

Menya wirinde!



“MENYA WIRINDE” CHATBOT FOR ADOLESCENT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (ASRHR)

A PILOT FUNDED BY GRAND CHALLENGES CANADA 'STARS IN GLOBAL HEALTH'

BACKGROUND

In Rwanda, 74% of new HIV infections are in young girls (15-19 years) and early pregnancy rates are rising. The age of sexual debut is dropping, and adolescents report high levels of coercion in their sexual relationships.ⁱ Increasingly, young Rwandans are using digital technologies to learn about sex, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and initiate and sustain relationships. While there are benefits to this approach, evidence suggests that digital technology is also encouraging high risk sexual behaviours.

A lack of access to SRHR information and non-judgemental advice on sexual and reproductive health and relationships is cited as a primary factor driving these trends, which threaten to reverse the impressive gains the Rwandan government has made in reducing health, poverty, and inequality in the nation.

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The aim of this project is to:

- **empower young Rwandans** to make more informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and relationships, and
- **equip parents and caregivers** with the skills and knowledge they need to discuss SRHR and relationships with their children.

PROJECT DETAILS

Funded by a *Stars in Global Health-Grand Challenges Canada* innovation grant, Proteknôn Foundation for Innovation and Learning is partnering with Rwanda Women's Network (RWN) and Rival Technologies Inc. to build and pilot a chatbot - **IrindeBot** - and "*Menya Wirinde*" ("Learn so you can protect yourself") **Facebook page**. Together, these platforms deliver reliable information and advice on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights (ASRHR) **to young people aged 13-24 years and caregivers**. The pilot project runs from October 2019 to September 30, 2020. The chatbot and Facebook pilot is live from June 5 to September 30, 2019.

Chatbot content is available in **Kinyarwanda or English**. Using a combination of simple text, audio mini dramas and image selection, IrindeBot is accessible to users with low literacy. Unlike most media platforms (e.g. radio, print, websites), the chatbot allows for a 2-way interaction. Additionally, users can upload comments and questions and receive a response from a trained ASRHR associate.

Chatbot content was informed by research on ASRHR in Rwanda as well as a workshop consultation with youth, caregiver, and ASRHR advisory groups. IrindeBot content focuses on three topics:

1. **"Let's Talk"**: caregivers and children learn how to talk with each other about adolescent relationships and sexual and reproductive health and rights
2. **"My Body"**: young people and caregivers learn how to protect adolescents' sexual and reproductive health and rights
3. **"My Relationships"**: young people and caregivers learn how to protect adolescents' sexual and reproductive health, rights and relationships.

During **COVID-19**, the chatbot also delivers key messages to users to increase child protection and GBV reporting.

Individuals can access the chatbot via the "**Menya Wirinde**" **Facebook page (@IrindeBot)** or **this link**, which allows users to engage with IrindeBot via Facebook Messenger or the web. Users can engage with IrindeBot via smartphone, tablet or computer, but the Facebook page is accessible via any mobile phone. The Facebook page hosts the audio chatbot content as well as ASRHR-related information in Kinyarwanda.

With careful COVID-19 protocols in place, individuals without access to a smartphone or computer can access the chatbot at one of six mobile access points in our two pilot communities in Bugesera and Nyarugenge districts.

If the pilot proves successful, Proteknôn Foundation will work with RWN to partner with national stakeholders to identify funding and new content for scale up.

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Behaviour change takes a coordinated and sustained effort by all stakeholders, from adolescents to community-based organisations, government and donors. To achieve gains in adolescent sexual and reproductive health in Rwanda, we all have to work together!

For this pilot project to achieve its goal of empowering young Rwandans to make more informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and relationships, we invite you to partner with us to:

- increase *awareness* of IrindeBot, especially via social media and low-tech communication channels like radio,
- increase *access* to IrindeBot, for example, via existing computer labs and programs like Connect Rwanda,
- build buy-in from key stakeholders, and
- secure funding for scale up.

LEARN MORE

For more information please contact one of the following:

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LET'S CHAT!

1. Options for starting a chat:

- Go to [@IrindeBot on Facebook](#) and click on "Send Message"
- Click on [this link](#) or respond to an IrindeBot Facebook or Instagram ad

2. Choose Ikinyarwanda or English

3. Introduce yourself and start chatting!



TIPS:

- Irinde isn't an artificial intelligence chatbot, so you need to select buttons and only enter text when asked.
- You can't go back and change your responses, or you will get an error message.
- Sometimes the internet can be slow, so please be patient!

ⁱ Violence Against Children and Youth Survey: Findings from a National Survey, 2015-2016. Republic of Rwanda Ministry of Health (2017).