriculum and emphasized the importance of its positive effects on child development. After talking with the IZU's, Elias came to see how the program would help him and his family in ways that he may not have previously thought were possible and asked if they could switch their meeting times to Sunday's so that he could attend them.

From then on, Elias attended all of the sessions through Module 12. Elias felt particularly touched and inspired by a story that Dativa shared during Module 9,"The Important Role that Everyone Plays in Raising a Baby Well," which talked about a family who went to visit another family and were able to witness how they help each other and share household chores. The father realized he had been leaving all home chores to his wife to do by herself. It forced Elias to think about his role in the household and how he never helped Priscila with chores or making decisions for the family and how this often led to disputes.

Elias decided to talk to Priscila about adjusting their family dynamic and him helping more with responsibilities at home. After their conversation, Elias started helping Priscila more. He would watch over their children while Priscila was cooking and made an effort to engage in stimulating activities with them such as making toys and reading stories to them before bed. Using what he learned in the Sugira Muryango modules regarding nutrition and hygiene, Elias built a kitchen garden and a tippy tap for his family. He also used his monthly savings to purchase a jerry can for boiling water and iron sheets to expand his family's home.

In September of 2021, three months after Elias and his family had started the Sugira Muryango program, Elias attended the group closing session with a very happy heart and a poem that he wrote and hoped to share called "Ndate Sugira Muryango". When the session-lead called on the caregivers to share their testimonies, Elias read his poem aloud and talked about how he had recently noticed that his youngest child had a certain curiosity and was even more eager to learn than his eldest. He shared how he is now much more comfortable and confident in interacting with his son because he has a better understanding of child development and a child's needs. He concluded his talk by excitedly sharing how he had started the Sugira Muryango program in a small home and how he recently expanded it for his family.

After completing the Sugira Muryango program, Elias decided to join a Father Champion group which is a group of fathers and male caregivers that support each other in cultivation and household responsibilities such as making home waste bins and kitchen gardens. They also discuss and review the Sugira Muryango modules. Thinking that there might be caregivers in this group who are like him and had originally thought they needed to receive money or other tangible benefits to participate in the program, Elias continually shares with his fellow fathers and caregivers that money is not always the solution to their problems.





RECONNECTING IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

By: Felix Uwamahirwe

In a remote area of Akarambaraye Village, Joselyne Mukaneza, a single mother, lives with her three year old daughter Lucky Ange Ineza. Joselyne has moved around a lot. She lived with her parents until they passed away in 2015 which instigated her move to her sisters home. She was forced to move out and live alone when her sister got married. Shortly after, Joselyne's niece who was pregnant at the time asked to come live with Joselyne. While Joseylne was happy to help her niece, the responsibility of taking care of both her own daughter and her pregnant niece started to overwhelm her.

Joselyne found it difficult to adequately provide for both herself, her daughter, *and* her niece who was going to have a child soon. To make more money, Joselyne started cultivating on the land of her community members, often working for an entire week and still not having enough money to feed her and her child. Joselyne began feeling intensely stressed, anxious, depressed and alone in her struggles which caused her to socially isolate herself. This only worsened her feelings of loneliness. Joselyne felt hopeless because it seemed that neither her family members nor her community could help her solve her problems. As her anxiety and depression worsened, she found herself not only unable to make necessary improvements to her home in preparation for the arrival of her niece's daughter, but unable to keep herself or home clean.

In June 2021, Joselyne participated in the Sugira Muryango Group welcome session that took place in her home village. During the session she had the opportunity to meet other families including many single mothers who were living under conditions similar to herself. Joselyne had wondered how Sugira Muryango was going to help her solve her family issues, but she soon viewed the program as an opportunity to positively change her whole life. The Sugira Muryango modules taught Joselyne critical skills to cope with the stresses of family life that had led to her loneliness and social isolation. Joselyne also learned to apply these skills in response to different problems that she encountered in the future.

As a single mother, Joselyne was particularly appreciative of Module 2, "The Importance of Early Stimulation". In this module, Joselyne came to understand how important it is to play with your child not only for the child's benefit, but for her own benefit as well. Joselyne also realized how happy she was whenever she engaged and played with her daughter. Participating in Sugira Muryango even inspired Joselyne to join a local church choir which became another source of renewed joy for Joselyne.

In July 2021, Joselyne decided to form a savings group with some of the other participants she had met through the Sugira Muryango program. The group meets regularly to share business ideas and their experiences as parents giving them the space and opportunity to learn how to manage common challenges together. This savings group has helped ease her loneliness and has taught her how to save her money and put it towards larger purchases such as the three new hens she bought that are now providing her with eggs she can use to feed her daughter. Joselyne has even borrowed capital from her savings group in order to start trading fruits and vegetables at local markets.



Most importantly, participating in the Sugira Muryango program and joining this saving group has taught Joselyne how to support herself and her family and how to be resilient. Joselyne believes her life was deeply impacted by the Sugira Muryango Intervention and she is able to identify all of the positive changes it has brought to her personal and family life.

During one of her savings group meetings Joselyne shared, "Loneliness hurts; no matter what form it takes or when it strikes, it is perhaps the most painful emotion I have ever experienced after the death of my parents. I had been living a life of social isolation, **but I was finally able to connect with other people through the Sugira Muryango program**."

LEARNING TO LOVE DIFFERENCE

By: Umubyeyi Victoire



Nyirabagenzi Claudine and her husband Semuhutu Bernard live together with their six children. One of their children, Alice, was born with a mental and physical disability that also impairs her hearing and speech. Despite her disability, Alice is able to walk and use her hands and has found her own way to express her feelings and emotions. Before Sugira Muryango, Claudine and Bernard were ashamed of Alice which made her the victim of much physical and emotional abuse. Not only would Claudine and Bernard refuse to let Alice leave the house, but if she tried to, they would beat her. They didn't give Alice the same opportunities as their other children when it came to expressing her emotions or trying something new and they rarely bathed her or washed her clothes. This physical and emotional neglect left Alice feeling very frustrated, isolated, and lonely.

When an IZU named Damascene first visited Claudine and Bernard's family to deliver the first module of Sugira Muryango, Alice tried to join the meeting and her parents immediately told her to return to the house. Claudine and Bernard felt ashamed to have a child with a disability and didn't want other people to know, so they did their best to always hide Alice from the public. After witnessing how Claudine and Bernard treated Alice, Damascene explained to them that disability is in fact not the same as inability. Damascene reminded the couple that not only is it not their fault that Alice has a disability, but it is not Alice's fault either. It was imperative that Claudine and Bernard learned to love their child and her disability and began treating her like they did their other children. Damascene explained how a person with a disability is just as capable and important as any one else and if they gave Alice the same opportunities to succeed as their other children she would excel. It was important that Claudine and Bernard's family realize that Alice has the same rights as everyone else – she has a right to play, she has a right to eat, she has a right to health care, she has a right to education, and she has a right to express her emotions. This fundamental understanding was vital to them shifting how they treated their daughter.

Alice's parents finally started to understand that their daughter is a person who has the same rights as any other person. From then on, Claudine and Bernard started to allow Alice to leave the house, interact with others, and freely express her emotions. They accepted that their daughter, despite having a disability, was very capable and deserved to have access to the same opportunities as any other person. This change in treatment and mindset benefitted Alice greatly and made her quite happy. Now, whenever Alice sees Damascene or the cell mentor who observes her family's at-home sessions she smiles at them and gives them each a hug. Though Alice is not able to talk, the way she individually expresses her emotions conveys her gratitude and so much more.

In addition to their struggles with their daughter Alice, Claudine and Bernard had very poor hygiene and a poorly kept home. They were uncertain as to whether or not it was good to wash their bodies and clothes regularly, so they neglected washing both themselves and their children. Claudine and Bernard's family had even become known within their community for being unclean and this often resulted in neighbors calling them names and considered them as *the* family with poor hygiene. Claudine and Bernard started to grow accustomed with this identity, making them increasingly unsure of how to separate themselves from it and change their family's habits. Given the importance of hygiene when it comes to a family's overall health and wellness, it was important that Sugira Muryango provided Claudine and Bernard with the tools to improve and maintain their family's hygiene.





During her IZU training, Damascene was taught Sugira Muryango values – humility, avoiding judgment and criticism, neutrality, active listening, compassion, love, empathy, and respect. When presenting each module to Claudine and Bernard's family, Damascene relied on these values to build a strong relationship with the family and help them open up and share their stories. Therefore, when Damascene reached the fourth module, which focuses on the importance of good hygiene, this family was very interested and willing to be honest about their challenges with this topic.

Damascene conducted her homevisit during the hygiene module with the utmost respect and the family responded with openness and optimism for each passing visit. Damascene made it a point to acknowledge even the smallest successes and regularly recognized and praised the family's efforts. She also assisted them in practical household chores such as making a kitchen garden, washing dishes, and more. Claudine and Bernard had accepted the name their village had given them and become inadvertently attached to it, but Damascene and other Sugira Muryango staff helped them to detach from this identity by teaching them simple hygiene skills and practices. By the end of the intervention, Claudine and Bernard's family came to understand the importance of hygiene and had improved their hygiene by cleaning their house, themselves, and their clothes on a regular basis. In fact, their hygiene improved to a point where the whole community had noticed and praised them for the positive change.



In May 2022, when the cell mentor visited the family to see how they had improved, Bernard shared,

> "I CANNOT EXPLAIN HOW HAPPY I FEEL AND HOW GRATEFUL I AM FOR THE SUPPORT OF SUGIRA MURYANGO. OUR CHILD NOW BELONGS TO THE FAMILY AND WE DON'T FEEL ASHAMED OF HER, BUT RATHER WE ARE PROUD OF HER. WE CARE ABOUT HER AS WE DO OUR OTHER CHILDREN. SHE HAS BEEN GIVEN HER RIGHT AND OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY WITH OTHER CHILDREN, EXPRESS HER EMOTIONS, AND SHE IS FREE TO DO WHATEVER SHE WANTS JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE. OUR CHILD IS HAPPY NOW AS YOU CAN SEE."

Claudine and Bernard shared how they had "stopped calling [Alice] bad names" and how "everybody is excited about the change we have made (Hygiene improvement)". They told the cell mentor that a local government official (executive secretary) requested other people to "improve their hygiene like our family has. **Local government officials use our home as a role model even in community meetings".**

FROM NEGLECTFUL TO NURTURING: TRANSFORMING ATTITUDES TOWARD FATHERHOOD

By: Felix Uwamahirwe



Before receiving the Sugira Muryango Program, Damascene and Sylvie both agreed that Damascene was not very engaged in their household. Previously, Sylvie carried out all household chores with little to no support from Damascene. She needed help taking care of their twins, especially when cultivating, but Damascene did not understand the importance of his involvement in child-rearing and home activities. After cultivating, he would usually spend time with his friends instead of helping Sylvie, which caused regular disagreements between them.

In June 2021, Damascene and Sylvie participated in the Group Welcome Session alongside other Sugira Muryango participants in the village. The family was paired with a male IZU named Nzabonimpa Deogratias who encouraged Damascene to attend and actively participate in the sessions.

Damascene and Sylvie were coached together by the IZU on all modules of the Sugira Muryango Curriculum but especially on Module 2, "Early Stimulation" and Module 9 "The Important Role that Everyone Plays in Raising a Baby Well." Throughout the intervention, Sylvie saw that her husband changed both his attitude and behavior and began supporting her at home by raising the children and attending to chores such as fetching water, collecting firewood, and even cooking.

"I was suddenly so surprised seeing my twin children playing with my husband using homemade toys. It was also astonishing to see him gathering green vegetables and cooking food for the children when I was busy with other home activities," Sylvie stated during a Cell Mentor supervision session in July 2022.

During the Group Closing Sessions that took place in September 2021, Damascene was happy to share how the Sugira Muryango program improved the lives of himself and his family.

"I WAS SO CURIOUS ABOUT HOW THE SUGIRA MURYANGO PROGRAM WILL SUPPORT MY FAMILY SINCE WE ARE AMONG THE VULNERABLE PEOPLE OF RUSHUBI VILLAGE. I WAS THINKING THAT LIKE OTHER PROJECTS THAT PROVIDED MONEY TO THE VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN ZAZA SECTOR, SUGIRA MURYANGO WOULD PROBABLY DO THE SAME. HOWEVER, WHAT I GAINED FROM PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROGRAM WAS REMARKABLE. MY CHILDREN NOW HAVE A REAL FATHER WHO IS TAKING PART IN RAISING THEM AND ALSO HELPING HIS WIFE. I NOW REALIZE THAT MY CHILDREN WERE BEING DEPRIVED OF MY CARE."



RUBAVU DISTRICT



A VILLAGE TRANSFORMED

By: MUSEKURA Mathias, Village Leader

Upon describing what Bweza Village looked like before the Sugira Muryango intervention, Mr. Mathias, the Village Leader described various social issues from children dropping out of school, conflicts among families, unsafe toilets, lack of kitchen gardens in households, to the use of harsh punishment with children. Along with this, some IZUs were also not fulfilling their normal responsibilities of supporting families. When the IZUs of this village started delivering the Sugira Muryango modules through home visiting, many participating families expressed that the program came at a very crucial time to help them address issues they were facing.

Through various training, IZUs were equipped with skills that improved their professionality and problem solving within families across the Bweza Village.

In fact, following IZU involvement in households, families learned how to resolve their conflicts positively, engage with children in ways that stimulated their growth, build their own toilets, keep their homes clean and tidy, and prepare well-balanced diets. The participants of Bweza Village have expressed the utmost appreciation to Sugira Muryango and the IZUs for helping them learn important skills for promoting community and early childhood development and shared responsibilities in child care.

"Through working in partnership with the Sugira Muryango program as a Village Leader, I have acquired many skills related to Early Childhood Development and how to support the children in their holistic development. The skills I gained will allow me to keep providing advice to the other populations of Bweza village whom I am assigned to lead." Mathias asserted.



CHANGING BELIEFS, BUILDING BETTER HOMES: THE POWER OF SHARED PARENTING



Bisengimana Gaston and his wife Murorunkwere Alice live with their seven children, four boys, and three girls, in Rurenge Village in the western province of Rwanda. Prior to the Sugira Muryango program, Gaston and his family were experiencing many challenges related to extreme poverty, misunderstanding of gender roles, and unequal caretaking/home responsibilities. Alice was primarily responsible for all of the household chores, while Gaston made all of the financial decisions without consulting Alice. This unequal distribution of responsibilities worried Alice as they navigated parenting for their large family.

After experiencing some initial challenges with enrollment into the Sugira Muryango program regarding Ubudehe categorization, Gaston's family was successfully enrolled and was assigned to an IZU that delivered the 12 SM modules.

Gaston mentioned that all of the modules were helpful, but sessions discussing the importance of uniting families through shared parenting roles especially resonated. Those modules helped Gaston and Alice understand that sharing household responsibilities and making decisions together is crucial for effective parenting.

While sharing his story, Gaston exclaimed, ***"Prior to the start of SM sessions, I used to think that child care and household chores are meant for women and not men. But after gaining the knowledge from the modules, I decided to change my mindset and I started helping my partner care for our children and even complete other household chores."***

He continued by sharing how he now recognizes that his wife was struggling with all of the caretaking tasks and household chores.

Before SM, Gaston's mindset reflected their cultural gender norms that shamed men for engaging in domestic chores that were normally done by women.

"TODAY I AM PROUD OF SHARING HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES AND DECISIONS WITH MY WIFE. WE HAVE IMPROVED OUR MINDSETS AND OUR FINANCIAL SITUATION. WE JOINED A SAVING GROUP AND WE ARE HAPPY," GASTON SHARED. AT HOME, GASTON ENSURES THERE IS A MORE EQUITABLE DIVISION OF LABOR, "NOW I HAVE THE SAME AMOUNT OF RESPONSIBILITIES AS MY WIFE IN ALL DOMESTIC CHORES. I BATHE OUR CHILDREN OR FETCH WATER WITHOUT ANY SHAME," GASTON EXPRESSED WITH LAUGHTER AND CONFIDENCE.

After making significant changes following the Sugira Muryango program, Gastion is doing much better at sharing responsibilities with Alice and has even become a role model for the rest of the men within his community. He was elected to be the Village Leader and quickly became an Opinion Leader within his Cell. The future plan for Gaston's family is to graduate from the 2nd Ubudehe category. Alice and Gaston are both thankful for the Sugira Muryango Program and the way it has helped them change their beliefs, resolve conflicts, and build a better home.



REBUILDING HOPE

By: Rubavu SLA



Mukamanzi Florence and her husband Habiyaremye Jean Damascene live together with their eight children in a small village in Rubavu District. Florence and her husband earn money to support their family through cultivation on their land and sometimes their neighbor's land. Tragically, in June 2021, their house was destroyed by the volcanic eruption of Mount Nyiragongo in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The impacts, both physical and emotional, were devastating and left Florence and Damascene's family homeless. Despite the destruction of their house, the caregivers continued to participate in the Sugira Muryango intervention and received the sessions given by IZU Twizerimana Ferdinand, all while living temporarily in their neighbors' homes.

Given that the family didn't live in their own home, this made it challenging for Ferdinand to successfully deliver the home visitation modules.

Upon navigating this situation, Ferdinand came up with the idea of advocating to the Anglican Project RW 826 which was helping families that were homeless, including those that were affected by natural disasters during this time. Ferdinand dedicated himself to advocating for Florence and Damascene's acceptance to the Anglican Project. He explained the severity of living conditions this family was undergoing and how much the Anglican Projects' additional support alongside Sugira Muryango would improve this family's recovery and overall well-being. With great thanks to Ferdinand's efforts, the Anglican Project RW 826 committee agreed to support this household since the family was in a critical situation similar to other participants of the Anglican Church of Nyamyumba.





In February 2022, when Ferdinand was delivering the 3-months booster session, the Anglican Project began to build a house with five rooms for this family. Shortly thereafter, the house was finally complete and the Anglican Project celebrated the achievement of building Florence and Damascene's new home with the support of cell officials. This family greatly appreciates not only the support of the Anglican Project, but Sugira Muryango and Ferdinands' role in helping them meet both their physical and emotional needs. Once faced with destruction, this family now has a new home and skills that have equipped them for the future.



HEALING THROUGH SUPPORT: JACQUELINE'S STORY WITH SUGIRA MURYANGO

By: Uwanyirigira Roselyne



In Kiziguro Village lives a single mother, Mukagatare Jacqueline, and her 5 biological children. Although Jacqueline had fallen in love with her husband and the father of five children, her family did not want her to get married to him. Despite this, Jacqueleine married him in 2000 and years later after their fourth child was born, Jacqueline and her husband went through a painful separation. In 2006, Jacqueline's husband left her alone with their four children to live with another wife. Nevertheless, the husband used to come back to Jacqueline's home to temporarily live with her. After a while, Jacqueline and her children sold their house and relocated from Rutsiro District to Rubavu District where they hoped to find a new home. Unfortunately, after their relocation, Jacqueline's husband misused the money Jacqueline made from selling their house by spending it all. "This dishonesty affected me a lot both mentally and emotionally in such a way that it made me sick," Jacqueline said.

In 2011, Jacqueline's husband completely refused to come back to Jacqueline's home and again married another woman he was living with.

These difficulties that Jacqueline faced with her husband and her living situation caused her to be miserable with pain and stress. Jacqueline started to struggle in raising her children alone and began feeling helpless. Without the support of another caregiver and under the stress and pain she was experiencing, Jacqueline did not have the time or patience to play with her children and instead began punishing them harshly and emotionally abusing them.

A short time ago, when Jacqueline was still in difficult living conditions, "I unexpectedly made the mistake of getting pregnant and giving birth to my fifth child Irashoboye Deborah which made me eligible to be a Sugira Muryango participant. I was accidentally impregnated by another man and after

giving birth I did not love my child at all until the Sugira Muryango intervention. My family had abandoned me, I didn't have anyone to talk to about my problems, and I soon sought to take my life regardless of my children who would be left alone to struggle through life without their mother." Jacqueline expressed that the solution to her suffering was the Sugira Muryango program. Having her fifth child was her pathway to being eligible to participate in the Sugira Muryango program.

In June 2021, the designated Sugira Muryango IZU visited and helped Jacqueline address some of the challenges she was facing. Jacqueline received the sessions including Module 2 on early stimulation which helped her learn not only how to play with her child and make home-made toys, but how to love her young child. Through play activities and the Module 7 stress management session, Jacqueline learned to practice deep breathing whenever her children would make mistakes before disciplining them. Jacqueline also practiced positive thinking to help her cope with her husband's dishonesty. She even joined the church choir of ADPER, where she spends a lot of time and has met many new friends and community members which have helped relieve some of her loneliness.

Jacqueline received another important session on good nutrition and hygiene during which she learned how to prepare a well-balanced meal and diet, how to make a kitchen garden, and how to keep the house clean as well. Jacqueline said that ***'Sugira Muryango was the solution to [my] problems, but when the village leader came to enroll [me] in the program, [I] had doubts that the village leader wanted to deceive [me]. However, it was totally different from that because the sessions [I] received from the Sugira Muryango program completely changed [me] in many different ways. It especially changed [my] thoughts, behaviors and emotions, and [I] became free from stress and the pain of not having someone that could help [me] and talk with [me]."***

Ultimately, Jacqueline is grateful to the Sugira Muryango Program and the great support she received through the IZU who delivered her home visit sessions.





BUILDING RESILIENCE AND EMPOWERING WOMEN IN NYANTOVU VILLAGE

By: Valens Habinshuti

Niyitegeka Drocella is a single mother who lives in Nyantovu Village, works as a tailor, and also volunteers as an Ishuti z'Umuryango. Since becoming trained in Sugira Muryango, Drocella has worked with many wonderful families that have participated in the program and has personally joined a Sugira Muryango savings group. Together, these experiences have deeply impacted Drocella's life.

When the Sugira Muryango program started in Drocella's village, IZUs participated in a ten day training to learn how to conduct home visits and deliver each module to families. For each of the different modules, IZUs learned various skills across the topics of nutrition, conflict resolution, and early stimulation to then pass along to their assigned families. During the group welcome session, Sugira Muryango staff advised the IZUs to work very closely with the participating families and encouraged them to create saving groups to both financially support themselves and improve their resilience.

"THE BASIC TRAINING THAT I RECEIVED FROM THE SUGIRA MURYANGO PROGRAM SUPPORTED ME IN FULFILLING MY RESPONSIBILITIES. I LEARNED SKILLS ABOUT PROBLEM SOLVING, THE ROLE PLAYED BY EVERYONE IN RAISING A CHILD, HOW TO MAKE TOYS BY USING AVAILABLE MATERIALS AND NOT BUYING THEM FROM THE SHOP, HOW TO PREPARE A WELL-BALANCED DIET, AND HOW TO IMPROVE HYGIENE AND SANITATION," DROCELLA SHARED.



Due to the advice and guidance she received from participating in Sugira Muryango training and during PLAY Collaborative meetings, Drocella was able to learn crucial skills that helped her increase her financial freedom and confidence and save even more in the savings group. The Sugira Muryango program taught Drocella that working as a team to save a certain amount of money plays an important role in both family and community development. Regularly saving a small amount of income that her and her fellow caregivers each earned enabled them all to provide for their families and improve their living conditions immensely.

Beyond the savings group, Drocella felt deeply impacted by the enrolled families in the Sugira Muryango program. Each family appreciated the skills Drocella taught them and were inspired to become role models in their community. This overwhelming positive response made Drocella feel she had a purpose and that the work she had done truly had a positive impact on her community.

