

In a rural Rwandan community, a special event combined the thrill of basketball with essential health education, empowering young women on and off the court. The collaboration between Shooting Touch Rwanda (STR), a sports-based nonprofit, and the Basketball Africa League's (BAL) BAL4HER initiative brought together young women for a day of learning, mentorship, and physical activity.

This wasn't just about slam dunks and jump shots. The event served 150 girls from STR's program, offering a basketball clinic led by the BAL's U-23 BAL4HER women's team. But it went beyond the sport. Local gender experts delivered a workshop focused on sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR), a critical topic often shrouded in silence.

"This is a good and important initiative," said Lorence Mfashije, a mother of four who benefitted from the program. "Some of us don't understand these issues."



The interactive session tackled accessing SRHR services, contraceptives, and menstrual hygiene – empowering young women with knowledge and resources. It also fostered intergenerational dialogue, a bridge between young women and older generations.

The BAL4HER campers, talented young female athletes themselves, served as mentors and role models. Jane Dusabe, a BAL4HER camper and Rwandan Women's Basketball League star, highlighted the importance of sharing knowledge and inspiring others.

"Meeting these young women is something special," Dusabe said. "We get the chance to share our knowledge about women's lives and inspire other young, talented girls."

The impact extended beyond the day itself. Shooting Touch announced all participants would receive reusable menstrual hygiene pads, addressing a critical need and promoting sustainability. The BAL, impressed by the program's impact, committed to funding a latrine at the court, enhancing hygiene for the entire community.

"We are thrilled to have partnered with the Basketball Africa League for another impactful event," said Christelle Umuhoza, STR's In-Country Program Director. "Today's activities...provided them with critical education about their health and

their rights as women.”