By Alphonse Rutazigwa

As a precursor to reduce new human immune virus (HIV) and acquired immunity deficiency (AIDS) in Rwanda, Dr. Jean Claude Munyemana, the Director General of Kirehe District Hospital emphasizes the necessity of sensitization through cooperatives among key population, who are the most vulnerable in regard to both contracting and spreading of HIV.

Dr Munyemana highlights the strategy that Kirehe District adopted to support key population like prostitutes, people whose probability of acquiring the virus is very high as well as spreading it to other people.

While prostitutes blame poverty as the main factor to go into sex trade, the district want to equip former prostitutes with income generating activities, as well as teaching them skills like tailoring to enable them to be empowered financially.

Janviere Mukandayisenga, the Vice Mayor of Kirehe District in-charge of social welfare observes that they sensitize former prostitutes to work in cooperatives so they can be supported together.

“Its imperative that we keep sensitizing the key population, and distributing preventive tools like condoms, as a way of minimizing new HIV infections,” Mukakandayisenga notes.

In the district, free condoms are distributed and mass testing of HIV/AIDS that targeted at least 50,000 residents was recently concluded to determine the prevalence rate of the disease in the district.

The Vice Mayor revealed that the District currently has about 5,010 people living with HIV; however, expressing skepticism as the number keeps on changing.

Being located in close proximity with Rusumo border also plays a critical role in placing Kirehe in a tricky situation, due to the fact that long distance drivers stay in the District, during their travels which further exacerbates the prevalence issue.

Among the citizens who were tested, thirty seven (37) were found positive, which is equivalent to 1.8% of the people who were tested. Dr Munyemana said that it necessary to focus on key population, ie, people who are highly vulnerable to new HIV infections, such as people engaged in sex industry, discordant couples, these are married couples with one of the couples living with HIV virus, who happen to be

pre exposed to new HIV infections and men who have sex with men (MSMs), in this regard preventive measures against new HIV infection is imperative, and it's in this context that after mass HIV testing, over fifty thousand (50,000)condoms were distributed in the whole district, as a way of keeping the prevalence rate low.

In order to facilitate access to condoms, there are stations where they are kept, for easy access, and to ensure privacy, because there are some people who are shy when it comes to asking for condoms, and it's in this regard that such stations were established to ensure easy access.

Mukandayisenga says that they offer different health services from the grass root level, at health facilities, through health councilors and among local leaders in charge of health from the Village level as well as the Cell level.

Among the services include helping the vulnerable people, services pertaining citizens access to health services, testing of different diseases, non-communicable and communicable diseases, mobilization of the population in regard to health issues, be it reproductive health, hygiene, preventive measures against different diseases, financial assistance, material assistance and assistance in terms of accessing health services.

HIV/AIDS in particular gets different assistance in terms of accessing treatment, as we are all aware it's a disease which is communicable especially through sexual encounter, materials through different means and there are drugs which are distributed to decrease the intensity of the disease.

In Kirehe District, such health services are existent and when it becomes evident that one has the disease, the person is directed to health workers at the health Center or hospital. One can access counseling, food and other different ways to help a person living with HIV virus.