

REPORTED PSYCHOSOCIAL BENEFITS OF SELF HELP GROUPS IN RURAL RWANDA

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Background: In Burera District, in northern Rwanda, the nonprofit organization Inshuti Mu Buzima/Partners in Health Rwanda has been working closely with the Ministry of Health to provide mental health care integrated and delivered in primary health care settings in rural and resource-limited areas. This approach has been to provide both psychopharmacological and psychosocial interventions that are administered at the community level. Starting in 2015, one important intervention has been the creation of “Self Help Groups” (SHG) that aim to provide psycho-rehabilitation. There are currently 17 groups, with a total of 676 participants.

Aim: In this poster we describe the results of a series of focus groups conducted to understand the impact of these SHGs on the lives of clients and their families.

Methods: We conducted 6 focus groups with different SHGs around Burera district. There were in total approximately 130 participants.

Results: Certain themes emerged as people gave testimony about the effects of the SHGs on their lives: 1) medical and psychiatric health benefits, 2) increased social benefits like intergroup friendships, 3) stigma reduction and increased community integration of individuals with mental illness and 4) economic status improvement. As of February 2019, the 17 self help groups had 374,950 RWFs in collective savings and had 927,795 RWFs in rotation credit. It is notable, that all groups have been expensing savings by investing in livestock, renting land for cultivation and/or supporting families by buying health insurance.

Discussion: In this poster we will describe the role of the social worker in initiating and sustaining these psychosocial interventions in rural, and resource limited areas, as well as elaborate on the outcomes of SHGs for clients and their families.

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Learning Objectives:

- 1) Participants will be able to recognize the self-reported benefits of SHGs in participants' lives.
- 2) Participants will be able to apply a similar model, as we will describe in detail how to start such a group, and how they are structured.

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