UNIVERSITY of RWANDA

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORK IN EMPOWERING PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION in Huye District in Rwanda

By:

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Structure of the presentation

- **Introduction**
- **Background and Statement of the Problem**
- **Purpose & Research questions**
- **Social Work as Empowering Profession and Essential to PLHIV's Relief from Poverty**
- **PAR with PLHIV in Cooperative Associations in Huye District and Message from Empirical Findings**
- **Conclusions and Recommendations**

1. Introduction

The World we live in

THE WORLD = VILLAGE???

World Population:
Around 8 Billion
Various Resources
Different
Opportunities
Globalisation
Haves vs. Haves not
Wealthiest vs. Needy

Various issues
➤ Poverty
➤ HIV/AIDS
➤ Refugees
➤ Child Welfare
➤ Safety and self-care
➤ Globalisation

SOCIO ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES !!!

1. Socioeconomic threats
   - ❑ poverty
   - ❑ infectious disease
   - ❑ environmental degradation
2. Inter-state conflict
3. Internal conflict
   - ❑ Civil war
   - ❑ Genocide
   - ❑ Other large-scale atrocities
4. Proliferation and possible use of weapons of mass destruction
   - ❑ nuclear
   - ❑ radiological
   - ❑ chemical
   - ❑ biological
5. Terrorism
6. Transnational organized crime

How do these cluster threats appear?

The Social World we want: "No one Behind"

I S   T H I S

P O S S I B L E

YES BUT???

RESPONSE TO SOCIOECONOMIC THREAT: Poverty among People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) in Huye District

Social Work has a big Role to Play

Human Rights Social Justice

UBUNTU

UBUTWARI (Heroism)

UBUMWE (Unity)

COMPLEMENTARY VALUES

WHAT, WHEN, WHO and HOW?

- Empowering People in Need (PIN)/PLHIV
- Being Available to approach the PIN whenever necessary
- Involving PLHIV in the Problem Solving Process
- Influencing all concerned Stakeholders
- Informed Cultural-Based Practice

2. Background and Statement of the Problem

POVERTY HINDERS THE BETTERMENT OF PEOPLE'S LIVES

Poverty = Social Problem N°1 that hinders the betterment of PIN's lives in the society such as PLHIV

Nexus Poverty-HIV/AIDS: Strong bi-directional linkages between HIV/AIDS and poverty in resource-poor settings.

Reducing poverty levels will also reduce HIV utmost gravity

- People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) are among persons who have been often discriminated, isolated and disempowered.

  In the absence of a dedicated cadre of helping professionals, they feel helpless, discouraged, and powerless.

- Once empowered, they could play an invaluable role in coping with social problems and particularly with poverty.

HIV/AIDS = Disease of Poverty

"HIV/AIDS is a disease firmly associated with the social, political, and economic context in which it thrives. In other words, HIV/AIDS is a disease of poverty" (Can, 2018, p. 64)

To mitigate poverty among PLHIV from poverty-stricken families, it was devised to help the latter **gather in cooperative associations** as means to relieve the people in need (PIN)'s pain. This was indeed considered as a '**right thing**' to promote collective action but in reality, it was apparent that the necessary involvement of the associations' members in the problem solving process for effective success and the enhancement of their well being requires '**doing things right**'.

Promoting Individual-Collective approaches:

"For poor or marginalised groups, getting successfully involved in collective action increases confidence and self-esteem while improving living conditions" (Bosc, 2018, p. 7)

To mitigate Poverty, tremendous effort has been made and Strategies are always devised:
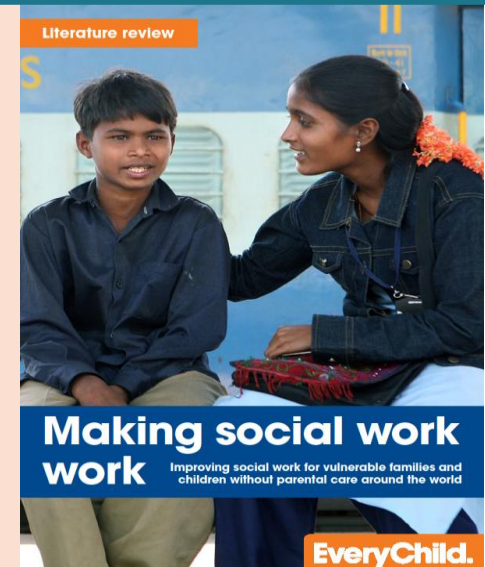
Worldwide: SDGs

Rwanda: HGIs that spurred socio-economic development

GOVERNANCE AND JUSTICE	ECONOMY	SOCIAL WELFARE
Gacaca (Traditional conflict resolution)	**Umuganda** (Community work)	y socio-economic program)
	Imihigo (Performance contracts)	**Girinka** (One Cow per Poor Family)
(National Dialogue Council)	**Itorero/Ingando** (National Civic Education Programme)	

Gacaca

Solving Process, "making social work work" and promoting the Collective ownership of their concerns

Social workers have a responsibility to help people to:
- ❑ Help themselves
- ❑ Create change in their lives
- ❑ Recognize their strengths
- ❑ Reach out to their own resources

Literature review

Making social work work
Improving social work for vulnerable families and children without parental care around the world

EveryChild.

We, social workers in Rwanda:
"We are counsellors, community facilitators, advocates and policy influencers. We work both with individuals and whole communities as the nation needs to work together to overcome the challenges." (Uwihangana, 2019)

Three sample cases:

An Association of PLHIV becomes a Strong and Vibrant Business by transitioning from an Association to a Cooperative (Chilli Pepper Production and now Pineapple Production on 3 Ha of Land)

Speciose Mukaferesi stimulates colleagues to set up an Association for "Helping PLHIV Support each other: Emotionally, Physically, Financially". She says: "I'm a widow, so all of us widows got together to talk about our lives, our problems. It helped reduce the burden that we have."

Social Work Practice in Rwanda: Drumming and Weaving for Healing Hadidja Nyiransekury, PhD Researcher drew on the Rwandan Proverb that "He who cannot stand, cannot dance" and she created and fostered a free-flowing narrative that uses drumming and weaving place to put women together for shared pain and shared healing; this led to involvement in income generation activities.

"**Despite the profound commitment of social work toward people living in poverty, the social work profession has failed to develop practice based on awareness of poverty" (Krumer-Novo & Monnickendam, 2009, p. 225)**

- Although the role of social work in Rwanda and in Huye in particular in helping people help themselves to address adversities they are faced with including poverty is indisputable, there is still much to do and need to produce evidence of this.
- The situation of PLHIV is critically uncertain and unexplored not only in terms of material needs but also in terms of prejudice and discrimination that impacts on their functioning within the community.

- In view of this situation, there was conviction that **well-thought social work interventions** could play great role in **enabling more the PIN** to transform sustainably their lives.

- It is in this perspective that I chose to examine the relevance and uniqueness of social work in operationalising the universal profession's motto of '**Helping people to help themselves**' by using **participatory methodologies**.

3. Research purpose & objectives

The main concern in this research was to investigate the role of social work in empowering people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIVs) organised in cooperative associations in Huye District (HD) for poverty alleviation.

Specific objectives

- To assess the nature of poverty and its impact on the lives of PLHIVs within associations in HD;

- To examine how poverty can be addressed by identifying key actors in the system;

- To examine the role of the Social Welfare Workforce (SWWs) and that of Social Work Professionals in particular in empowering PLHIVs for sustainable poverty mitigation;

- To assess the potential of developing a **communal action model** and explore its place in supporting social work initiatives.

1) *Key definitions and fundamental considerations*

▸ What is **Social Work**?

▸ What is **empowerment**?

▸ What is **poverty**?

▸ Who is a person in need? Who is a PLHIV?

▸ What is an association?

▸ Indigenous Social work/Developmental Social Work?

▸ Who is an **Intermediary Social Work Actor** (ISWA)?

2) *Theoretical orientation: Socio-Ecological Systems and Empowerment - Strengths Theories/perspectives*

▸ *"The unique contribution of social work practice is the duality of the profession's person and environment; social workers must **help society work better for people** and **help people function better within society**... social workers make a commitment through professional training to help people to improve society, and to give special attention to the interactions between people and between people and their surroundings" (Segal, Gerdes & Steiner, 2013, pp. 2-3)*

➔ *Considering the person in his/her environment (PIE)*

➔ *Enabling people, particularly PIN own their circumstances through 'empowerment' : referring to the **'Empowerment-Participation-Strengths (EPS)'** model.*

- "The strengths approach believes that all people have strengths and capacities. People can change; people change and grow through their strengths and capacities; problems can blind people from noticing their strengths; people do have expertise to solve the problem... People know best what helps them change and what stops them...." (Venkat, 2018)

- "The basic community organisation for empowering individuals and mobilising their capacities is the association. An association is a group of citizens working together. An association is an amplifier of the gifts, talents and skills of individual community members" (Kretzimann and Kcknight, 1993, p. 119)
- "If people who live in poverty were empowered through *education and training*, they could take charge of their journey out of poverty and inspire others to do the same" (DESA, 2012)
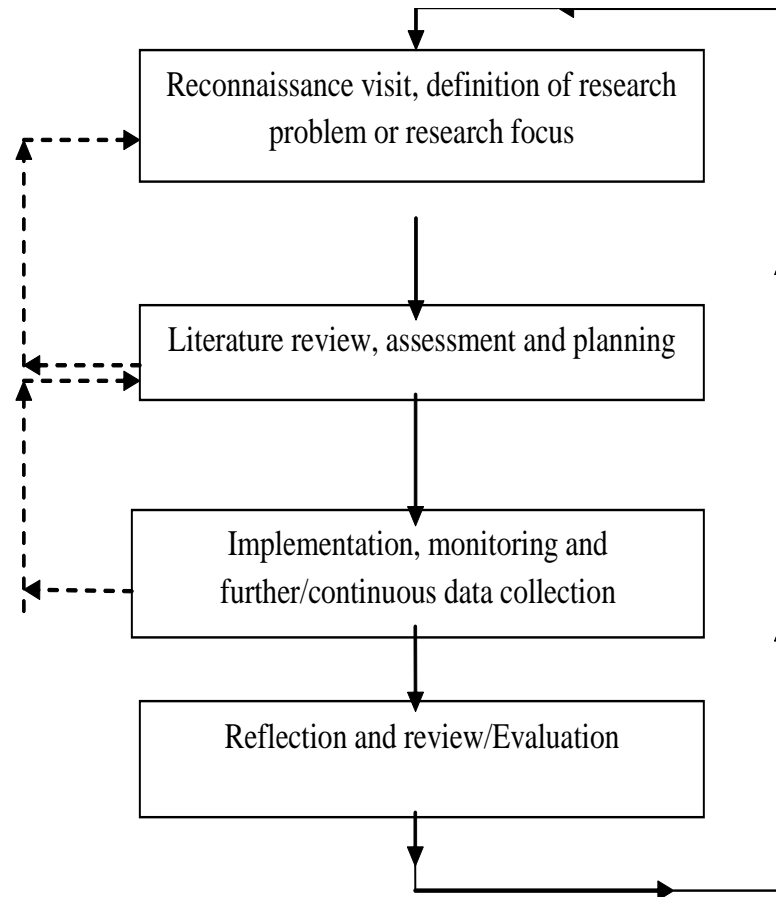
- Kinyarwanda sayings:

"Ak'imuhana kaza imvura ihise": It is better to be self-reliant because assistance from outside is unreliable and unpredictable;

- "Inkingi imwe ntigera inzu": One pillar cannot make a house
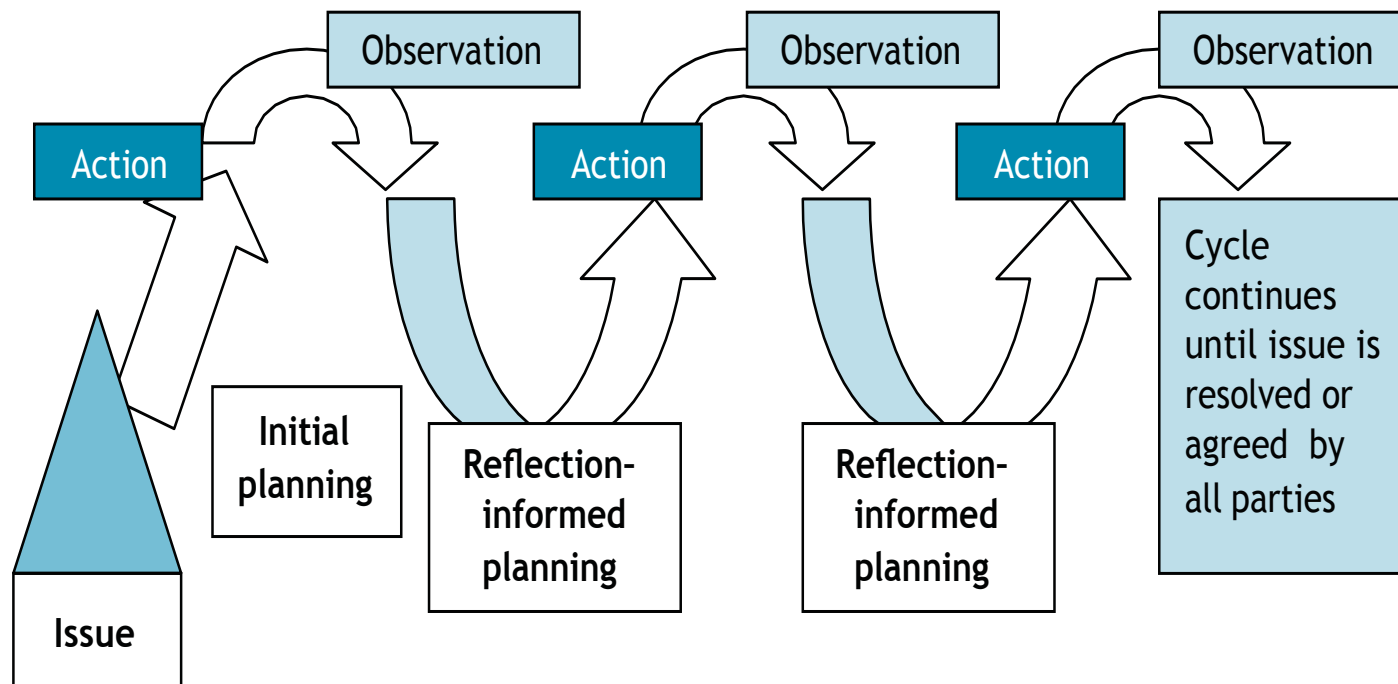
5. Research design and methodology

➤ This PhD research project was qualitative in nature and great privilege was given to participatory action research methodology (PAR).

➤ It was conducted in direct partnership with 13 SWWs including 8 Professional Social Workers (PSW) and 13 Representatives of 12 targeted Cooperative Associations. The direct research team worked with 266 associations' members during 3 consecutive years. The research was conducted in respect of the following process.
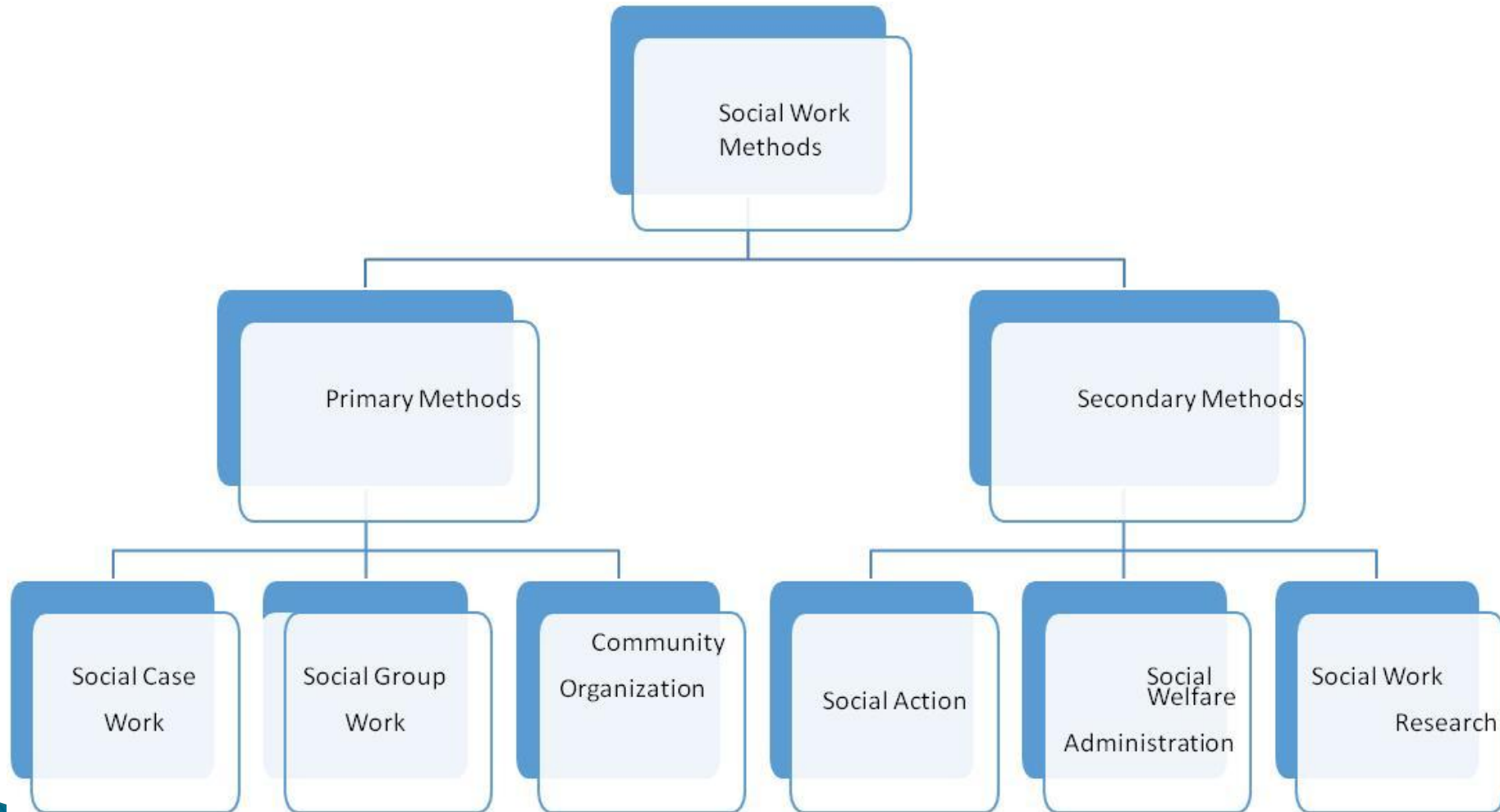
1) Overall Research Process

Source: Adapted from Rossouw (2009, p. 10)

2) The iterative cycle of participatory action research over 3 years (PAR)

Issue

Action → Observation → Initial planning → Action → Observation → Reflection-informed planning → Action → Observation → Reflection-informed planning → Cycle continues until issue is resolved or agreed by all parties

3) Social work methods referred to: Primary and Secondary methods

6. PAR with PLHIV in Cooperative Associations in Huye District and Message from Empirical Findings

1) *Key iterative activities: Cycle stages*

The core reflective learning, training and advocacy activities were as follows:

▸ Providing services to people within their local community/environment: "*Genda usange abandi, ubafashirize aho bari*" (28/09/2015);

▸ Self-reliance through well-thought investment: "*Reka nshore nunguke – Twigire dushingiye ku mishinga*" (21/12/2015);

▸ Associations as a significant way to wellness: commitment to combating poverty: "*Twisuzume mu ishyirahamwe ryacu dusobanukirwe icyo umunezero ari cyo: ubukene si akarande*" (21/03/2016);

▸ The tireless collective work versus potential external aid: "*Ak'imuhana kaza imvura ihise – Imbuto y'umugisha yera ku giti cy'umuruho*" (24/03/2017);

▸ Behavioural change for sustainable development: "*Twivugurure dutere imbere*" (30/06/2017); [till September 2018: Auto-organisation and technical assistance + Monitoring-Evaluation]

▸ As dissemination and follow-up session, a meeting with research partners was organised on 28 December 2018.

2) Training of Trainers (ISWAs)

3) Key findings

3.1 In general, the targeted PLHIVs in associations in HD consider themselves as 'poor' but they showed that through their associations – taken as **amplifiers of individual potentialities** –, it is possible to handle the phenomenon of poverty with the help of **dedicated professionals**.

3.2 Poverty is understood as a situation in which people lack the necessary resources for a normal life or for social inclusion. It manifests itself in the form of insufficient incomes but it is aggravated by psychosocial occurrences like despondency.

3.3 The results showed that **social workers are key catalysts and well positioned to empower people in need (PINs)** but for effective success, **it is essential that they work with intermediary social work actors (ISWAs) and** use mostly **developmental approaches** that should integrate **indigenous practices**.

3.4 The **close and constant collaboration** and mutual relationships **between the ISWAs and their colleagues** (associations' members) in their respective settings served as a good strategy to involve the latter in the research process and to engage them tirelessly in **mitigating poverty through** the initiation of various **small income generating projects**.

The role of ISWAs in uniting people is paramount!

GARUKA	COME BACK
Ngwino	Come
Dukorane	Let us work together
Utubemo	Stay with us
Dufashanye	Let us help each other
Tugirane inama	Let us advise each other
Ukomereze aho tugejeje	Join us and work from where we are
Uhorane natwe	Stay with us
Udukunde	Love us
Wubakire ku byo dufite	Build on what we have
Ariko ku banyamuryango beza	For irreproachable members
Bakorana umurava igikorwa kikarangira vuba	When they perform diligently their activities
Abantu nabo bakagira bati:	The people all declare:
"Abashyize hamwe bagakorana umurava bagera ku musaruro vuba bagasezerera ubukene	"People working collectively and enthusiastically achieve their objectives quickly and alleviate easily poverty

3.5 Synthesising international theories/perspectives and indigenous practices impacted greatly on the success of the empowerment process of the PINs.

Thus, the collective action strongly embraced in the targeted associations build on 6 key specific Rwandan traditional values yielded positive results. These values start with the root '**KWI**' and are abbreviated as '**6Ks**'. This was well linked with the **Home Grown Initiatives** (**HGIs**) referred to like the "**Performance Contract**".

The "6 Ks" are as follows:

- **KWI**YIZERA: Self-confidence
- **KWI**ZERANA: Trustworthiness
- **KWI**BONANAMO: Mutual intimacy
- **KWI**HANGANIRANA: Tolerance
- **KWI**GOMWA: Unselfishness
- **KWI**TANGA: Bravery

Poem translating Duhaguruke's members Imihigo

DUHAGURUKE

- *Twigire*
- *Twubakire ku byo dufite*
- *Twizamure tuzamurana*
- *Twirinde gucika intege*
- *Tujyane n'ibihe*

LET US STAND

- Let us be self-reliant
- Let us build on what we have
- Let us develop ourselves by helping one another
- Let us avoid being discouraged
- Let us adapt to current needs

3.6 Putting the PINs at the helm of the battle against poverty or other kinds of adversities stimulates the spirit of ownership and the propensity to engage sustainably in the problem-solving process.

In this endeavour, social work professionals using the **model** "**EIPPARD**" derived from this PAR, may collaborate with the PINs and help them enhance and maintain their well-being through well-thought coordination of various helping activities.
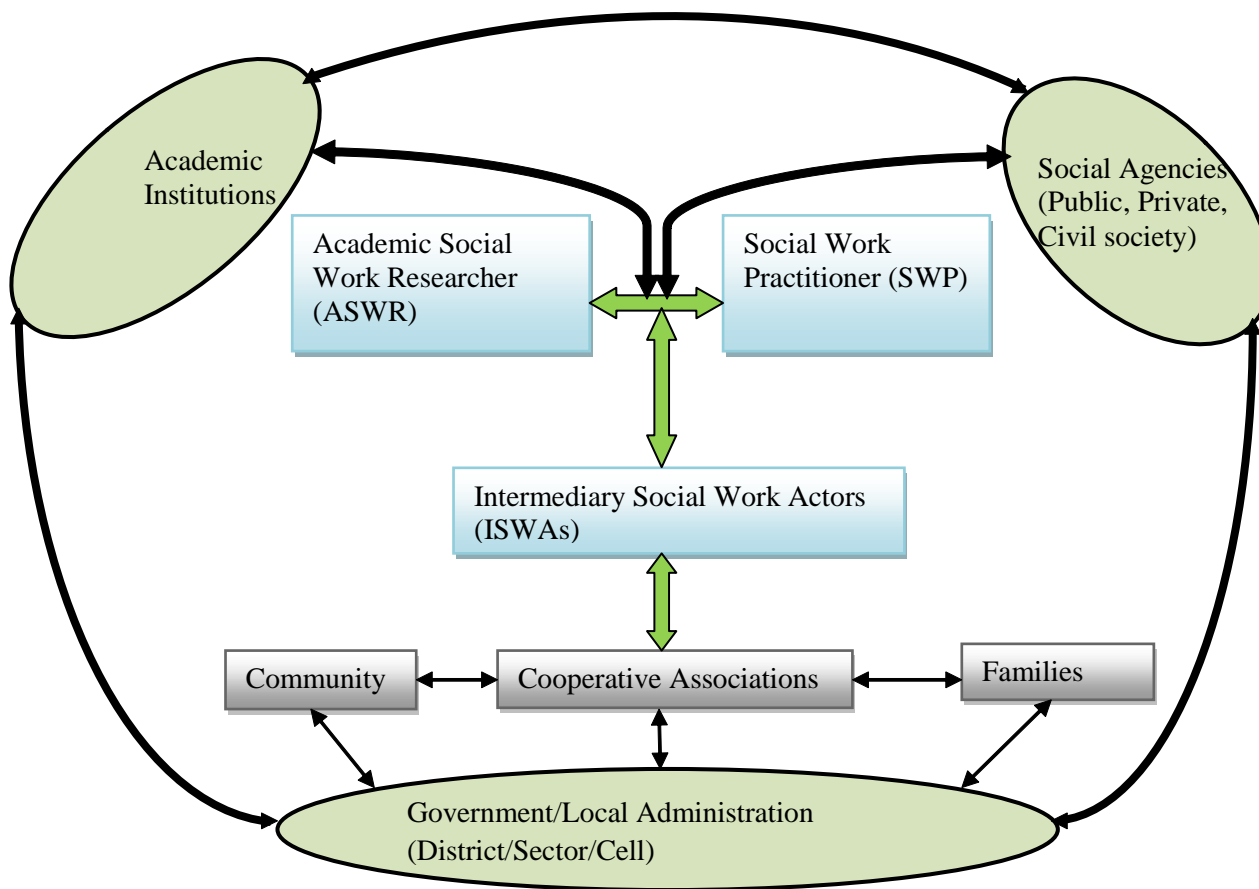
EIPPARD Communitarian Model for the empowerment and betterment of PLHIVs/PINs

Criteria	Philosophy of change	PAR-based planned change
NEEDS	- Lacking skills - Empowerment needs - Collaboration in changing conditions	- Self-esteem - Reconnaissance visits - Preliminary contacts- Assessment and Planning of action - Action Research - Reflections – Lessons learned – Action - Evaluation - Termination – End of Research - Follow up – Control
CLIENT/PIN	Citizens/Residents/ Participants	
CHANGE STRATEGY	- Involvement in felt needs, problem-solving - Partners in process of change - Task group, discussion, communication - Aims at consensus, self-help	
GOALS	Process goals	
ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKER	Teacher, enabler, skills in group worker, influencer, innovator, implementer	
OUTCOMES	Empowerment, capacity building, self-reliance, well-being	

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

1. As **conclusion**, I'd like to mention that the research goals/objectives were attained. Indeed:

❑ It emerges from the research that **Social Work is** a valuable **empowering profession**. The experiential PAR conducted in HD with PLHIV confirmed the important role of the profession in promoting and **improving the poor people's well-being**, particularly by using '**individual-collective approaches**' through specific **bridging units** i.e. social groups or associations composing the large community.

- The social work practitioners are well positioned to 'help PINs help themselves; create change in their lives; recognise their strengths and reach out to their own resources'. This is evidenced by the research findings presented here.

- However they may be cognizant of their limitations to replace people they work with, particularly the PINs and to respond to the latter's solicitations wherever and whenever necessary. They cannot always reach physically every person in need within his/her environment though this is comforting. They may partner with different stakeholders particularly from the Social Welfare Workforce (SWWs) including the **category newly referred to** in this research i.e. **Intermediary Social Work Actors (ISWAs).**

Source: Primary data, 2018

2. Lessons learned and Key Recommendations

❑ Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon. It is mostly felt by the victims and people in similar conditions. To mitigate or to struggle perfectly against it requires professional expertise but also the involvement of well enlightened or regularly trained victims or PINs (ISWAs) themselves who in turn, will enlighten or train others.

➔ Social workers may, without endangering their expertise, work closely with well selected wise people from PINs who will be in constant contact with the colleagues and report regularly to the coach/mentor.

➔ Social workers may use participatory, synthesised and integrated methodologies. Here the PAR should be privileged and indigenous practices/Home Grown Initiatives (HGIs) promoted in the perspective of making people aware of their responsibility in the problem-solving process.

Ak'imuhana kaza imvura ihise: It is better to be self-reliant because assistance from outside is unreliable and unpredictable

❑To help adequately PLHIVs from poverty-stricken families requires to work with them in their respective settings where all concerned actors may strive for the betterment of all PINs who may have access to the benefits of the existing systems.

➔Social workers may be well equipped (from university already) to be able to handle different kinds of adversities at different levels and to adapt to the ever changing world: emphasising **emancipatory education**.

➔Embracing and putting in action the principle of "**Leaving none behind**".

➔ Social workers may challenge common sense approaches and use interpretive approaches.

➔ Contributing always to the building of a decent society: playing directly or indirectly an influential role and establishing a bridge between local policy implementers and policy makers in order to fix every time emerging shortcomings.

➔ Drawing on prevailing social capital within the settings under consideration.

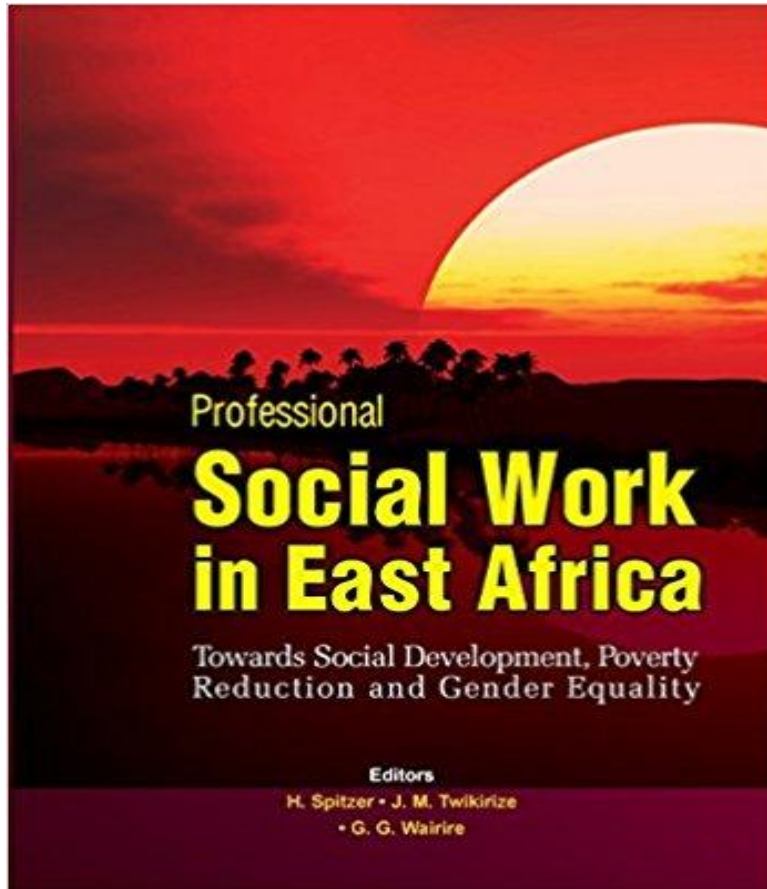What is asked to the PSWs and the SWWs on the whole is "Not to do extraordinary things but to act extraordinarily well"

Reflexivity and Pitfalls

- ❑ Conceptual and theoretical limitations
- ❑ Democratic and equal participation in the research (Research coordinator/facilitator and clients)
- ❑ Timeframe: Resolution/alleviation of the poverty problem; the after-completion of the PhD project?
- ❑ Decolonisation and indigenisation of social work towards social development with the use of PAR methodology.

Various interventions afterwards and further researches to fill the gap!!!
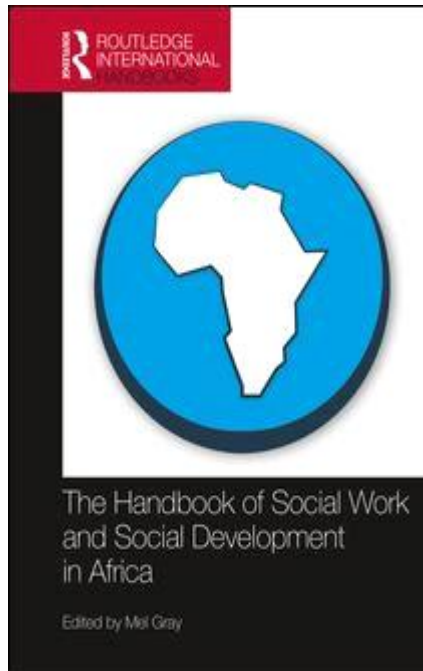
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The Role of
Social Work
in Poverty Reduction and the Realisation of
Millennium Development Goals
in Rwanda

Charles Kalinganire
Charles Rutikanga

Book chapter

Social work practice in Rwanda

The challenge of adapting Western models to fit local contexts
Authored by: **Charles Kalinganire** , **So'Nia L. Gilkey** , **Laura J. Haas**
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THANKS!

MERCI!

MURAKOZE!