

RRP+

Rwanda Network of People living with **HIV** and **AIDS**

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About the Main Author and Presenter:

Mr Jean Berchmans TUGIRIMANA is a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Resources Mobilization Officer at RRP+ with 12 years of experience in HIV/AIDS interventions. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Geography, and two postgraduate certificates in Program Management and Strategic Information for Improved HIV/AIDS Programming from the National University of Rwanda. Currently pursuing a Master of Science in Project Management at the University of Kigali, Jean Berchmans is dedicated to academic excellence.

Throughout his career, he has successfully managed projects focusing on gender equality, COVID-19 and HIV, sexual reproductive health and rights, and adolescent health. Jean Berchmans actively represents RRP+ in national and international workshops, fostering knowledge sharing and collaboration. His passion for making a positive impact on vulnerable communities in Rwanda and beyond is commendable, showcasing him as a valuable asset in the field of development and HIV/AIDS interventions.

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

Authors: Jean Berchmans TUGIRIMANA¹, Deo MUTAMBUKA², Pirotte Anne³, Gasozi Ntwali Andrew⁴

- **Introduction:** This study aimed to improve the accessibility of health services and promote the overall well-being of young people living with HIV (YLHIV) in the cities of Kigali, Musanze, Rubavu, and Muhanga in Rwanda. Specifically, the project focused on identifying the challenges faced by young female sex workers (FSWs), men having sex with men (MSM), and teen mothers (TM) in accessing HIV services.
- **Description:** Implemented by the Rwanda Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (RRP+), this project received technical and financial support from the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). A total of 133 YLHIV participated in peer education support groups, where they shared their perceptions regarding the barriers to achieving the three 95 UNAIDS objectives. The Well-Being Index developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) was employed for a rapid assessment of the mental health of the youth. The findings and recommendations resulting from this study were discussed in community and national dialogues, bringing together rights holders and duty bearers.
- **Lessons Learned:** Improved communication regarding viral load, enhanced confidentiality measures in health facilities, and addressing food insecurity were identified as crucial factors for increasing testing, self-care, adherence to treatment, and reducing HIV transmission. Consequently, recommendations were formulated based on these findings.
- **Further Recommendations/Next Steps:** To create a more youth-friendly environment and empower YLHIV to make informed decisions, future interventions should encompass research activities, adjustments in health systems, and peer-facilitated mechanisms. These efforts should aim to provide comprehensive information, mental health support, and foster youth empowerment. Furthermore, advocating for the respect of human rights is crucial. The UNAIDS-funded Fast Track Cities program presents an opportunity to leverage the findings of this study and continue progressing towards a more inclusive environment for all YLHIV.

^{1,2} Rwanda Network of People Living with HIV (RRP+), ³ The German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) – Rwanda, ⁴ United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

ORAL ABSTRACT PRESENTATION:

Fast – Track Cities 2023 Conference,
Amsterdam, Netherlands 25-27
September 2023

Join us on Tuesday, 26 September
2023 10:30-11:30

Abstract ID: 1282

Vision:

The ultimate goal of RRP+ is to ensure that 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.

About RRP+

Mission:

The RRP+ exists to contribute to the process of preventing HIV, improve adherence to continuity care and treatment for HIV infected patients and restores hope and improves the quality of life of persons, families and communities affected by HIV.



Areas of Interventions

HIV Prevention: Reduce HIV new Infections:

1. Community mobilization and awareness
2. Promotion of HIV prevention services uptake targeting key and priority populations (condom use, PMTCT, self-testing, VMMC, index and family testing, partner notification etc.)
3. Development, Multiplication and distribution of IEC materials

HIV Care & Support: Reduce HIV/AIDS-related morbidity and mortality

1. Support linkage to Care, retention, adherence and VL suppression via peer education approach
2. Promotion of nutritional intake and provide psychosocial support

Impact Mitigation: Ensure Human Rights of People infected and affected by HIV:

1. Advocacy on PLHIV rights
2. Awareness of community on Stigma and discrimination reduction
3. Provision of legal protection of PLHIV
4. Improve economic status of PLHIV
5. Apply PLHIV and Key population Stigma Index Survey

Organizational strengthening & Advocacy: Empower our members to grow as a support network

1. Ensure representativeness of key groups of PLHIV
2. Build partnership with Local authorities, HFs, donors and national/ international organizations in HIV response
3. Monitoring and evaluation