Journalists and a health expert gathered in Kigali on Friday for the Science Media Café, a half-day event focused on integrating Solutions Journalism (SoJo) into health reporting in Rwanda.

The Café, organized by Science Africa in partnership with the Solutions Journalism Network, took place at Centre Lavigerie and brought together about 20 journalists to explore new ways of reporting on health challenges and solutions.

Opening the event, veteran science journalists Steven Nsamaza and Aimable Twahirwa stressed the importance of Solutions Journalism, a rigorous approach that emphasizes evidence-based reporting on responses to social problems.

“This approach doesn’t just focus on the problems; it highlights solutions that are already making a difference,” said Nsamaza. Twahirwa extended the conversation to the One Health framework, which links human, animal, and environmental health.

He discussed how solutions journalism can provide a holistic view of health challenges, underscoring the interconnections between these different areas.

One of the key presentations at the event came from Dr. Theoneste Maniragaba, Director of the Cancer Programme at the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC). Dr. Maniragaba provided a comprehensive overview of the current state of cancer in Rwanda, detailing the country’s national health challenges, key statistics, and emerging strategies aimed at combating cancer.

The discussion provided journalists with valuable insights into how to report on pressing health issues in a way that highlights not only the problems but also the solutions that could mitigate them.

The event also featured an experience-sharing session with three journalists who have successfully applied the Solutions Journalism approach to health stories. Steven Nsamaza shared his work on fighting the mental health burden in Rwanda through community healing spaces, exploring how local initiatives are providing much-needed support. Joan Mbabazi discussed her reporting on community efforts to combat deadly intestinal worms in Rwanda, highlighting the success of local initiatives in reducing the prevalence of these diseases. Jejje Muhinde presented his innovative piece on how a board game is transforming sexual and reproductive health education for youth in Rwanda.

Each journalist shared the challenges they faced during the reporting process, including sourcing information, dealing with sensitive topics, and overcoming logistical barriers.

They also spoke about the impact of their stories, including scoping different awards from various institutions recognizing their impactful work.

“I believe solutions journalism is a powerful tool in changing the narrative around health issues,” said Mbabazi. “It shows that while problems exist, there are real people and organizations working on solutions that are worth covering.”

Moderated by Aimable Twahirwa, the session included a Q&A segment, during which journalists discussed ways to effectively apply the Solutions Journalism approach to their own work. Twahirwa encouraged participants to focus on solutions in their reporting, saying, “People want hope and actionable steps. It’s time to shift the narrative from problems to solutions.”

The event concluded with a networking lunch, where participants continued to exchange ideas on how to strengthen health reporting in Rwanda and across the African continent. The Science Media Café underscored the growing importance of evidence-based reporting, emphasizing how journalists can inform and empower communities by focusing on practical, scalable solutions to health challenges.