COMMUNITY HCV SCREENING DURING ISW (INTERNATIONAL SCREENING WEEK) AMONG DRUG USERS IN BURUNDI

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Background:
Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world. People who use drugs face (PWUD) many societal barriers to accessing healthcare. Furthermore, people at risk of blood borne virus transmission have limited access to education, awareness, testing and treatment. In 2017 BAPUD was launched and soon became recognized as a powerful organization committed to advocating for PWUD. In 2021, they partnered with ANSS-Burundi (Association Nationale de Soutien aux Séropisitifs et malades du Sida) to undertake BBV and sexually transmitted infections (STI) testing as part of an International Screening Week (ISW). PWUD do not trust providers to be supportive and non-judgmental and therefore BAPUD recruited and trained peers to support ISW. This has now become an annual event.

Description of model of care/intervention:
18 peers were mobilized in partnership with ANSS to undertake screening among PWUD. Peers offered education and awareness sessions to participants with the aim of reducing onward transmission of BBV's. The community was offered screening for BBV's and STI's.

Effectiveness:
PWUD responded well to the BAPUD peers and many came forward for testing for the first time. Peers were able to break down barriers caused by stigma and discrimination. Trust was built up between the community and the medics. The prevalence of HIV was 10.2% and the prevalence of HCV was 5.5% which is some of the highest rates across Africa.

Conclusion and next steps:
Effective partnerships to conduct screening event evidence the need for scale up of testing and treatment in Burundi. BAPUD continues to lobby government and health ministers to adequately resource testing and treatment. This needs to be a priority if Burundi is going to reach HIV and HCV elimination targets.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: *See example below:*
Nothing to Declare