



Nyarugusu Camp and the HIV Pandemic

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Nyarugusu refugees' camp is found in Kigoma Region, Kasulu district (Zone of Makere), in the United Republic of Tanzania. It is located in the western hemisphere of the country. It hosts more than 59,342 refugees mostly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (former Zaire). The main populations living in this camp are Babembe tribe (70%), Bafuleru, Bwari and Tabwa. It has 7 km where only 40% of this area is inhabited due to some natural calamities such as lack of water. The birth rate is 200 babies per month. There are few activities done by refugees whereby women are the most affected by this situation because they go to trade small scale business especially products received from UNHCR whereas in different neighboring areas sexual activities take place so as to sustain survival.



The camp is at high risk of HIV/AIDS infection due to the many factors: First, extreme poverty. The camp is under threat since many refugees live under the poverty line and rely on donations from humanitarian organizations for their survival. In this case, no one has dared to dream about making a better future because they depend on the same source of income. The most affected of this, are women and children who engage in sex to survive. Second, lack of occupational activities. The first and foremost activity is to go to collect food from reception centres. This activity is done once per two weeks and more than 70% people

who collect this food are women. Apart from this, refugees are not allowed to cultivate or engage in any form of trade. Third, gender inequality. Major decisions are made by men instead of participating women who take the burden of the family. Fourth, culture. There is a culture of inheritance of wives between members of family after the death of the husband. Also, these people believe that having more than one wife is a source of prestige and happiness. Fifth, religion. Most of these people are Christians, who feel that using condoms is going against God's will who said that "go and fill the world." Finally, education. Many people do not have confidence in the use of condoms. They argue that condoms are just business of Europeans who inject the virus in them so that they may harm them. Many people are also not informed about HIV infection. Therefore, they make unsafe sex at any time and at any cost.

This community is at threat of HIV/AIDS contamination at high risk. For example, the 1998 record showed that among 10 persons who were tested, 3 of them were affected by AIDS. This camp was the leading camp with HIV in 1999 compared to other refugee sites. Currently, it is said that 9% of the camp population is HIV positive. We worry about the health of our people, and call for urgent assistance in this sector especially in terms of training. That is why we firmly join our hands with Mr. Logan Cochrane and salute his efforts and initiatives to intervene in this sector. We request any person as well as NGOs to act!