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|  | <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> |
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## Report of the Workshop of RRP+ Youth representatives

### I. INTRODUCTION

Involving youth in the fight against HIV is extremely important. Rwanda's population is overwhelmingly young, with 40% between the age of 14 and 35 years old.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, youth represent the highest percentage of the population whom are sexually active which puts them at higher risk. Although the need to focus on youth in the HIV epidemic is recognized by the government and other partners, challenges still exist to effectively prevent HIV infection among young people and to assure young people have access to HIV treatment and care.

RRP+ youth representatives play a key role in tackling these challenges. They are responsible for informing youth about HIV prevention, treatment and care. They should encourage other young PLHIV to adhere well to treatment and avoid transmitting the virus to others.

Apart from their role in terms of HIV prevention and treatment and care, the youth representatives should be inspiring examples to young PLHIV for a positive living. This includes informing young people about their rights, raise awareness about when their rights are violated and how to claim their rights. Only when all human rights of PLHIV are respected, HIV+ youth can live a healthy life free from stigma and discrimination, pursue studies, find jobs and live a dignified life.

It is in this context that RRP+ has organized the 3 days Youth representative training with the overall objective to equip them for their tasks as youth representatives. The training took place at Hilltop Hotel in Kigali from December 13 – 15, 2017.

### II. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Youth representatives get to know each other and are encouraged to exchange experiences and support each other mutually
- Youth representatives know their role and responsibilities as RRP+ representatives and have reflected about what they want to achieve in the coming 5 years
- Youth representatives know their rights; have a clear understanding of when these rights are violated, and what to do to claim their rights.

### III. PROCESS OF THE TRAINING

The training consisted of three parts:

<sup>1</sup> Fourth Population and Housing Census, Rwanda, 2012

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- Getting to know each other and RRP+ overview including mission, vision, interventions and different programs implemented by RRP+;
- HIV generalities and Differentiated Service Delivery Models
- Rights of PLHIV and responsibilities
- Roles of RRP+ elected district Youth representatives

### 1. Getting to know each other

After the registration of 30 youth representatives' participants from all districts, every participants presented himself.

The opening remarks have been given by the Executive secretary of RRP+ Sage SEMAFARA, congratulating the elected district youth representatives and thanking them for attending the workshop.



*The Executive Secretary of RRP+ giving the opening remarks of the youth training on Dec. 13, 2017.*

The Executive secretary also reminded the participants of the workshop objectives and called active participation from everyone. The Executive secretary also thanked GIZ for the support and collaboration with RRP+ to integrate the RBA and put special attention to the youth and gender among PLHIV.

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After the welcoming remarks, RRP+ has been presented by TUGIRIMANA Jean Berchmans to the participants with focus on the overview of RRP+ including mission, vision, interventions and different programs implemented by RRP+.

This presentation allowed the newly elected district youth representatives to know better RRP+ and its interventions. According to different interventions of participants it has been noted that the newly elected district youth representatives did not know the RRP+, appreciated the presentation and promised to be active in different activities of RRP+ in the associations.

After the RRP+ presentation, the participants continued the “getting to know each other” exercises. This included the Ice breaker, Introduce your partners, introduce your partner and True and lie exercises to allow the participants to get the maximum information from other participants.

## 2. HIV generalities and Differentiated Service Delivery Model

The consultant Mr Innocent KAMALI, gave the opportunity and time to the team of representatives to discuss the ways of HIV transmission and HIV prevention. Then the current model used in Rwanda in HIV care and treatment (DSDM) and the role of peer education, especially the role of youth to support this model, were introduced at the end of the day.

Participants were divided into two groups, standing up, one discussing the ways of transmission and the other on the prevention strategies. After discussions in groups each group had an opportunity to present and be asked questions by the other group. This made participants active and every one had a chance to participate in the discussions. As far as HIV prevention among youth is concerned, we underlined the importance of condom use specifically among youth as the only one method that protects from HIV transmission and unwanted pregnancies.



*The two working group discussing the knowledge they had about HIV so far on Dec. 13, 2017.*

One of the take-home messages highlighted during this section was the positive prevention among PLHIV. « Even PLHIV can still be infected, either by another type of virus or get a resistant virus from

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PLHIV who is not suppressing its viral load». The objective of this message was to underline the importance of the use of condoms among PLHIV

After the group discussions, the facilitator, presented the current model of HIV care and treatment and highlighted the importance of peer education which is mostly to support retention and adherence of their peers. Participants were called to support the peers especially adolescents and young people being role model as they are challenging the HIV program with their poor adhere to their treatment.

### 3. Rights of PLHIV and responsibilities

The second day, the workshop focused on rights of PLHIV and responsibilities and highlighted HIV related stigma and discrimination. It started with group work. Participants were divided into 4 groups and discussed the fundamental rights of PLHIV as well as their obligations. After the group work, participants presented the results and were complimented by other participants and the facilitator.

The discussions were followed by a power point presentation on national and international human rights framework and the most relevant rights for PLHIV. The presentation focused on key examples of rights such as right to health, education, privacy, right to found a family and freedom of association and movement.

In this part, the main reference was the booklet developed by RRP+ on rights and obligations of PLHIV and where to claim their rights. The Ministerial Order determining programs and strategies to ensure protection and assistance of children infected or affected by HIV/AIDS was also used. The right to non-discrimination was discussed more extensively, since this is the violation of rights that PLHIV face most.

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*The facilitation of rights of PLHIV during the youth training on Dec. 14, 2017.*

Following the presentation on their rights, responsibilities were also discussed. Interestingly participants understood that they should not infect others but rather protect them and contribute to reducing new HIV infections and commit to educate their peers who have a wrong understanding or behavior.

Different institutions that can support people to claim their rights were also discussed, and practical examples were provided by participants from their own experience and other examples were found in the documentary film.

The last part of the second day was dedicated to open discussions as participants had many questions, some being individual and other general.

Most of the questions focused on their rights being violated for example the long line (queue) at health facilities clearly showing you are coming for ARV, being punished by health facility staff because they came late to pick their drugs, and a health care provider who discloses their HIV status to others, ...

All these questions were discussed and some answers were coming from the team, and of course some need to get cases investigated before people take it as true. The session ended by reminding the participants that they should know that beside the rights there are also responsibilities.

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#### 4. ROLES OF RRP+ DISTRICT YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES

The last day of the training was dedicated to the roles and responsibilities of RRP+ youth representatives.

During this session the facilitator made 5 groups of participants to discuss the challenges faced by youth LHIV in different districts and the roles elected youth representatives should play.



*The working groups discussing the roles of elected youth representative on Dec. 15, 2017.*

From group discussions, it has been noted that youth LHIV faces problems as follows:

- Ignorance and school drop outs,
- Poverty among poor families;
- OVCs;
- Youth LHIV in the same district do not know each other;
- Few youth is organized in existing associations / cooperatives of PLHIV
- Lack activities and programs targeting youths LHIV;
- Difficult to get counseled when youth LHIV;
- Ignorance of HIV prevention measures and / or inaccessibility of condoms

Stated roles of elected RRP+ youth representatives from group work:

- Be a role model for their peers;
- Advocate for the rights of PLHIV especially the youth;
- Report to the relevant institutions and RRP+ in case of violation of human rights;
- Play a key role in the fight against HIV and special involvement of youth;
- Contribution to reduce new HIV infections, not to infect others rather protect them;
- Commit to be good peer educators of the HIV prevention strategies;
- Collaboration with different partners targeting youth;

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- Have at least one active youth LHIV organization by district fighting HIV;

## 5. Conclusion and recommendations

The training of new elected youth representatives has come at the right time. The participants had not much information about RRP+, the rights and responsibilities of PLHIV and above all their roles as youth LHIV representatives. It was great opportunity to get to know each other and share challenges and to learn the way to behave and tackle them.

It was noted that although participants do not have the same level, some being more active and knowledgeable than others, they were happy for the organized training as they had time to express their thoughts and they actively participated in discussions.

The participants improved their knowledge as the average score of the pre-test was 56% while at the end of the training the score increased at 81%. There were questions that could not be discussed enough due to the limited time we had such as questions about Hepatitis, questions related to the Sexual and Reproductive health, etc.

The above statements brought us to recommend the following to RRP+:

- Organize regular meetings or trainings/workshop for youth representatives at least twice a year for their capacity building;
- Support or advocate for the most vulnerable youth living with HIV;
- Follow up of school drop-out cases and advocate for getting them back to school;
- Advocate for activities and programs targeting youths LHIV;
- Support youth willing to participate actively in peer education approach;

To the Youth district representatives:

- Be a role model of their peers;
- Advocate for the rights of PLHIV especially the youth and report the violation of human rights where it occurs;
- Play a key role in the fight against HIV and special involvement of youth;
- Contribute to the reduction of new HIV infections, not to infect others rather protect them;
- Commit to be good peer educators of the HIV prevention strategies;
- Collaborate with different partners targeting youth;
- Have at least one active youth LHIV organization by district fighting HIV;

Kigali, December 2017

SEMAFARA Sage  
Executive Secretary RRP+

