Creating an Enabling Environment for Youth Living with HIV to Access Health and Well-being: A Case Study in Four Rwandan Cities

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Table of content

- Background
- Objectives
- Methodology
- Key findings and recommendations
- Lessons learnt
- Conclusions and next steps
Background

RRP+: Rwandese Network for People living with HIV

- National Umbrella of PLHIV
- 162,005 RoC (76%)
- 4,459 PEs
- 441 PLHIV SRs

Implementation model

- National level
- District level
- Sector level
- 300 Cooperatives
- 500 Associations
- 12 NGOs
Background

**Rwanda** among top 5 countries to achieve 95-95-95

Source: UNAIDS, July 23, 2023
A human-rights based approach

Contribution to SGD 3
Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
Scope of the intervention

**Target area:** City of Kigali and 3 secondary cities with high levels of HIV prevalence (Rubavu, Musanze, Muhanga)

**Objective:** Facilitate an inclusive access to health services and well-being of all YLHIV, including FSW, teen mothers (TM) and MSM

**Time:** March – December 2022
Methodology

**7 FGD 133 Youths**  
Youth challenges, barriers to achieve 3 UNAIDS targets  
And Rapid assessment on mental health (WHO Well-Being Index)

**ASSESSMENT**  
FIRST YOUTHS’ PROPOSALS

**4 Community Dialogues**  
68 duty bearers, 57 right holders  
Discuss challenges

**MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING**  
MORE PROPOSALS

**National Dialogue**  
45 right holders and duty bearers  
Discussions of findings and proposals

**3 steps**

**EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY**  
AGREED RECOMMENDATIONS
Key Findings and recommendations

1. CONFIDENTIALITY, TO PREVENT (FEAR OF) STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION
2. COMMUNICATION
3. FOOD SECURITY
4. MENTAL HEALTH
Key Finding - Confidentiality
At school: Impact on adherence and school drop out

- Students keep their ART in dormitory, are seen and asked by others what this is, why they take drugs every day;
- Public checking point at school to expose drugs and increase stigma

✓ Appreciation:

✓ MINEDUC has drafted guidelines to fight stigma for People LHIV and other manage chronical diseases at school;

✓ RBC is training school authorities
Key Findings - Confidentiality

• Youth do not like waiting in ARV services mixed with adults
  ✓ Organise specific time slots for youth

• Fear of disclosure of HIV status by peers and care providers and peers without consent
  ✓ Feedback to peers, HCPs, RBC and MoH
Key Findings - Confidentiality

✓ Visibility of ARV services (location and labelling) to be reduced
Key Findings

1. CONFIDENTIALITY, STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION
2. COMMUNICATION
3. FOOD SECURITY
4. MENTAL HEALTH

Communication to YLHIV by HCP to be improved

✓ On positive & negative impacts of ARV
✓ Respectful care for inclusive care
✓ Empower youth to better manage themselves and protect others.

Communicate

✓ Exact Viral Load results: Add VL result on card;
✓ VL results meaning
Key Finding

Food insecurity negatively impacts adherence

1. CONFIDENTIALITY, STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION
2. COMMUNICATION
3. FOOD SECURITY
4. MENTAL HEALTH

Percentage of PLHIV who have been unable to meet their basic needs in the last 12 months

- 51%: Most of the time
- 30%: Sometimes
- 19%: Never

Source: Stigma Index Survey 2020.

Only 19% respondents never fail to meet their basic needs
✓ Need recognized
Key findings

1. CONFIDENTIALITY, STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION;
2. COMMUNICATION
3. FOOD SECURITY;
4. MENTAL HEALTH

Importance of counselling currently insufficient

Credit picture: Lucxama Sylvain, Pexels
Key Finding: WHO (Five) Well-Being Index: an eye opener on poor mental health of YLHIV

Individual scores, per category of youth

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual scores – N=133</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>5</td>
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A score <13 (a) indicates poor wellbeing; (b) is an indication for testing for depression under ICD-10.

Tool designed by Psychiatric Research Unit, WHO Collaborating Center for Mental Health, Frederiksborg General Hospital, DK-3400 Hillerød
Key Finding

Mental health negatively impacted by multiple vulnerabilities

Average score per category of youth

- FSW & TM: 7.0
- TM: 10.0
- FSW: 11.4
- MSM: 13.8

Poor well-being
Key Finding  Need to address mental health issues

✓ Improve counselling by HCP

✓ Explore possible contribution of peer education to support mental health
Lessons learnt

Key factors for increasing testing, self-care, adherence to treatment, and reducing HIV transmission among Youth

- Confidentiality
- HIV at school
- Communication
- Food insecurity
- Mental health
- Youth empowerment
Conclusions

Effective methodology used to create a more youth-friendly and inclusive environment, including peer-facilitated mechanisms.

1. **Situation Assessment**
   - FGD
2. **Community dialogue**
   - Participative identification of opportunities for changes
3. **National dialogue**
   - Evidence-based advocacy
   - Agreed recommendations
Next steps

*Follow up changes and continue advocacy* for creation of a conducive environment for inclusive access to care and treatment

*Design and implement a low cost pilot for youth-friendly peer education* to empower YLHIV to make informed decisions and support their mental health
Acknowledgment

THANK YOU
MERCI BEAUCOUP
MURAKOZE