IDENTITY of SWAA-BURUNDI

Creating a group of women and men wishing to challenge taboos and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS, in a society where discussion of sexuality was extremely difficult and women's rights were violated, SWAA-BURUNDI is one of the very first non-profit organizations fighting AIDS in Burundi and is affiliated with SWAA-International, an Africa-wide women's movement against HIV/AIDS. Officially established on November 14, 1992, SWAA-BURUNDI acts in the areas of prevention and care of people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. While its actions are aimed as a priority at women as mothers, spouses, educators and pillars of the Burundian family, it also focuses on men as well as orphans and other children at risk some of whom are heads of households. Its response strategy is based on a family, community and partnership approach. Given human rights violations, the magnitude of which have increased since the socio-political crisis affecting the country since 1993 began, and in response to requests for support and care from victims of gender-based violence, particularly of a sexual nature, it had to plan and implement an integrated, gender-based, violence prevention and care program. This effort was further motivated by the findings of studies indicating that sexual violence is an entry point for HIV/AIDS.

BACKGROUND

Despite noticeable gender disparities in virus transmission, HIV undermines society’s overall efforts and the well-being of the whole population regardless of gender, social origin, age or religion.

In Burundi, HIV has a female face. Women are more at risk of being infected than men. On this basis, SWAA-BURUNDI developed activities that incorporate gender as a contribution to the national HIV/AIDS response, taking into consideration the different types and levels of risk for men and women.

OBJECTIVES

Two main objectives:
- Prevent HIV/AIDS infection by promoting individual and community action on the part of women in society.
- Reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS by assisting infected people and people around them.

ACHIEVEMENTS

SWAA-BURUNDI’s main activities are related to the 3 strategic pillars of the national HIV/AIDS action plan, the most important being:

A. In terms of prevention
Community mobilization through communication for behavioral change activities, sensitization sessions and the Stop SIDK information shops.
- Distribution of male condoms
- Promotion and extension of female condoms
- Listening, information and counseling services through an anonymous and free information hotline
- 17,479 male callers and 11,611 female callers from 2003 to 2007
- Operational research
  - Study conducted on acceptability of the female condom. Before marketing the product, a survey was carried out on a sample of 320 women.
  - Study on human rights violations among displaced women living with HIV/AIDS in 2 displaced sites in Bujumbura. This study has shown that sexual violence can at times lead to HIV/AIDS contamination
  - Survey on the magnitude of sexual violence in four provinces where SWAA-BURUNDI operates
  - This survey sought to assess health needs related to HIV/AIDS among girls and women in society.

B. In terms of care
- Voluntary HIV testing, with pre and post test counseling
- Psychosocial care of people infected and/or affected
- Medical care: Medical consultations, support for the purchase of medicines, including ARV treatment, hospital entry deposit, out-patient hospital care, home-based care and PMCT referrals, etc.
- Care of victims of sexual violence

C. In terms of Impact Reduction
- Development of income generating activities for girls and women at risk, in particular women who are heads of households.
- Orphan care: School enrollment, identification of and placement in foster families, referrals to other associations
- Skills training for people affected/infected for the purpose of professional reinsertion

RESPONSE AREAS

Demographic distribution of female and male during group testing

The female condom is a tool to prevent HIV transmission specifically for use by women

- 55,792 individuals tested from 2003 to 2007 - 28,955 men and 26,836 women
- Out of 55,792 individuals tested, 5,561 were HIV-positive - 2,117 men and 3,444 women
- High HIV prevalence among women 12.4% vs. 7.31% for men.

SWAA-BURUNDI’s Good Practice in Integrating Gender to the Fight against HIV/AIDS

- Free male and female association membership
- Staff recruitment based on qualifications (142 permanent staff members – 96 women and 46 men)
- Inclusion of gender in planning association activities (according to the study conducted by UNDP’s APP/f/PLUJ Project, out of 63 projects planned by SWAA-BURUNDI, 20 incorporate gender and 16 focus on human rights).
- Inclusion of gender in registering beneficiaries (8,162 individuals – 5,433 men, 2,384 women and 5,231 children)

CONTACTS

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