

	<b>Réseau Rwandais des Personnes Vivant avec le VIH/SIDA</b>	<b>Urugaga Nyarwanda rw'Ababana na Virusi itera SIDA</b>	<b>Rwanda Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS</b>
<b>B. P. 6559 Kigali</b>			

## Who we are

RRP+ (Réseau Rwandais de Personnes vivant avec le VIH) is a civil society organization whose members and beneficiaries are the people infected and affected by HIV. RRP+ serves as a coordinating organ for all activities in the area of HIV and promotes Greater Involvement of PLHIV (GIPA) in the national HIV response.

## Background

At the time of creating RRP+, many people in Rwanda lacked knowledge about HIV and linked HIV with immoral behavior. Consequently, this fueled HIV related stigma and discrimination against people infected and affected by HIV. To change this situation, representatives of 175 associations of PLHIV from across the country decided in March 2003 to form a network of people living with HIV (RRP+). Although RRP+ has initially been created for an unlimited period in accordance with law No 20/2000 of July 26th 2000, this was revised by law n° 04/2012 of February 17th, 2012 governing the Non-governmental Organizations.

RRP+ continued to grow and today it has more than 120.000 members of which 68% are females and 32% are males. 89% of all members is HIV+. 11% is affected by HIV. The members are grouped in different organizations according to their level of registration from sector level to national level (associations, cooperatives and NGOs) and are active in all districts across the country. RRP+ activities focus on advocacy for the rights of PLHIV, HIV prevention, care and treatment, and impact mitigation. PLHIV are mobilized to actively participate in the HIV response and to organize themselves in cooperatives to support their livelihoods.

## Vision

Rwandans infected and affected by HIV are healthy, live in a socio economic environment free from stigma and discrimination and are fully engaged in the HIV response.

## Mission

To contribute to the prevention of HIV, improved adherence to continuity care and treatment for HIV infected people and to restore hope and improve the quality of life of persons, families and communities affected by HIV.

## Intervention areas

RRP+ mainly focuses on advocacy for the wellbeing of PLHIV , HIV Prevention, Care and Treatment and Social-Impact Mitigation. Each pillar represents a strategic intervention area. All together they support RRP+ in achieving its long term mission and vision in alignment with Rwandan national goals and global targets in HIV response.

1. **Advocacy:** Considering human rights at the center of development, RRP+ advocates for increased respect of rights of PLHIV and supports PLHIV to claim these rights. A special effort is made to promote **women's rights** and fight gender inequality, since these are the root causes making women especially vulnerable to HIV, **gender-based-violence** and **stigma and discrimination**. RRP+ believes that the promotion of human rights is a sustainable way of empowering PLHIV to improve the quality of their live.
2. **HIV Prevention:** RRP+ contributes to improved and equal accessibility to primary and secondary prevention measures by all, in order to reduce new HIV infections. **Peer educators** that are trained and supervised by RRP+ play a crucial role in increasing the awareness in communities about HIV (among others by giving public testimonies) and referring people at risk to HIV testing in health facilities (or outreach campaigns).
3. **Care and Treatment:** Through awareness raising campaigns and the work of **peer educators** in the communities, RRP+ contributes to improved uptake and adherence to HIV care and treatment, and collaborates with health facilities to ensure that qualitative care and treatment are accessible, acceptable and affordable for PLHIV.
4. **Economic and Social Impact Mitigation:** RRP+ contributes to improved economic well-being of PLHIV by strengthening member organizations to work in cooperatives and develop income generating activities. Through awareness raising activities and advocacy activities, RRP+ also contributes to the reduction of stigma and discrimination against PLHIV. Reduced poverty, financial independency and reduced self-stigma and discrimination lead to increased self-esteem which enables PLHIV to live a dignified life.

The success of RRP+'s work in the area of prevention and treatment is mainly based on the **Peer Education (PE) approach**. This approach relies on the involvement of PLHIV in community mobilization, awareness-raising, screening of TB and in referring people to health service providers for HIV and TB testing, to reduce new HIV and TB infections and to improve adherence to treatment of HIV and TB. Peer Educators are role models, elected by associations' members, based on their integrity and adherence to treatment.

The importance of peer educators in linking the community and health facilities has been recognized by the Ministry of Health. To assure the successful implementation of the new HIV treatment model (Differentiated Service Delivery Model) the ministry has increased the number of peer educators, who play a key role in following up on PLHIV. Especially since stable patients will see a doctor only quarterly, the role of peer educators to follow-up on patients within their community and assure proper adherence to HIV treatment, has become even more important.

## **Organizational structure**

**RRP+ members** are organizations or cooperatives of people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, recognized and approved by the respective responsible authorities. All members of RRP+ maintain their own management, identity and internal autonomy in management of their activities. To become a member of RRP+, an organization submits a written application, which is approved by the general assembly.

### **The following structures are in place:**

1. The National General Assembly
2. The Board of Directors at the national level
3. The District General Assembly
4. The Board of Directors at the District level
5. The Executive Secretariat

The daily management of the RRP+ is done by the Executive Secretariat composed by the Executive Secretary and staff working at Headquarter office and at the provincial levels.

## **RRP+ strengths**

- National Umbrella of a large number of associations of People Living with HIV
- A decentralized structure from the national to the sector level which facilitates communication and coordination.
- A well-equipped Executive Secretariat with qualified staff at both national and Provincial level
- A long and notable experience in working with the community and the delivery of HIV/AIDS messages.
- Close cooperation between associations, health centres and local leaders and local authorities
- Well known by and working in good partnership and collaboration with public and private institutions, International Organizations and UN Agencies as well as civil society organizations
- Active participation in various Technical Working Groups and Steering Committees regarding HIV and AIDS

## **Key partners**

RRP+ partners are all public and private institutions, International Organizations fighting on the HIV response and UN Agencies as well as the civil society organizations.

## **RRP+ future ambitions**

- Contribute to ending new HIV infections by 2030
- Insure Zero stigma and discrimination among PLHIV.
- Financial independence to support the on-going activities for efficient and effective engagement of people living with HIV in the fight against HIV/AIDS.