

Partnerships for Health in a Rwandan Village: The Rwanda Health and Healing Project

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Background



Barefoot artists is an organization that uses education, development, arts and health to “work with poor communities around the globe to help people heal and thrive through self-expression and action”. In 2005, Barefoot Artists initiated two arts related projects in Rugerero, a survivors village in Rwanda. The projects consisted of a Genocide Memorial Park and the Survivors Village Transformation, which used banners and painting of culturally relevant murals on homes to foster trust and community development. A team of Thomas Jefferson University medical, nursing, and public health faculty and students were asked to partner with Barefoot Artists to implement a community-oriented health project that integrates public health programs into Barefoot Artists philosophy of the transformative power of art in social change. This partnership became the Rwanda Health and Healing Project.



Mural Arts



Genocide Memorial Park

Objectives

The Rwanda Health and Healing Project conducts an annual comprehensive community assessment of Rugerero. The goals of this Project are:

- * document health needs through focus groups and interviews
- * identify existing community health resources
- * review community health needs in the unique social and political history of Rwanda
- * develop community-based and led public health initiatives

Public Health Initiatives

Health and Hygiene Train the Trainer Program

- * Identify 14 key community members for health committee
- * Environmental Walk
- * Conducted training on hygiene and hand-washing
- * Developed tools for community education



Childhood Malnutrition Program

- * Nutrition Intake: Z-scores on 150+ children
- * Ongoing Monitoring
- * Education and Supplementation Programs



HIV Education an HIV+ Women’s Cooperative

- * Support Group for HIV+ community members
- * Cooperative potato growing filed to support care for HIV+ women
- * HIV education programming for adults and youth

Income Generating Projects



- * Chicken Rearing
- * Mushroom Farming
- * Marketing/Sales



Partnerships

During the last 5 years of the Rwandan Health and Healing Project, we have partnered with two organizations to help us implement our public health initiatives year-round.

Engineers without Borders: Latrine Construction and Rainwater Collection

- * Mid-Atlantic Chapter of Engineers Without Borders



Rwanda Village Concept Project (RVCP) and Rugerero-Philadelphia Exchange Program

- * RVCP: student –led organization aimed at improving living standards in a Rwandan community by using low cost methods and to develop the capabilities of student in participatory development
- * Through an application process, RVCP members selected for yearly clinical exchange program in family medicine/pediatrics at Jefferson University Hospital
- * RVCP members travel to Rugerero to provide monthly monitoring of existing projects

Conclusions and Future Directions

For the past five years, the Rwanda Health and Healing Project has helped initiate public health programs that are community directed, community oriented and sustainable. Through our partnerships, we have provided a unique educational experience for medical, public health, and nursing students from both the United States and Rwanda. The Project will continue to strengthen our existing programs and partnerships and develop new initiatives with the goal of improving health and encouraging healing.