

BURUNDI ASSOCIATION OF PEOPLE WHO USED DRUGS PEER EDUCATOR PROJECT

Author:

Nsababaganwa A¹

¹Burundi Association of People who Used Drugs (BAPUD)

Background:

Created in 2017, BAPUD led by active drug users, contributed to the implementation of East Africa's HIV and Harm Reduction 2017-2019 sub-regional project in Burundi through partnering with Alliance Burundaise contre le Sida.

In Burundi, there are 85,000 people living with HIV, many whom are part of marginalized communities such as sex workers, and people who use drugs (PWUD) with a prevalence rate of HIV 10.2%.

Description:

In October 2022, as a sub-recipient of USAID within the NGIRANK'ABANDI Activity, BAPUD implemented a Peer led prevention, testing and treating HIV strategy which consisted of inviting PWUD to attend different healthcare facilities or to participate in HIV screening at their drug consumption sites.

20 Peer Educators, including 6 women, were trained and mobilized to raise awareness, encourage and empower PWUD to be screened, and if needed, to initiate treatment across drug consumption sites and hotspots of 10 provinces in Burundi.

Effectiveness:

The Peers had credibility with PWUD and built mutual trust and respect. They were able to bring different health professionals together, and break down barriers such as stigma and discrimination.

36 new cases of HIV were found in 2023.

This project also allows us to continue treating and supporting PWUD who were HIV positive before. 15% more PWUD on HIV treatment.

Conclusion and next steps:

Peer to peer education and support, combined with specialist outreach testing clinics is an effective community-based model. This integrated method increased engagement and delivered a higher proportion of PWUD with HIV staying engaged with their treatment.

The intervention will continue until October 2025 when the project ends, however the need will be the same. BAPUD needs to secure other partnerships and funding to continue this work. This peer education approach can be adapted for other health issues such as hepatitis C and Tuberculosis.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

Nothing to declare