

# NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF RWANDA



## HIV/AIDS CONTROL POLICY



## I. BACKGROUND

Since the beginning of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, sub-Saharan Africa is one of the most severely affected regions. According to the 2006 UNAIDS report, two thirds of the total number of new cases (5 millions) observed in the world live in sub-Saharan Africa. Heterosexual transmission is the main mode of contamination.

After the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the epidemiologic profile has improved. Since 1997, there have been several controversial reports on Rwandan national seroprevalence. The 2005 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) found out a national prevalence of 3%, which may be more accurate than previous reports based on sentinel sites, because DHS is based on random sampling, with better representation of the whole population.

Surveys in the student population of the National University of Rwanda showed prevalence rates of 2.7, 2.2 and 2.8 % respectively in 1993, 2000 and 2005. Knowledge of university students about HIV/AIDS is good, but their attitudes and their sexual practices need to be safer as evidenced by different student dissertations.

The present number of NUR students is three-fold the one before the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Before the establishment of the University League for AIDS Control, most of the numerous student associations, with various social interests, did not seem interested by HIV/AIDS control activities. There was a weak participation of students to efforts of sensitization and mobilization against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Therefore, a strategy was necessary to mobilize the university community in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

It is in that context that the University League for AIDS control was established by the National University of Rwanda on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 1999 as an institutional organ. All members of the university community, authorities, professors, staff members, students are represented in its board of directors at the highest level.

The League has as mission to coordinate:

- all activities of the National University of Rwanda in the field of HIV/AIDS control in the university community as well as in the general population and
- research on HIV/AIDS within academic units or other initiatives.

Faced with the AIDS scourge, the National University of Rwanda has comparative advantages to combat it. With about 8,000 students (among whom 26% are females), 400 professors and 300 staff members in 2006, it has immense multisectoral human resources in the different fields involved in AIDS control: medicine, biology, psychology, social sciences, anthropology, economics, and law, among others.

These human resources are useful not only for prevention activities in the university community, but also for outreach activities in the community. One particular area of intervention is the surrounding secondary schools, whose adolescent students must particularly be informed and protected from HIV/AIDS.

Activities of university students are best achieved through students' associations. Their members must regularly be trained in order to intervene in the university community and in outreach programs, mainly aiming prevention through communication for behaviour change.

Multidisciplinary research is made easy by the existence of different faculties. With regard to documentation and research, the National University of Rwanda enjoys easy access to information and communication technologies, notably good internet connectivity. Research can be done through dissertations of students or through research projects. Such projects are highly needed because the approach to combat HIV/AIDS scourge must be holistic. It will be the best way to help other stakeholders, notably governmental and non-governmental organizations, community-based organisations as well as bilateral and multilateral cooperation to find new and efficient strategies in AIDS control.

Sub regional cooperation is useful in sharing experience, notably through interuniversity festivals and in training of trainers.

Since its establishment, the University League for AIDS control has enjoyed a resolute support from university authorities, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the National Commission for AIDS Control and its partners, notably in funding the activities.

## **II. HIV/AIDS CONTROL POLICY**

### **2.1 COORDINATION**

All AIDS control activities are coordinated by the University League for AIDS Control. The highest organ of the League is the Board of Directors in which all members of the university community, authorities, professors, staff members, students are represented at the highest level: the Rector, the Academic Vice-Rector in charge of Administration and Finance, the Chef du personnel, the Dean of students, the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, the Director of the School of Public Health, the Dean of the Faculty of Social, Political and Administrative Sciences, the Director of the School of Journalism, the Director of the University Centre for mental health, members of the Executive Committee of the University League for AIDS Control, representatives of the Academic staff, a representative of the administrative and technical staff, representatives of the General Students' Association, the representatives of students' associations, the Director of the University Drama Centre. Partners and stakeholders are also in the Board of Directors: Representatives of the District, of the District Aids Control Commission, of the HIV/AIDS program in the Ministry of Education, of the National Youth Council, of the Aids Treatment and Research Centre, of the National Aids Control Commission and the UNAIDS representative.

### **2.2 IMPLEMENTATION**

Aids control activities are implemented by different academic units, student associations, staff associations, and other initiative groups notably outreach programs in partnership with community associations, local leaders and main stakeholders.

### **2.3 HIV/AIDS PREVENTION AMONG STUDENTS AND STAFF MEMBERS**

The government offers scholarships to students aiming at ensuring them a healthy and happy life, useful to themselves, to their families and to the society. They are expected to serve the nation at completion of their studies. Therefore they must protect themselves from HIV/AIDS and remain healthy; otherwise their studies would become a losing investment.

Prevention can be achieved by different strategies, applying the basic methods for HIV/AIDS control, notably abstinence, faithfulness, condom use and education.

### **2.3.1 HIV/AIDS EDUCATION**

Education, research and community service are the three missions of the university. HIV/AIDS education is part of the Education mission of the university.

#### **2.3.1.1 Initiation seminar**

During their first week at the campus, all new university students have an initiation course on HIV/AIDS/STIs and reproductive health focusing on aspects of sexual physiology, unwanted pregnancies, contraception, STIs, biology, epidemiology, modes of transmission, clinical aspects, prevention, treatment and socio-economic impact of HIV/AIDS, and the role of student associations in AIDS control. This seminar is useful to first year students who are at risk of unsafe sex due to the newly acquired liberty on the campus and ignorance related to HIV/AIDS. This seminar also aims at sensitizing female and male students so that they are capable of refusing undesired and/or unprotected sex.

It helps them identify places of high risk of HIV/AIDS contamination and take appropriate measures.

#### **2.3.1.2 Structured course**

A compulsory course of 3-4 credits shall be on the program of the first year curriculum for all students; they pass an exam on it and it is on the official report. This course encompasses all aspects of HIV/AIDS: biology, epidemiology, anthropology, psychology, clinical aspects, socio-economic impact, judicial aspects, prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS.

At completion of this course, it is expected that students will be able to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS, that they will be skilled to be active in anti-AIDS projects within student associations and that, at completion of their studies, they will be active in the society, combating AIDS at their post of responsibility.

#### **2.3.1.3 Training of trainers**

The University League for AIDS control regularly organizes training seminars for representatives of students and staff. Those training seminars target the fields of HIV/AIDS/STIs and reproductive health and project design, implementation and evaluation.

### **2.3.2 AWARENESS PROGRAMMES**

#### **2.3.2.1 Cultural activities and sports**

The National University of Rwanda encourages prevention of HIV/AIDS through drama and sports. Drama, music, dances, evangelisation campaigns targeting HIV/AIDS and sports are efficient in attracting people, particularly students. Through these activities, messages for HIV/AIDS prevention are transmitted. Such communications may be more efficient for behaviour change than classical lectures.

Interuniversity awareness festivals at national, regional and international level are particularly encouraged.

### **2.3.2.2 Posters**

The National University of Rwanda encourages the use of posters in and outside its campus as an efficient means of communication for behaviour change. These posters are regularly changed.

### **2.3.2.3 Newspapers**

The National University of Rwanda supports regular publication of the Newspaper of the University League for AIDS Control and encourages HIV/AIDS awareness articles in other student newspapers.

### **2.3.2.4 Radio and television broadcasting, web site**

The National University of Rwanda supports the weekly broadcasting program of the University League for AIDS Control on the University's "Radio Salus" and similar programs from the university community on other radios and on the national television.

On the web site of the NUR, there will be a section of the University League for AIDS Control.

## **2.3.3 PREVENTION STRATEGIES**

The National University of Rwanda will ensure that its working and studying environment minimises exposure to HIV and where necessary will provide protective equipment.

Students and staff have the obligation to remain informed on HIV/AIDS. They have the responsibility to change their behaviour when necessary in order to protect themselves and protect others from HIV/AIDS.

The National University of Rwanda encourages a responsible behaviour in HIV prevention. Based on individual choice, **abstinence**, **faithfulness** and/or the use of **condom** are all accepted as prevention methods. In this regard, free of charge and self-service condoms are available and accessible in student homes and in work places.

## **2.3.4 VOLUNTARY COUNSELLING AND TESTING**

The National HIV/AIDS policy focuses on voluntary counselling and testing as one of the principal means of prevention.

Through its centre, the University strengthens voluntary counselling and testing services and encourages the students and the staff members to test voluntarily. This helps seronegative persons to choose appropriate behaviour in order to remain seronegative and the seropositive persons make decisions about lifestyle to remain in good condition as long as possible, have treatment when necessary and avoid contaminating other persons.

The University League for AIDS Control, the university medico-social centre and the department of clinical psychology should ensure good psychological guidance.

## **2.4 ACCESS TO TREATMENT**

The access of PLWHA to highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) is ensured by the government through bilateral and international cooperation and UN programmes. The NUR will facilitate to university students and staff members living with HIV/AIDS the access to HAART through the government programmes. However, in case these programmes are not sufficient to cover all patients, the National University of Rwanda will ensure full access to HAART to its students and staff.

The university students and staff are ensured the HAART for post-exposure prophylaxis of HIV/AIDS in case of accidental professional exposure, rape or high risk sex through the national treatment programmes; in case these are insufficient, the National University of Rwanda ensures the HAART for post-exposure prophylaxis.

## **2.5 SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUPPORT**

### **2.5.1 Social and psychological support**

The National University of Rwanda through the University League for AIDS Control and the Department of Clinical Psychology encourages social support activities among students', staff and professors' associations towards PLWHA. This social support will be extended to visits to PLWHA within their families for home-based care.

### **2.5.2 Economic support**

The National University of Rwanda, through the Vice-Rectorate in charge of Administration and Finance, will facilitate to PLWHA among its personnel the access to micro credits for income-generating micro projects, through their associations and in partnership with the National AIDS Control Commission and the different stakeholders intervening to improve their socio-economic conditions.

## **2.6 HIV/AIDS CONTROL IN THE GENERAL POPULATION**

### **2.6.1 Secondary school youth**

As evidenced by national surveys, adolescents, in school or out of school, and young adults are the most exposed to HIV/AIDS. Therefore, university student associations are encouraged to have awareness activities in the neighbouring secondary schools. They are invited to ensure the training of trainers for representatives of anti-Aids clubs in secondary schools and to support the coordination of such clubs.

On the other hand, university students associations from the different districts are encouraged to have awareness and support activities during the holiday period. Those activities will be beneficial for the whole population and will target poverty reduction activities. Secondary school students in holidays will be particularly invited to such activities.

### **2.6.2 Out of school youth**

Out of school adolescents are particularly vulnerable. Their knowledge of HIV/AIDS is limited, their attitudes and their practices are most of time not correct. Therefore, they need

education and socio-cultural support for HIV/AIDS prevention. University students associations will be particularly encouraged in their activities towards out of school adolescents in their respective districts. They will establish and supervise local anti-Aids clubs in partnership with local authorities and stakeholders.

### **2.6.3 At community level**

Members of the university community, particularly lecturers, staff members and students are encouraged to participate, through their units and the University League for Aids control, to the national effort of fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS. This can be achieved through specific activities (communication for behaviour change, home-based care, poverty reduction, fight against malnourishment, sanitation, care to street children, legal support concerning HIV/AIDS). This is part of the third mission of the university: community service.

## **2.7 RESEARCH AND CONSULTANCY IN THE FIELD OF HIV/AIDS**

The HIV/AIDS scourge is still challenging the whole world, particularly Africa, including Rwanda. There are still unexplored areas for research and best practices to be reported. Research is the second mission of the university. The National University of Rwanda must play its role in basic and applied research, notably by contributing to research funding in partnership with other stakeholders.

The government and non-governmental organizations expect from the university to do research leading to efficient strategies in AIDS control. The university encourages its researchers and professors to do research and consultancy for the government or for NGOs. The members of the university community, particularly professors, but also other staff members and students are encouraged to participate, through their units or through the University League for Aids Control to the national effort in combating the AIDS scourge. This may be achieved through specific activities or through planning, implementation, follow-up or evaluation of programmes.

The students in their dissertations and the professors and researchers in their faculties, schools and centers are encouraged to do multidisciplinary research on HIV/AIDS. The university will focus on the following research areas:

- HIV/AIDS trends in the university community and in the country;
- Interventional research, notably behaviour change research;
- Reduction of HIV/AIDS impact;
- Clinical trials;
- Vaccines

In all cases, the international ethical norms for research on human subjects must be strictly observed.

## **2.8 CAPACITY BUILDING**

The university will provide all necessary training in the country or abroad to its lecturers, researchers, staff members directly involved in education or research in the field of HIV/AIDS or in voluntary counselling and testing and to its students. It will provide all means necessary for upgrading the knowledge and practices of its lecturers, students and staff members notably by facilitating them participation to national, regional and international conferences, in partnership with other stakeholders.

### 3. RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

#### 3.1 Rights in matters related to HIV/AIDS

##### 3.1.1 Rights of students

- ?? The National University of Rwanda must ensure the **admission** of students irrespective of their HIV status. HIV positive candidates must be admitted with equal opportunity.
- ?? The **access** to infrastructures (classrooms, hostels and other places for academic and para academic activities) must not be denied to a student based on his/her HIV status.
- ?? No student shall be submitted to **stigmatisation** and/or **discrimination** based on his/her HIV status.

##### 3.1.2 Rights of staff

- ?? Nobody shall be denied **recruitment** in the university staff based on his/her HIV status.
- ?? There is equal **access** to all service places for all members of staff without considering their HIV status. There will be **equal opportunity** concerning job assignment, salary, training, evaluation, promotion and retirement without any consideration of the HIV status. Evaluation and claims should be considered with some palliating measures for PLWHA.

##### 3.1.3 Rights common to students and staff

3.1.3.1 **Social and economic advantages** for staff members and students shall not be based on their HIV status.

3.1.3.2 **Medical and social insurance** shall not be based on HIV status.

3.1.3.3 Within the university community, nobody shall be subject to **stigmatization** and/or **discrimination** based on his/her HIV status, be it in official activities or in private life.

3.1.3.4 **Voluntary counselling and testing and confidentiality.** Employees and students will be encouraged to have a voluntary HIV testing and counselling; they will not be forced. Confidentiality shall be guaranteed to all.

#### 3.2 Obligations in matters related to HIV/AIDS

##### 3.2.1 Obligations of students and staff

- ?? Students and staff members have the obligation to regularly update their knowledge on HIV/AIDS and have appropriated behaviour in order to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS and remain healthy.

- ?? Students and staff members living with HIV/AIDS must avoid to voluntarily contaminate other persons.
- ?? Students and staff members should use their knowledge and skills to combat HIV/AIDS in the university community and in the population in general.

### 3.2.2 Obligations of NUR

- ?? The NUR will provide all means necessary, so that the risk of STIs/HIV/AIDS is reduced. In particular, in order to avoid promiscuity and the risk of STIs/HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies, the NUR will establish a good environment, notably by making **homes** available for male and mainly female students.
- ?? There is a **strict duty of confidentiality** for all health professionals towards PLWHA.
- ?? **Material and financial support.** Within the limits of its financial means and with the help of other stakeholders, the university will ensure material and financial support to students and staff members living with HIV/AIDS.
- ?? **Access to treatment.** When the national scheme of highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) is insufficient, the university will provide HAART to its students and staff members living with HIV/AIDS. This is also valid for post-exposure counselling and HAART prophylaxis and for prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT).

### REFERENCES

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Consulted on 18/11/2006

## ANNEX 1

### THE UNIVERSITY LEAGUE FOR AIDS CONTROL

#### 1. CONTEXT

HIV/AIDS pandemic is a great cause of morbidity and mortality all over the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, including Rwanda.

The University League for AIDS Control was established on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 1999, as an institutional organ of the National University of Rwanda to fight HIV/AIDS. At that time, awareness and other HIV/AIDS control activities were rare in the university community. A structure was needed to enhance and coordinate those activities. It would notably tackle the problem of high-risk behaviour still observed in the students' community.

#### 2. MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

##### 2.1 MISSION

The University League for AIDS Control has as mission to coordinate:

- all activities of the National University of Rwanda in the field of HIV/AIDS control in the university community as well as in the general population
- research on HIV/AIDS within academic units or other initiatives.

##### 2.2 OBJECTIVES

1. To coordinate the activities for AIDS control at the National University of Rwanda
2. To induce the behaviour change in the university community concerning HIV/AIDS
3. To supply material and moral assistance to people living with HIV/AIDS in the university community
4. To promote research on STIs/HIV/AIDS
5. To expand AIDS control activities outside the university.
6. To build capacity in research methodology and management of programs.

#### 3. ORGANS

The organs of the University League for AIDS Control are the Board of Directors, the Executive Committee and the Specialized Commissions.

**2.1 The Board of Directors** is composed of representatives of the university authorities, the organizations of the teaching staff, the administrative and technical personnel, students' associations and stakeholders. The Rector is the Chairman of the Board of Directors and the Vice-Rector in charge of Administration and Finance is the Vice-Chairman.

The Board of Directors defines the university AIDS control policy. It approves the regulations proposed by the executive committee. It approves the strategic plans and the annual plans of action and the budget proposed by the executive committee. It approves the activity and financial reports proposed by the permanent secretariat, the voluntary counselling and testing centre and the executive committee. It is informed of the follow-up of the plan of action and makes proposals for improvement when appropriate. It elects the members of the different organs. It appoints the personnel of the permanent secretariat and the voluntary counselling and testing centre, after proposition by the executive committee.

**2.2 The Executive Committee** is composed of a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary, a Treasurer and the Presidents of the specialized commissions.

It ensures the drafting of the strategic plans, the plans of action and the budget and proposes them to the board of directors. It ensures the follow-up of activities. It makes activity and financial reports for the board of directors.

### **2.3 The Specialized Commissions**

The League has three specialized commissions:

**2.3.1 The Communication for Behaviour Change Commission** is charged with:

- Conceiving, producing and distributing the media support for the promotion the control of AIDS and STIs.
- Organizing sensitization seminars for the university community.
- Organizing cultural activities in relation to AIDS control.

**2.3.2 The Youth and Gender Commission** is charged with:

- Mobilizing, sensitizing and educating young people in general and the students of the National University of Rwanda in particular about prevention of HIV/AIDS and other STIs.
- Promoting activities concerning Gender and Reproductive Health.

**2.3.3 The Research Commission** is charged with:

- Coordinating HIV/AIDS research.
- Managing a documentation center, with a database and documentation on HIV/AIDS and other STIs.
- Organizing lectures, seminars and conferences on HIV/AIDS.

The commissions report to the Executive Committee and to the Board of Directors.

### **4. The Permanent secretariat**

The daily management of activities of the University League for AIDS Control is ensured by the permanent secretariat. Together with the Executive Committee, it ensures regular contact with all partners and stakeholders. It makes quarterly and annual activity and financial reports to the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors.

### **5. The Voluntary Counselling and Testing Center**

The Voluntary Counseling and Testing Center ensures all activities of voluntary testing, with pre- and post-test counseling, for the whole university community, students and staff members. It makes quarterly and annual reports for the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors.