



2023

ANNUAL REPORT



MESSAGE FROM OUR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE



Dear Partners,

As we reflect on another year of service to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities and their families, I am humbled by the unwavering commitment of UPHLS secretariat to our mission of strengthening the capacities of member organizations, support, and guide and coordinate programs aim at promoting the rights of Persons with Disabilities for inclusive services in HIV&AIDS, health and employability.

I am proud of the innovative approaches and exceptional teamwork demonstrated by UPHLS staff in the face of challenges, ensuring that we continue to make a lasting impact in the lives of those we serve.

I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to our partners, donors, and the Government of Rwanda, particularly the Ministry of Health for their invaluable support, which has enabled us to conduct interventions aiming at the inclusion of persons with disabilities and reaching more persons with disabilities including children in need like the provision of assistive products. Together, we have made great strides in ensuring that no one is left behind.

As we are embarking the new year, I am confident that we will continue to build on the best practices and made, lesson learnt and tackle challenges that still there for persons with disabilities particularly children and their families with determination and a commitment to excellence. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to each and every one of you for your contributions to our mission in one way or another and for striving to make their programs inclusive.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Dr SUUBI Patrick

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This annual report attends to showcase the achievements realized throughout the year, best practices and lessons learnt. UPHLS focused its interventions in 21 districts including Nyarugenge, Kicukiro, Gasabo, Muhanga, Ruhango, Nyanza, Huye, Gisagara, Rulindo, Musanze, Burera, Gicumbi, Nyabihu, Rubavu, Karongi, Ngororero, Nyagatare, Gatsibo, Rwamagana, Kayanza and Bugesera.

The activities conducted during the year are grouped into three thematic areas, among others, HIV and AID prevention among persons with disabilities, Health promotion which include capacity strengthening of health system in disability inclusion (including HIV, SRH, Nutrition and WASH) and employability which focused on capacity building of youth with disabilities vocational and technical skills as well as the employers to assure inclusive employment for youth with disabilities. Among the main activities conducted including the outreach sessions to reach persons with disabilities through their self-help groups on disability rights, HIV and AIDS, ASRH, TB, leadership and Cooperative Management where 299 youth with disabilities were trained on ASRH, HIV and life skills while 41,775 persons with disabilities reached during disability friendly outreach sessions. Capacity strengthening of health facilities to foster the inclusion health care service provision particularly HIV related services, ASRH, nutrition, WASH where 420 health care providers were trained and 749 CHWs trained on disability inclusive community health service provision including 460 CHWs trained on early detection of impairment in children. In 2023, 3 health centers were renovated; 7 strategic documents were developed in partnership with RBC on the management of the reversible impairments and deformities in children, Rwanda Integrated Rehabilitation Model (RIRM) and Simplified Tool for Early Detection of Developmental Delays and Disabilities in the Community (STED).

In terms of capacity building and economic empowerment, 121 selected vulnerable families of children with disabilities were provided with the livestock like goats pigs and hens. 77 committee members out of 86 of the youth groups were trained on soft skills and business development, 110 self-help groups provided with 53,905,000 million (RWF) as seed funding for economic empowerment.

During this year, 3,095 persons with disabilities were screened by the specialists where some of them were treated, others were provided with assistive products while others were referred for further specialized interventions. In total 228 digital hearing aids provided to children with hearing impairment, 328 crutches (both elbow and axillary), 10 orthopedic shoes, 75 wheelchairs provided to persons with physical impairment, 120 white canes, 41 eye glasses and 4 Telescopic and magnifiers provided to persons with visual impairment.

The mentioned achievements would not be achieved without an enabling environment and the high commitment of UPHLS staff who work tearlessly to achieve the expected results and even went beyond. UPHLS is grateful and thankful for the faith that our beneficiaries, partners and UPHLS leadership have attributed to us in 2023, and look forward to more wonderful milestones to celebrate at the end of next year.

I. INTRODUCTION

Umbrella of organizations of Persons with Disabilities in the Fight against HIV&AIDS and for Health Promotion was created on 21st September, 2006 by the Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), registered under final Registration No 048/NGO/2015 by RGB. UPHLS envisions an inclusive society where people with disabilities are empowered and enjoy wellbeing and dignity, with mission of strengthening the capacities of member organizations, support, and guide and coordinate programs aim at promoting the rights of Persons with Disabilities for inclusive services in HIV&AIDS, health and employability.

The year 2023 was marked by different activities aiming at promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, accessibility of services, capacity strengthening of the service providers to provide inclusive services including mainly health facilities, government partners in different domains mainly those involved in health, WASH, Nutrition, ASRH, vocational and technical skills as well as the employers assure inclusive employment for youth with disabilities. UPHLS interventions also marked by the capacity building of persons with disabilities and their families on health related topics (including HIV, ASRH, Nutrition and WASH), vocational and technical skills, leadership and cooperative management for social economic empowerment. For social behavior change among person with disabilities, their families and the community at large, UPHLS conducted the series of community dialogues to address social norms around persons with disabilities particularly children with disabilities and their families. Briefly, UPHLS interventions in 2023 are grouped into five areas including HIV&AIDS; SRH, Health Promotion; Assistive Technologies; Employability and Advocacy.

Geographically, during 2023 UPHLS covered 21 districts in all provinces and the City of Kigali including Nyarugenge, Kicukiro, Gasabo, Muhanga, Ruhango, Nyanza, Huye, Gisagara, Rulindo, Musanze, Burera, Gicumbi, Nyabihu, Rubavu, Karongi, Ngororero, Nyagatare, Gatsibo, Rwamagana, Kayonza and Bugesera. UPHLS also conducted some interventions in other two districts not listed above including Rusizi where, UPHLS provided orthopedic materials to strengthen the orthopedic workshop of Gihundwe Hospital and provided assistive products in Nyaruguru during the celebration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD).

This annual report is showcasing the key achievements realized throughout the 2023 with reference to the above mentioned areas, best practices, lessons learnt, gaps, recommendations, general conclusion and summary of annual plan for the year 2024.



II. HIV and Sexual Reproductive Health

2.1. HIV and AIDS

Throughout 2023, HIV activities were conducted to address barriers to information and services among persons with disabilities by increasing their knowledge HIV preventive measures through the trainings, disability friendly outreach campaigns and the distribution of the customized SBC tools.

Training of peer educators and representatives of the self-help groups of persons with disabilities on HIV and AIDS, leadership and Cooperative Management

Through the self-help groups of persons with disabilities, UPHLS conducted the trainings of peer educators and the representatives to increase their knowledge on disability rights, HIV and AIDS, leadership and cooperative management. After these trainings the trainees in collaboration with UPHLS and the health centers organized the disability friendly outreach sessions for social behavior change on HIV and AIDS and the rights of persons with disabilities.

Disability friendly outreach campaigns on health related topics (HIV&AIDS, TB, and COVID-19)

After the trainings of persons with disabilities as peer educators/ facilitators, the later in collaboration with health care providers from the health centers particularly the ones in charge of youth corners and the in charge of Community health workers organized disability friendly outreach sessions targeting youth with disabilities, persons with disability in general and their

families and the community members through the community dialogues. The key messages for outreach sessions turned around the awareness on HIV preventive measures, family planning COVID-19 as well as the rights of persons with disabilities. The message on TB and the related preventive measures was also highlighted during some sessions.

Summary of achievements

106 Representatives of the self-help groups of persons with disabilities trained on HIV, SRH, disability rights, leadership and cooperative management

41,669 persons with disabilities including 23,220 females and 18,429 males reached during disability friendly outreach sessions.

Coaching and mentoring the health care providers working in HIV related services at health centers.

The coaching and mentoring sessions were carried in health centers to discuss with health center staff working in HIV related services about their experiences in serving persons with disabilities, adherence of persons with disabilities in their services including mainly ARV, VCT, PMTCT and VMMC. The monitoring also aimed at identifying gaps & challenges and after discussions the team proposed some strategies to overcome the raised existing challenges.

Concerning the adherence of persons with disabilities living with HIV to ARV, in 92 health centers visited Kayonza, Rwamagana, Bugesera, Muhanga, Ruhango, Nyanza, Huye, Gicumbi, Rulindo, Musanze, Nyabihu, Rubavu, Karongi and the City of Kigali, 578 persons with disabilities were reported on ARV including 362 females and 212 males.

Training of persons with disabilities on disability rights, SRH and HIV

These training targeted mainly youth with disabilities who are in schools and those out of schools to increase their knowledge on SRH, HIV and AIDS and other STIs preventive measures, disability rights and life skills. UPHLS organized the training of parents of children and adolescents with disabilities to promote positive behavior towards their children by increasing their knowledge on the rights of children with disabilities especially their rights to ASRH. All these trainees were trained as peer educators and they contributed actively during community dialogues and disability friendly outreach campaigns.

2.2. Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH)

Throughout 2023, SRH related activities were conducted to address barriers to information and services among persons with disabilities particularly youth by increasing their knowledge on sexual and reproductive health (SRH). In collaboration with health care providers in charge of ASRH in health centers UPHLS conducted awareness sessions targeting youth with disabilities

where most of them were conducted in youth corners with the purpose of addressing the social norms around Disability and ASRH. During this year UPHLS also provided to the women and girls with disabilities the sanitary pads to not only raise their awareness on for menstrual hygiene but also facilitate them to access them.

Summary of achievement

299 youth with different types of impairments (158 girls and 88 boys) trained on ASRH, HIV&AIDS and life skills

90 parents of children with disabilities (68 women and 22 men) reached out during the training on the rights of children with disabilities

2606 Pads and 100 pampers distributed among women/girls with disabilities and to the centers of children with disabilities

Adaptation and reproduction of adapted IEC tools on ASRH, HIV, ART, Opportunistic Infections (OI) and PMTCT (Posters, Image boxes, etc.)

During 2023, UPHLS has adapted a ASRH booklet to make it disability friendly, reproduced customized communication materials including the training manual on disability and HIV, communication tools on Opportunistic Infections (OIs), PMTCT and ART. The adapted communication materials were distributed to the peer educators, youth with disabilities and the self-help groups of persons with disabilities. Other IEC tools were distributed in health facilities to increase the awareness of health care providers to provide disability friendly HIV and ASRH services. Over three thousand copies of adapted IEC tools on general information on HIV, ART, OI and PMTCT and 100 copies of disability mainstreaming toolkit have been reproduced and disseminated. 400 brochures with awareness messages on HIV and AIDS produced and distributed during community outreach campaigns.



III. HEALTH PROMOTION

During 2023, the health promotion interventions focused mainly on two areas including health facilities capacity strengthening with the purpose of ensuring disability mainstreaming in health care services provision particularly HIV services, SRH, WASH, nutrition, disability early detection, prevention and management. The activities conducted include the trainings of health care providers, renovation of the selected health centers after conducting accessibility check, screening of children and adult with disabilities in need of assistive products, rehabilitation services, medical care. The screening conducted targeted children and adolescents with hearing impairment, persons with visual issues and persons with physical impairment.

3.1. Capacity strengthening of health facilities

Throughout year 2023, UPHLS organized the training of health care providers from different areas including those working in HIV related services, OPD Nurses, Nutritionists, Social workers, the supervisors of CHWs, ...) to increase their knowledge on disability rights, disability mainstreaming, disability specific needs, disability friendly communication. The training targeting the midwives and the Community Environmental and Health officers (CEHOs) was conducted to increase their knowledge on disability early detection and management. Coaching and mentorship for the trained health professionals was also another core activity conducted throughout the year for the capacity strengthening.

Summary of achievements

Health care providers trained	T o t a l number	Comments
Midwives and CEHOs trained	72	Include 35 midwives and 37 Community and CEHO from Nyagatare and Huye trained on disability early detection and management
Health care providers working in ARV, OPD and Customer care from health facilities	156	Trained on disability mainstreaming and specific needs, sign language, mobility and orientation
Nurses in charge of youth corners, GBV Officers from District hospitals and YEGO Centers Coordinators	118	All 30 districts were represented
Nutritionists and Social Workers from Huye and Nyagatare	74	Trained on disability inclusion in nutrition services with focus to children with feeding difficulties
Local partners working in health in general and those working in nutrition	50	Trained on disability mainstreaming and disability friendly planning
Community health workers	749	112 trained on disability and HIV/AIDS disability friendly services, 71 trained on disability inclusive health service provision, 460 trained on the simplified tool for early detection of impairment in children



Accessibility check and Disability Inclusion Score Card (DISC) of health centers and ECDs and renovation of the selected health centers

To raise awareness on the gaps that are in health and ECD facilities and to provide guidance on how to address the identified gaps to be fully accessible for persons with disabilities, UPHLS conducted accessibility check and DISC in the selected health centers including Gihinga health

center (HC) in Bugesera district, Mushishiro HC in Muhanga district, Kirambo and Birambo HCs in Karongi district, Gacuba II HC in Rubavu district and Ntoma HC in Nyagatare district and the selected ECDs in Nyagatare and Huye. DISC was also conducted to Karambi and Kigoma (Ruhango), Kibuye and Rubengera (Karongi), UCC and Byahi in Rubavu to assess the progress or changes realized in terms of disability inclusion.

After the accessibility check, 3 selected health centers were upgraded including Rukomo HC in Nyagatare, Bungwe HC from Burera and Karambi HC from Ruhango.

Snapshot of achievements

78 ECDs including 37 ECDs in Nyagatare and 41 in Huye and 10 health centers were assessed	12 Health facilities visited during accessibility check including Karambi and Kigoma in Ruhango, Kibuye and Rubengera in Karongi, UCC and Byahi in Rubavu, Gihinga in Bugesera district, Mushishiro hc in Muhanga district, Kirambo and Birambo hc in Karongi district, Gacuba ii in Rubavu district and Ntoma hc in Nyagatare	3 selected health centers were renovated including Rukomo HC in Nyagatare, Bungwe HC from Burera and Karambi HC from Ruhango. Also 5 renovated health centers were roofed to ensure that the patients are safe during raining or sunshine
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Development of strategic documents



During 2023, UPHLS developed the strategic documents including the National Guidelines on the management of reversible impairment in children the simplified tool for the early detection of impairment in children to be used by the CHWs that were developed in partnership with RBC and disability standards and guidelines on accessible WASH services for actors that was developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Infrastructure (MINENFRA). The national guidelines on disability early detection and the management of the reversible impairments in children were endorsed by RBC and were disseminated.

Summary of achievements

NATIONAL CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF ANGULAR KNEE DEFORMITIES	NATIONAL CELEBRAL PALSY MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES
NATIONAL CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF CLUBFOOT DEFORMITY	NATIONAL CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF FLATFOOT DEFORMITY
RWANDA INTEGRATED REHABILITATION MODEL	SIMPLIFIED TOOL FOR EARLY DETECTION FOR DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS AND DISABILITIES IN THE COMMUNITY (STED)
DISABILITY STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES ON ACCESSIBLE WASH SERVICES	PROGRAM FRAMEWORK ON HEARING INTERVENTIONS AND FOLLOW UP (HIFC) FOR ALL AGES SERVICES IN RWANDA

3.2. Disability prevention, early detection and management



During 2023, UPHLS conducted the activities aimed at raising awareness through the training of midwives as mentioned above and the community dialogues on disability prevention, early detection and management of the irreversible impairments. In partnership with RBC, National champions on ear and hearing care, Kabgayi Eye Unity and the Physiotherapists from the District Hospitals, UPHLS conducted the screening of persons with disabilities in need of assistive products (like digital hearing aids, white canes, Crutches, Walkers, wheelchairs ...), medical care or other rehabilitation services.

Pre-screening, Screening and treatment of children with hearing impairment

This activity was conducted in three districts including Huye, Nyabihu and Nyarugenge and the following children and adolescents have been reached out during clinical outreaches:

- 446 children and adolescents with hearing impairment (233 males and 213 females) were prescreened in Nyabihu, Nyarugenge and Huye
- 425 children and adolescents with hearing impairment (223 males and 202 were screened by ENT surgeons and audiologists
- 122 children with hearing impairment assessed with Auditory Brainstem Response Test (ABR) and 62 children assessed with Auditory Steady-State Response Test (ASSR)
- 64 children treated with syringing
- 6 children were treated and recommended medication
- 8 Children found with chronic spirative otitis media (CSOM) and were referred for the treatment

Community screening for Eye Care Screening and treatment



The community screening was conducted in partnership with Kabgayi Eye Unity in Ruhango District (Muyunzwe and Gitwe Health Centers) and Rwanda Correctional Services (Rilima and Nyarugenge).

- 890 persons with visual issues from Ruhango were screened by eye health specialist
- 771 persons with visual issues from Rilima and Nyarugenge prison were screened
- 216 people were referred to Kabgayi Eye Unity for further assessment and treatment
- 7 persons with visual impairment were supported for a period of 6 months at Masaka Resource Center for the Blind for rehabilitation

Screening of persons with physical impairment in need of assistive product or other orthopedic services



During this year, UPHLS also in collaboration with the physiotherapists from the district hospitals conducted the screening of persons with physical impairment in need of assistive devices, medical care or other rehabilitation services. The majority of the screened persons are those living with HIV identified in collaboration with RRP+ from Rubavu, Karongi, Nyabihu, Huye, Nyanza, Ruhango, Muhanga, Rulindo, Musanze, Gicumbi, Gatsibo, Kayonza, Rwamagana and Bugesera. UPHLS in collaboration with orthopedic workshops from Ruhengeri, Gihundwe, CHUB and CHUK (provide with orthopedic materials by UNICEF through UPHLS) screened children, youth and adults identified in need of orthopedic services.

1,571 persons with physical impairment living with HIV were identified from health centers to be assessed by the physiotherapist

1,007 persons with physical impairment living with HIV screened by the physiotherapists from the district hospitals

541 persons found in need of mobility aids included wheelchairs, crutches and orthopedic shoes

371 (269 children and adolescents with disabilities and 102 adults) found in need of orthopedic services in the catchment areas of 4 Ruhengeri, Gihundwe, CHUK and CHUB.

3.3. Assistive Technologies

During 2023, UPHLS in partnership with RBC and Hospitals as mentioned organized the clinical outreach campaigns to screen persons with disabilities in need of assistive technologies.

After the screening those found in need of assistive devices were provided with the devices prescribed by health care providers.



Summary of achievements

- 228 digital hearing aids provided to 115 children with hearing impairment (55 males and 60 females) from Huye, Nyarugenge and Nyabihu
- 328 crutches (both elbow and axillary), 10 orthopedic shoes, 75 wheelchairs and 6 walkers were provided to persons with physical impairment
- 120 white canes, 41 eye glasses and 4 Telescopic and magnifiers provided to persons with visual impairment
- 371 persons with physical impairment were provided with orthopedic services including orthopedic surgeons, rehabilitation services while others were given prosthesis and orthosis from Ruhengeri, Gihundwe, CHUK, CHUB, Gatagara and Gahini rehabilitation center
- 4 Orthopedic workshops from Ruhengeri Hospital, Gihundwe Hospital, CHUB and CHUK were provided with orthopedic items

Some documented success stories

Mutoni Josiane, A young lady of 10 years old living in Huye District, Mbazi Sector. Gatobotobo Cell, who has developed diplegia post cerebral Malaria; she has Parkinsonian gait, balance and equilibrium during walking have been lost, she could not stand or walk without support. Her mother used to carry her on the back. After receiving crutches and rehabilitation, now Josiane is stepping few feet without support, and with crutches, she manages to go to school like other children with minimal support from peer when needed. Her teacher said that after provision of crutches, she sees a lot of improvement as she can now go to answer on the board unlike before, and that after provision of crutches she enjoys coming to school and interact with others. Her mother said that there is hope, because they no longer carry her to school, she can be given minimal support when needed.

Ishimwe Patience, a 4 years old boy was diagnosed with motor retardation, living in Huye District, Kigoma Sector and Musebeya Cell, before provision of walking frame, he used to crawl, after provision of walking frame, now Ishimwe is stepping for two minute without using walking frame, and more than 20 minute using walking frame. Physiotherapist and his grandmother are putting effort to help him walk independently, as he is attending ECD.

Emmanuel Irasubiza, is a 13 years old boy, diagnosed with bilateral knee stiffness, due to lack of medical services, at first he was prescribed with crutches but he was identified a bit late, he could not walk with crutches anymore, he was provided with wheel chair. Four months after provision, we visited him; he was excited that now he can go out and interacts with other children which was not the case before, and he was very excited that in the next semester he will go back to school.

His father was very happy saying that he no longer carries him around, he said that he was having back pain for carrying him for a long time.

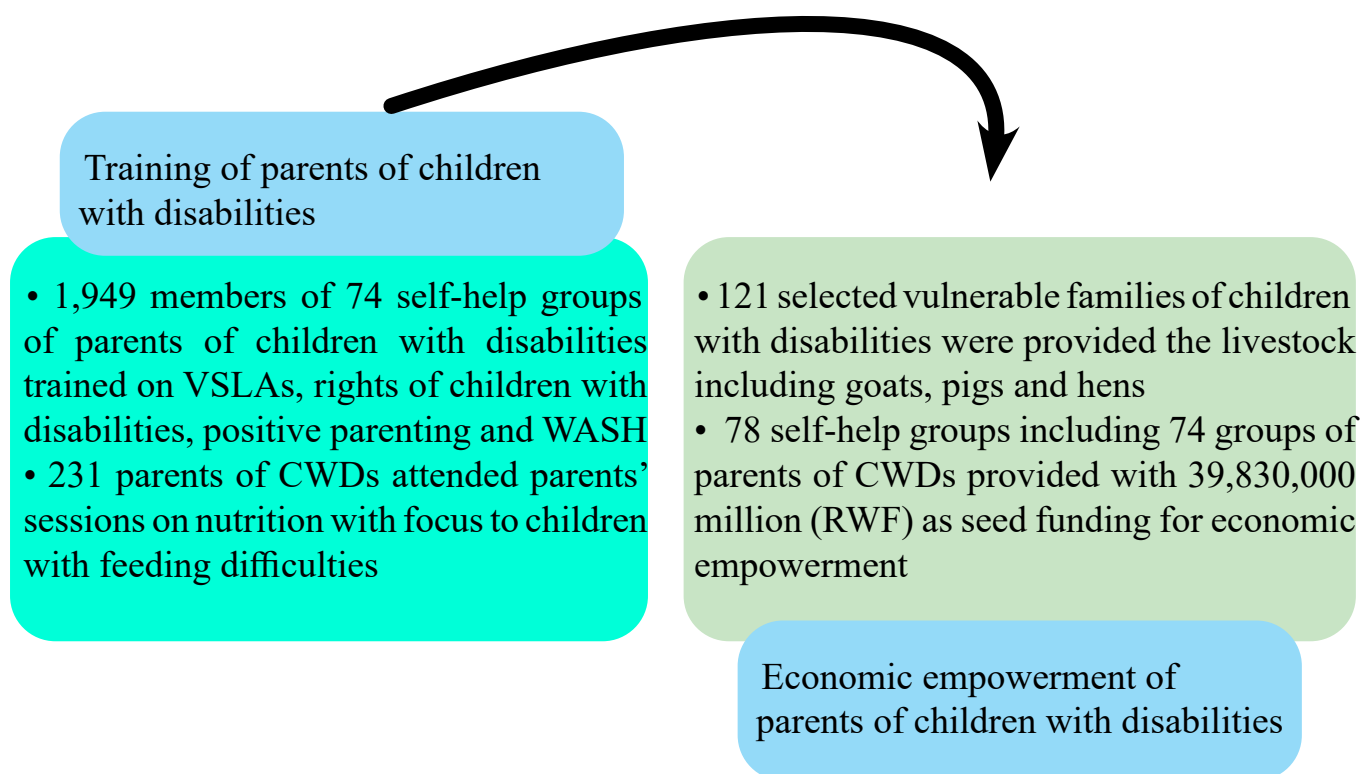
Iranzi Fiston, He is a 7 years old boy, in Huye District Maraba Sector and Kabuye Cell, he has leg discrepancy causing him back pain due to improper gait and it was difficult for him to attend school and after provision of an orthosis from CHUB hospital, he is enjoying school life and other daily activities as others children.

Bimenyimana Vincent, A six years old boy in Nyagatare District, Tabagwe Sector and Nyabitekeri cell, he has been diagnosed with leg discrepancy with caused improper gait and there was a lot of stigma among his peers in the village, some of them used to copy his gait deliberately to mock him, even the family members used to call him machete, Vincent was treated at Gahini Hospital, he was discharged after a month and a half, when he reached the village everyone was gathered (as he was popular in the center) to see how he is walking, they were surprised to see that he is doing much better. While taking the pictures the girl that used to say that she will not marry him was fighting to be besides him during picture sessions

In Karama Sector, Nyagatare District, there is a particular girl, IRAKOZE Sandrine 9 years old, that they used to carry around, she had road traffic accident, her parents spent everything they have for her medical bills, when discharged she was prescribed with crutches but parents could not afford them, so they carry her around, she could not attend school as she can't walk by herself, when we provided her with crutches she immediately started walking at home, become independent, after three months we visited her at Bright future academy, she had resumed school and she was walking with one crutch as she was getting better

3.4. Capacity building of persons with disabilities and their families

During the year 2023, UPHLS prioritized the interventions aiming at supporting persons with disabilities and families through the self-help groups to improve their economic well-being, increase and diversify their incomes through training on disability rights, nutrition, WASH, leadership and cooperative management, training on Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) for the saving groups, provision of seed funding and livestock to improve the nutrition status of children with disabilities from the vulnerable households, among many other interventions.



During 2023, UPHLS also provided medical insurance to 186 vulnerable households from Rubavu, Nyabihu, Karongi, Ruhango, Nyarugenge districts during the fiscal year 2023-2024

IV. EMPLOYABILITY

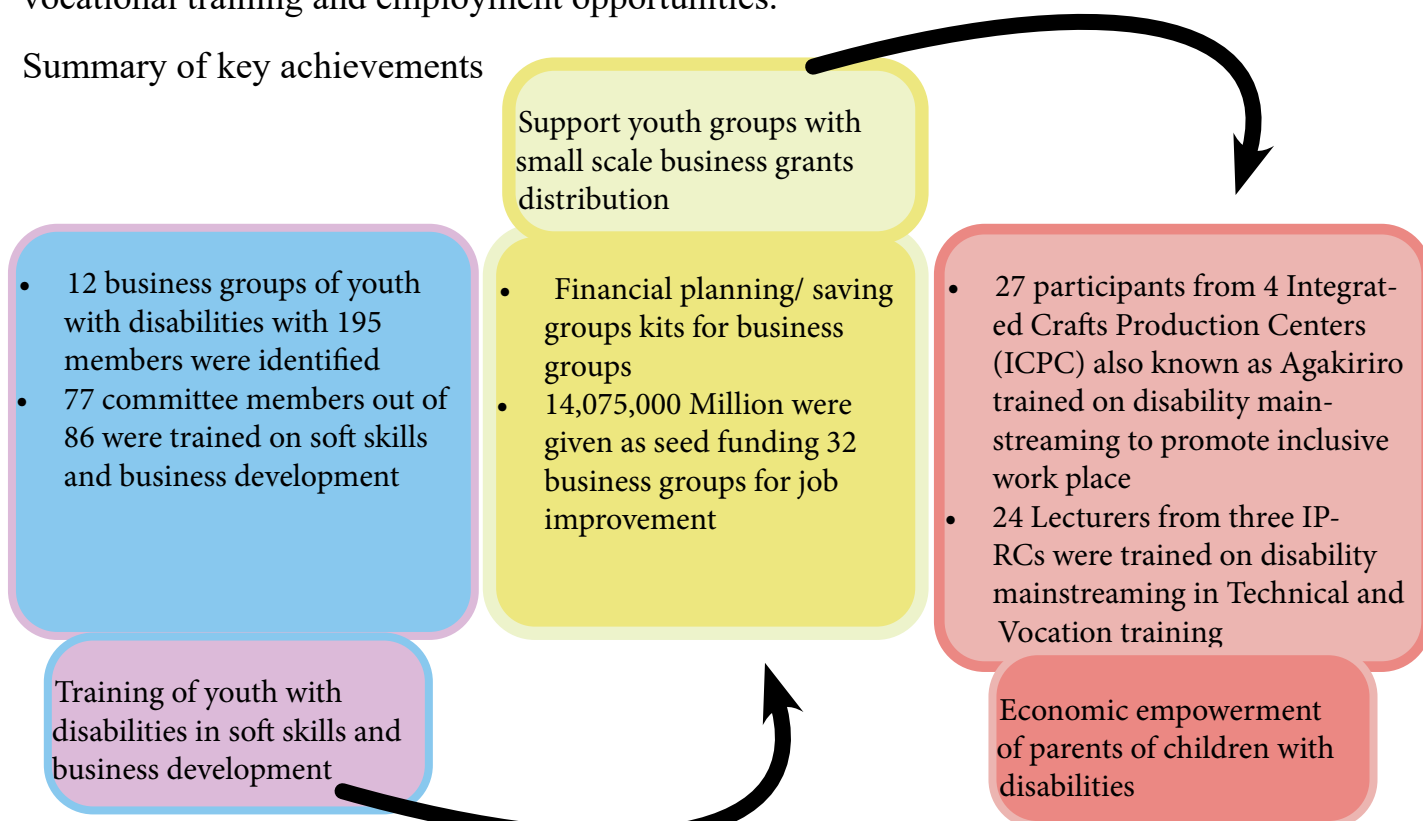
Persons with disabilities are frequently excluded from regular primary and secondary education, few persons with disabilities attend tertiary education. Furthermore, mainstream technical and vocational education and training (TVET) systems are often not accessible for persons with disabilities, including a lack of disability awareness among teaching staff as well as inaccessible training methods and tools. The strategic objective 4 of the National Disability policy is to “To increase the participation of persons with disabilities in employment and other sectors” with focus to Skills for Persons with Disabilities developed for employment and economic autonomy increased.

During the year 2023, UPHLS conducted activities aimed at promoting an inclusive workforce for youth with disabilities to improve their access to technical vocational training and employment opportunities. Inclusion of youth with disabilities in micro- to small enterprises, and business development as an effective approach to empower them in managing their development and enhancing participation in income-generating activities.

4.1. Youth with disabilities gain access to self-employment and small scale-business development support

During this year, UPHLS identified the self-help groups of youth with disabilities to be strengthened in terms of soft skills training, business development as well as materials support for economic empowerment. Apart from capacity strengthening of business groups, UPHLS also conducted the training of 4 Integrated Crafts Production Centers (ICPC) also known as Agakiro and 3 IPRCs (Karongi, Huye and Musanze) on disability mainstreaming with the purpose of promoting an inclusive workforce for youth with disabilities to access technical vocational training and employment opportunities.

Summary of key achievements



4.3. Students and teachers at IPRCs are reached with disability inclusion messages and involved in promotion universal design in Rwanda

In 2023, UPHLS conducted community awareness on the disability rights and disability inclusion in 3 IPRCs to promote the universal design. These awareness campaigns also were conducted in District Open Days to reach ICPC employers and other companies. To raise the awareness of ICPC on the disability inclusion, UPHLS conducted the accessibility check in 4 ICPC to assess at which extent they are accessible for youth with disabilities, identify the gaps and propose recommendations to ensure the full accessibility of work place. During the accessibility process, Bills of Quantity (BOQ) were also done to rationalize each ICPC towards accessibility compliance center.

4.4. Life stories

TUZAMURANE MUDENDE, a group made of 15 youth from Rubavu District created in 2019 right after they completed a six months technical training in tailoring and knitting under the Employable Project. They started off as any other employable alumni group with few start up kits (sewing machines) provided by UPHLS and a rent free working place provided by the sector. Through established ties with the sector's authority, the group has had many opportunities from the sector including a 1 million RWF reinforcement because of their outstanding effort which they used to purchase finishing stitching machines, furthermore the group has started to train young novices about tailoring where they are paid as much as 25,000 RWF per student by the sector and so far they have trained 3 cohorts of young vulnerable women and each cohort consisting of at least 8 people. Now the group is able to pay their working place rent, they have moved from being a self-help group to a certified cooperative and individually their livelihood have positively changed as they all able to save in a long term national pension scheme "EJO HEZA". Their aspiration now is to expand their market by availing local products such school uniforms for local neighboring schools on a regular basis and to move into using electric machinery as they speed up the whole process of making clothes.

TUZAMURANE, a group of 17 members engaged in sheep livestock. The saving and internal lending groups were created and reinforced by UPHLS for entrepreneurial activities. They started off with 8 sheep and now have 17 and still has 80,000 RWF on their bank account. The livestock activity seems to be going well as the needed care for the wellbeing of the livestock seem to be taken care of with the support of the sector agronomist and as a group They are striving to engage in Irish potato farming as Musanze is well known for good irish

TWUZUZANYE, a group of 17 members' alumni of USAID UKB project from Musanze district is engaged in sheep livestock since 2022. They initially started off as a saving and lending group and now they have 17 sheep and only two haven't bred. Regarding their internal saving, they are still growing strong as by then they had 437,000 RWF on the account and they look forward to investing in garlic farming.

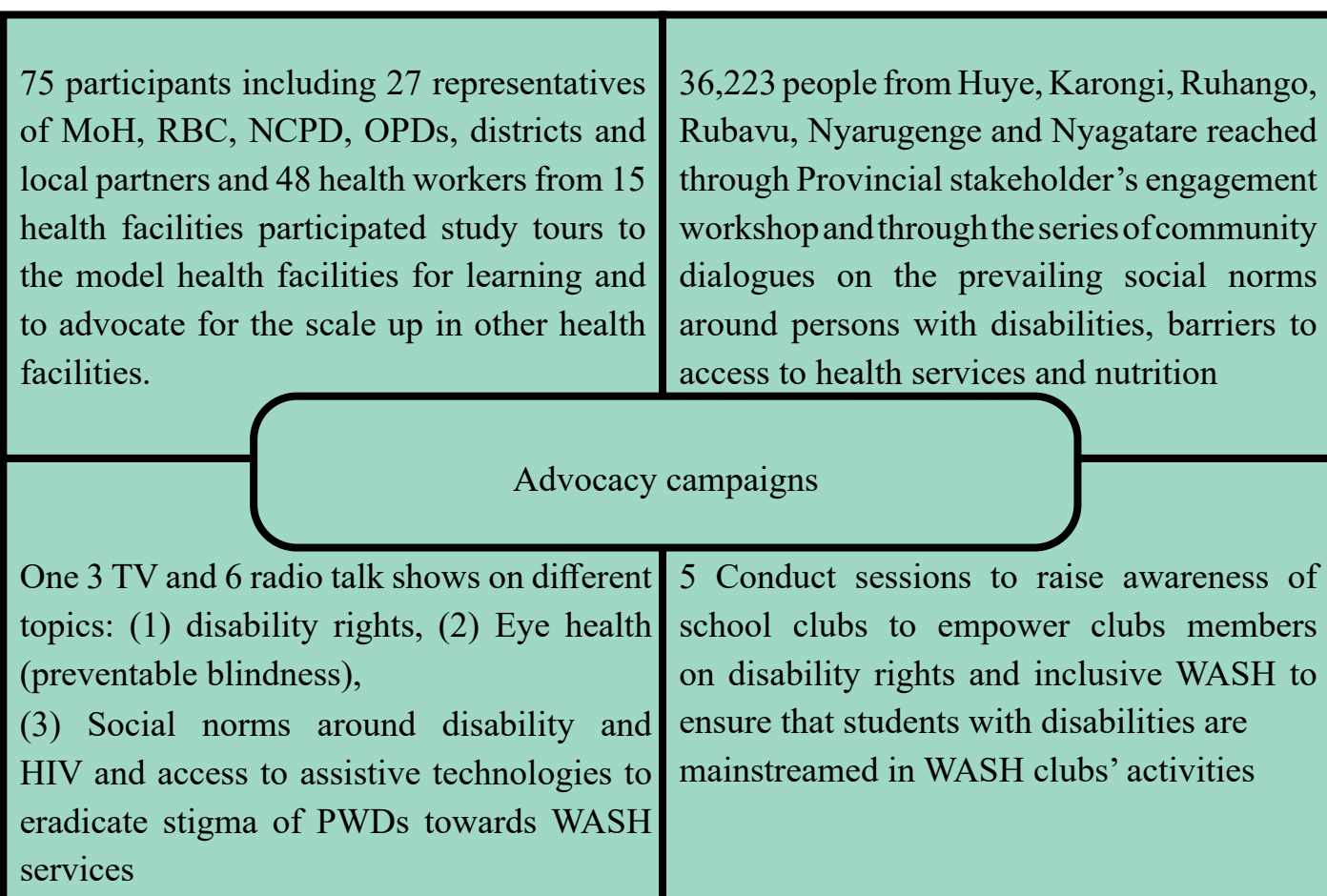
V. RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

Research

Throughout the year 2023, UPHLS planned to conduct two research including the “formative research on the risk factors and factors contributing to impairments among children and adolescents in Rwanda” which was conducted 10 districts namely Nyagatare, Bugesera, uye, Nyanza, Kamonyi, Gasabo, Gicumbi, Musanze, Nyamasheke and Rubavu. The second research “Assessment of Vulnerability, and Risks of Acquisition for Infectious and Non-Communicable diseases among Persons with Disability in Rwanda” is in process but the protocol was presented to Rwanda National Ethic Committee and this research is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2024.

Advocacy

To advocate for accessible and inclusive services particularly those related to health for persons with disabilities, disability prevention and management and the promotion of rights of persons with disabilities in the community, UPHLS conducted a series of community dialogues, stakeholders engagement workshops and participated in different conferences. The study tours to the renovated health facilities to advocate for learning and the scale up in other health facilities. UPHLS also organized radio and TV talks shows on different topics.



VI. GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PARTNERSHIP

In 2023, UPHLS participated in different conferences and national events organized at different levels (International, National and District). In these conferences, UPHLS contribution focused more on advocacy for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in different programs. The following are the main activities UPHLS participated in:

- Participation JADF meetings in 21 District of operation and Provincial level
- Participate in National Conferences on Health and Disability related themes,
- UPHLS sent a delegate in International Conference “First Track Cities held in Amsterdam” where UPHLS presented an abstract on the inclusion of persons with hearing impairment in HIV services,
- UPHLS participated in the Celebration of World AIDS Day held in Convention Center
- Celebration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) in which UPHLS organized the radio talk show at RBA and provision of Assistive devices in 8 districts including Muhanga, Ruhango, Ngoma, Nyarugenge, Gasabo, Nyaruguru, Karongi and Huye districts.
- UPHLS through the partnership with Compassion International, SOS Village d’enfant and World Vision International trained 460 participants including 400 staff from Compassion International, 16 staff from SOS Village d’Enfant and 44 staff from World Vision International in Nyamasheke Cluster on disability inclusive health and disability friendly planning.
- UPHLS supported CBM to conduct final assessment of disability inclusivity of eye care services at four CBM supported hospitals including: CHUB in Huye, Kirinda hospital in Karongi district, Byumba hospital in Gicumbi district and Nyagatare hospital in Nyagatare district.

Challenges

- Limited knowledge of persons with disabilities on leadership and Cooperative management among representatives of self-help groups of PWDs
- Lack of knowledge of youth with disability on SRH and HIV, especially persons with hearing impairment,
- Stigma and poverty among PWDs and their families
- Late of fund disbursement which affect the project implementation
- Limited knowledge on disability inclusion for the service providers,

- Many of the families of children with disabilities are very poor and that there is a big need for the children and other persons with disabilities to be supported in their livelihoods

Recommendations

- UPHLS to concentrate its interventions in the focus districts to ensure the holistic approach to provide the minimum package to PWDs
- To reinforce the partnership with other partners and continue to advocate for disability inclusion to the potential development partners
- Strengthening UPHLS resource mobilization to ensure the organization sustainability
- Increase the community dialogues to address social norms, stigma and discrimination around persons with disabilities
- Continue the capacity building of the self-help groups of persons with disabilities.

Our Partners

We take this opportunity to extend our sincerest gratitude to our partners who supported technically and financially for UPHLS to fulfill its mission of strengthening persons with disabilities, raising the voice of persons with disabilities in advocating for the inclusion of persons with disabilities through the trainings, community dialogues to seek social justice for people with disabilities, capacity strengthening of health facilities for inclusive health services through the training of health professionals and the upgrade the health centers not only to provide the inclusive services but also to serve as model for the promotion of the accessibility of health services to persons with disabilities. for this UPHLS works closely with the Government of Rwanda, Development organizations, global Organizations, UN agencies among others.



Ministry of Health





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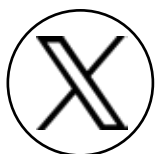
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