

EC Partners

Urunana Development
Cooperation

Health Unlimited

Ministry of Health

BBC

Radio Rwanda

Facts and Figures

- The programme has been running since 2000
- 1000 shows aired so far
- 3,5 million women and youth beneficiaries
- €750.000 of funding granted by EU
- Health Survey 2005: 90% of both men and women know about at least one way of preventing HIV/AIDS
- Special Award for Development Media by One World Broadcasting Trust, London, June 2008



EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Health care and training

Behaviour Change Communication through Radio

Empowering women to improve sexual and reproductive health

"Urunana is a breakthrough in changing mentalities. You are contributing greatly to the changes in Rwanda as far as sexual and reproductive health are concerned, which are no longer taboo today."

Dr. Jean Damascene Ntawukuriyayo,
Rwanda Minister of Health



Context

Urunana is a radio soap opera broadcast by BBC Great Lakes that offers information about sexual and reproductive health to rural women and young people. It is estimated that 74 % of the Rwandan population listens to this programme, reaching around 10,000 throughout the whole Kinyarwanda-Kirundi area. In a long-running, suspense-building format it addresses social norms which are barriers to behaviour change. Sensitive issues such as family planning, condom use, youth sexuality, etc. generally considered to be taboo in Rwandan culture are addressed in the show to achieve behaviour change and ultimately result in the improvement of people's health.

Objective

- Increasing institutional capacity of a local organisation to autonomously plan, implement and lead a health development and communication project.
- Provide rural women of reproductive age and youth with reproductive health and needs-based information.
- Increased discussion amongst rural women of reproductive age and youth regarding their expressed reproductive health concerns and rights to health through interpersonal discussions with members of women and youth CSOs (Civil Society Organisations) in Rulindo and Bugesera districts, Northern and Eastern Provinces respectively.

Impact

- Enhanced discussions on culturally sensitive issues of sexual and reproductive health.
- Significant increase in Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) with regard to Sexual and Reproductive Health issues.
- Four national and international Awards won by the programme.

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Stories about the positive effects of Urunana

Urunana radio soap opera is considered as one of the most popular tools in health education in Rwanda. There is a lot of anecdotal evidence that it is making a big impact on the listeners' lives. Not only does the project contribute to raising awareness on SRH issues, but it also helps change people's attitudes and practices.

Joseph, 40 years old, regularly listens to Urunana. He likes the storylines concerning the older people and his favourite characters are Bushombe and Kankwanzi "because they live in harmony despite their harsh living conditions". He says that their storyline has helped him to deal with his own problems and to get on better with his wife and family. He adds, "I see them as my role models".

Assumpta has 8 children. She is a farmer and her husband is a herdsman. "Before I started listening to Urunana, I was very reserved about discussing SRH issues with my children, but now I can talk more openly about them. My children also used to keep menstruation to themselves, but now I encourage them to talk to me about it. I also encourage them to listen to Urunana so that they stay out of trouble when they are away from home.



Sexual and reproductive health training in Bugesera District