



## INTRAEALTH IN RWANDA

### Strengthening Providers, Systems and Communities

Often referred to as the “land of a thousand hills,” Rwanda is a beautiful country with rich and varied wildlife. While it is hard to think of Rwanda and not recall the civil war and genocide of the 1990s that claimed nearly a million lives, the country is making strides with strong government leadership. Rwanda faces one of the most severe shortages of qualified nurses and physicians in Africa, however, and its health care system is heavily burdened by HIV/AIDS and malaria.

For almost two decades, IntraHealth has assisted the Rwandan government to address complex health care needs. IntraHealth’s wide-ranging efforts in Rwanda, funded by USAID, focus on building the capacity of health workers, strengthening the systems that support them, and helping communities develop and sustain health care solutions for the country’s burgeoning population.



#### Strengthening the Health Workforce

*Policy and planning:* IntraHealth supported the development of Rwanda’s 2005-2009 human resources for health strategy and policy and has pre-tested and refined an Internet-based human resources information system (HRIS) that is enabling the Ministry of Health (MOH) to track almost 5,000 public-sector employees. The HRIS is intended to facilitate long-term, data-driven workforce planning. Previously, IntraHealth assisted the government to draft a national policy on reproductive health for Rwanda, signed by the Minister of Health in July 2003.

*Nursing and midwifery education:* To strengthen pre-service education at the MOH’s five nursing schools, IntraHealth supported the January 2007 launch of new registered nursing and nurse-midwifery programs. In partnership with the MOH-led nursing curricula development team, IntraHealth completed competency-based integrated HIV/AIDS, gender and family planning modules for the three-year program. Assistance also included renovation of classrooms and facilities and purchase of training equipment and resources.

#### Building a Foundation for Community-Based Care

For more than seven years, IntraHealth has worked to establish and increase membership in community-run health insurance programs (*mutuelles*) and community-based teams that partner with health providers to solve problems and improve health services. These efforts have contributed to significant increases in the number of people receiving health care services. As part of the government’s decentralization of health care, IntraHealth administers small grants—District Incentive Funds—that promote good governance and give local authorities additional resources for creating healthier communities. These initiatives range from bringing electricity to health facilities to providing citizens with goats whose products can help pay families’ *mutuelle* membership dues.

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*Our partners include:*

• Capacity Project: JHPIEGO

• HIV/AIDS Clinical Services Program:  
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• Twubakane Program: RTI  
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*IntraHealth is also a partner on the  
Rwanda HIV/Performance Based  
Financing Project, which is led by  
Management Sciences for Health.*

### **Developing HIV/AIDS Clinical Services**

IntraHealth is assisting three hospitals and 27 health centers to increase access to HIV/AIDS services. The expanded services include voluntary counseling and testing for HIV, prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT), antiretroviral therapy (ART), palliative care and treatment for tuberculosis co-infection. More than 14,000 pregnant women received comprehensive PMTCT services from October 2006 through June 2007. The program has substantially increased the involvement of male partners in PMTCT, with 78% now agreeing to HIV testing. Through the community-health provider teams, IntraHealth also supports HIV prevention services.

*Mobile district physicians:* In the context of Rwanda's shortage of doctors, IntraHealth introduced an approach to expand access to ART in which mobile physicians travel weekly to district health centers. Since October 2005, these visiting doctors have reached nearly 10,000 HIV-positive clients with ART services and treatment of opportunistic illnesses at 14 remote sites.

### **Increasing Access to Family Planning Services**

In support of the government's initiative to increase access to family planning in Rwanda, IntraHealth is building the capacity of hospital and health center clinical staff in 23 of the country's 30 districts to provide a full range of family planning services, including long-term and permanent methods. In addition, we support national policy revision, curricula development and the efforts of district mayors and local authorities to champion family planning. IntraHealth has also established secondary posts that offer modern family planning methods to clients of Catholic-supported health facilities where those methods are unavailable. At 25 facilities, family planning counseling and services have been integrated into PMTCT services. From April 2005-June 2007, almost 70% of HIV-positive women who received family planning counseling accepted a modern family planning method.

### **Fighting Malaria and Malnutrition; Promoting Child Health**

IntraHealth is working to ensure that child health services address malaria, which accounts for almost half of hospital visits in Rwanda, and malnutrition, which affects nearly half of Rwandan children under five. Since March 2006, more than 700 community volunteers have been trained to identify and manage malaria cases house-by-house in their districts. Community health workers are also trained to treat children suffering from diarrhea and pneumonia.

### **Addressing Gender-Based Violence**

With sponsorship from the Ministry of Justice, IntraHealth conducted an assessment of workplace violence and sexual harassment in 15 districts. The study aims to increase the awareness of health-system decision makers about the prevalence and impact of gender-based violence in Rwandan health workplaces and ways to address the violence through policy, legal advocacy and programs.

IntraHealth has integrated content on gender-based violence counseling into nursing and midwifery school curricula. We are also studying health provider responses to evidence of gender-based violence during antenatal consultations and PMTCT services.

*IntraHealth International mobilizes local talent to create sustainable and accessible health care in developing countries. A not-for-profit organization, IntraHealth has worked in more than 50 countries over the last three decades.*

*Photos: Christopher Wilson Creative | Photos should not be construed as indicating the health status of persons depicted.*