

P2.2. Youth Empowerment through Education and Creation of Employments · Jean Claude Dusingize, Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS & Rwanda Village Concept Project; Serge Muhire Manzi, Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS & Rwanda Village Concept Project; Edmond Baganizi, Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS & Rwanda Village Concept Project
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Background/Significance: The events of the 1994 genocide caused the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of people in Rwanda, leaving tens of thousands orphaned and widowed. A part from this, Rwandans are used to having many children, regardless of income. These children aren't properly fed and lack access to other facilities; as a result they leave their homes in order to find somewhere else where they will try to meet their basic needs. These children are very exposed to much risky behaviour like heavy alcohol consumption, glue sniffing, cannabis, stilling and having unprotected sex.

Intervention/Activity Tested: Rwanda Village Concept Project is an international student run project in the southern province of Rwanda, aimed at improving living conditions in underprivileged communities.

One of the aspects of the project is the active participation of the beneficiaries from initial planning up to the evaluation. Most planned activities have two components to their implementation:

An educational aspect (Trainings, workshops, community based interactive sessions, sports activities, cultural integration sexual education, Mobile Video, use of information, education and communication materials, Voluntary HIV/AIDS testing and counseling etc.)and Income Generating Projects as a way of creating employment for them .

We decided to use this strategy after realizing that only education will not be successful without helping young people to create their own employment seen that the poverty is the leading cause of their vulnerability.

Methodology: We conducted a Cross-sectional survey with open –ended questions in order to collect as much information as possible and also to give to the participants the freedom. We also used a database of our weekly participants' evaluation so that we can count the number of the total young people who attended our sessions and who are engaged in different projects.

Different activities run by them has been visited and evaluated. We also collected data from our VCT center where they got tasted in order to know the percentage of acceptance and to get statistics of HIV prevalence among them.

Findings: This project reached about 750 youth living in rural areas and bout 60 street children have been reached. 90% of them accept to undergo VCT. Now we are using these young people to sensitize their peers and this strategy has been very successful.

The linkage of the education on HIV/AIDS, Reproductive health and family planning have shown good results in increase knowledge and reaching behavior change related to those cited issues and as major tool toward sustainable development.

An emphasis is to be put on Young people as the active part of the population and the future of the Nation. The excellent way to address those issues is through the community based programs and effective communication and creating of employment. Lesson learnt from Rwanda-VCP strategy and work could be shared.

Lessons Learned: We have realized that young people are ready to change their behaviours anytime they find someone who can talk to them with a youth friendly language and not considering them as offenders. We have also realized that the poverty is among the leading cause of vulnerability in young people. So, empowering young people through income generating projects help them to create their own employment and reduce their exposition to many risk behaviors.

Sports and other leisure activities, cultural activities encourage young people to stay together and these are good opportunities for anyone who wants to talk to them to reach them easily.