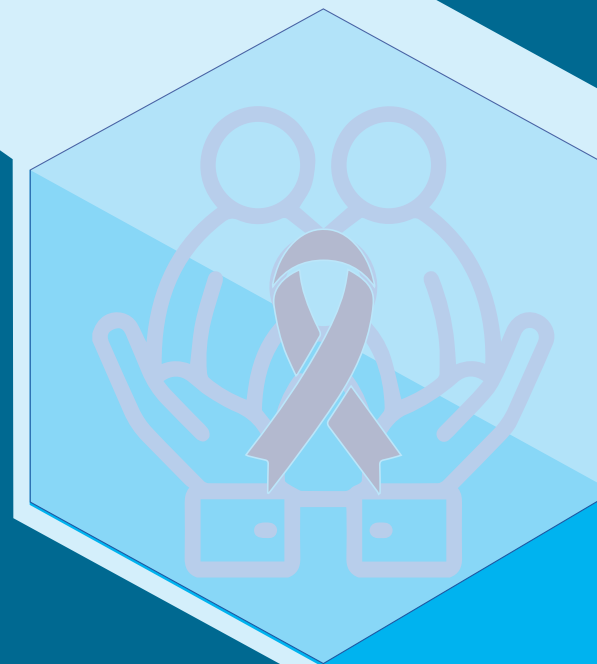




UNIVERSITY of
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COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SOCIAL
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SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE,
DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIETY



January, 2023

**Role of Social Work in Empowering People
Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) for Poverty
Alleviation in Huye District in Rwanda**

By: Charles KALINGANIRE

Student Number: 213004322

Supervisor: Prof So'Nia Gilkey

Co-Supervisor: Prof Roger Sapsford

Co-Supervisor and Director of Studies: Prof Herman Musahara



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By:

**Charles KALINGANIRE
Student Number: 213004322**

**Thesis submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work in
the College of Arts and Social Sciences**

Supervisor: Prof So’Nia Gilkey

Co-Supervisor: Prof Roger Sapsford

Co-Supervisor and Director of Studies: Prof Herman Musahara

January, 2023

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis contains my own work except where specifically acknowledged, and it has been passed through the anti-plagiarism system and found to be compliant and this is the approved final version of the thesis.



Charles Kalinganire / 213004322

Date: November 4, 2021



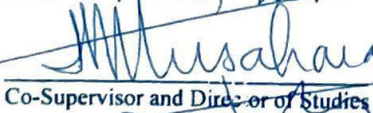
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(2nd November 2021)

DEDICATION

To my beloved wife Epiphanie Dusengiyera

To my Children

To my other close relatives, particularly Viviane Mukakarara

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I would like to thank all those people who supported me in various ways throughout my PhD project.

First and foremost, I owe my greatest thanks to Prof. So’Nia Gilkey who inspired and encouraged me to undertake PhD studies in 2010 when I was working with her during a partnership between Tulane University School of Social Work and NUR under the “*Certificate Training Programme in Psychosocial Support for People Living with HIV/AIDS*”. More interestingly, she later became my main supervisor! For this, I thank her together with Prof. Roger Sapsford from whom also I benefited as my second supervisor and Prof. Herman Musahara, my third and Director of Studies.

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This work would not have been accomplished had it not been for the sincere collaboration with and involvement of other different participants like the Chairs of the People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) associations in Huye district, ordinary association members

as well as the Social Welfare Workforce (SWW), particularly the social work professionals in Huye district who provided me with objective, valuable and reliable information for this study.

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Charles Kalinganire.

ABSTRACT

The world is confronted with different social ills that have exacerbated the situation of categories of people already living in difficult circumstances, particularly those in developing countries. A typical example is that of the people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) in poverty-stricken families in Rwanda.

While undertaking my PhD research, I chose to deal with the poverty phenomenon among these people. My contribution, albeit small, was to explore the impact of social work on empowering the poor PLHIV organised in the form of associations in Huye district to alleviate poverty so as to improve their living conditions.

The research was conducted in direct partnership with 13 Social Welfare Workforce (SWW) including 8 Professional Social Workers (PSW) and 13 representatives of 12 targeted cooperative associations. The direct research team worked with 266 associations' members during 3 consecutive years. Throughout this research, iterative empowerment activities – integrated in a three-stage recurrent process consisting of 'reflection, data collection and action' – were performed.

Overall, the key research findings of this study revealed that poverty combines economic, structural and psychosocial traits and manifests itself in the form of insufficient incomes for family survival and absence of basic needs. In the face of this situation, empowerment and evidence-based social work practice were found to be suitable strategies in tapping the potential and talents of PLHIV for the sustainable improvement of their incomes in the future. It was also found that the placement of the People in Need (PIN) at the helm

of the battle against poverty is equally fundamental. Hence, PLHIV should not be considered as passive recipients of aid. Instead, they should be empowered to play a caretaker role for themselves. Social work professionals should also be cognisant of their limitations while engaging in almost all aspects associated with PIN.

. Ultimately, it was found and this is recommended that a participatory inspiring model privileging the bridging role of the Intermediary Social Work Actors (ISWA) and favouring the involvement of PIN in the problem-solving process may be adopted to mitigate adequately poverty. The model referred to is named **EIPPARD: Enlightening and Involving People in Participatory Action Research for Development.**

Key words: Social work; Developmental social work; Intermediary social work actor; Empowerment; PAR; PLHIV.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS	: Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
AU	: African Union
BPR Bank)	: Banque Populaire du Rwanda (Rwanda Popular Bank)
CEPE	: Centre d'étude sur la pauvreté et l'exclusion
CBO	: Community-Based Organisation
CRISOWO	: (East Africa) Centre for Research and Innovation in Social Work
CS	: Civil Society
CUR	: Catholic University of Rwanda
DA	: Development Actor
EAC	: East African Community
EBP	: Evidence-based practice
EICV	: Enquête intégrale sur les conditions de vie et de ménages (Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey)
FBO	: Faith-Based Organisation
FGD	: Focus group discussions
GoR	: Government of Rwanda
HCO	: Health Care Officer
HGI	: Home Grown Initiatives
HGS	: Home Grown Solutions
HD	: Huye District
HIV	: Human immunodeficiency virus
ICRC	: International Committee of the Red Cross

ICT	: Information Communication Technology
IEC	: Information Education Communication
IASSW	: International Association of Schools of Social Work
IFSW	: International Federation of Social Workers
IPB	: Institut Polytechnique de Byumba (Byumba Polytechnic Institute)
ISWA	: Intermediary Social Work Actor
IUCN	: International Union for Conservation of Nature
LL	: Local Leader
MIDIMAR	: Ministry of Disaster Management and Refugee Affairs
MINALOC	: Ministry of Local Government
MoH	: Ministry of Health
NCC	: National Commission for Children
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organisation
NISR	: National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda
NST1	: National Strategy for Transformation 1 (2017-2024)
NUR	: National University of Rwanda
ODI	: Overseas Development Institute
PA	: President of Association
PIE	: Person-In-Environment
PIN	: People in Need
PLHIV	: People Living With HIV/AIDS
PROSOWO	: Promotion of Professional Social Work (in East Africa)
PRSP	: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PS	: Private Sector

RAHPC	: Rwanda Allied Health Professions Council
ROSCA	: Rotational Savings and Credit Associations
RRP+	: Réseau rwandais des personnes vivant avec le VIH/ SIDA (Rwanda Network of People Living with HIV/ AIDS)
RR	: Republic of Rwanda
RTC	: Rapid Technological Change
RWA-NOSW	: Rwanda-National Organisation of Social Workers
RWF	: Rwandan francs
SACCO	: Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisations
SDG	: Sustainable Development Goals
SEDI	: Socio Economic and Demographic Information
SIGP	: Small Income Generating Project
SWW	: Social Welfare Workforce
UN DESA-DSPD	: United States Department of economic and Social Affairs-Division for Social Policy and Development
UNGA	: United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	: United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
UNDP	: United Nations Development Programme
UR	: University of Rwanda
USD	: United States Dollar
VUP	: Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme
WBG	: World Bank Group
WCED	: World Commission on Environment and Development
WHO	: World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Focus and Structure of the Thesis

To help people in the face of adversities such as poverty requires empowering them so that they become able to participate in the problem solving process and to control their life as well as claim their rights. It is known that social work, considered as academic and practice-based profession is well positioned to play a great role in this endeavour. Indeed, social work strives to help people in need (PIN) help themselves and enhance their livelihoods. Throughout my PhD research where I used the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology over three years (2015-2018), a great focus was put on the impact of iterative social work activities on the empowerment of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) from poverty-stricken families gathered in cooperative associations in Huye District in Rwanda.

The output of this research is the present thesis which provides a road map for social work interventions to enhance the well being of PIN. The thesis is divided into five chapters respectively the introduction, literature review; methodology; presentation of findings; discussion and conclusion.

The introductory chapter focuses mainly on the background and statement of the research problem whereby the seriousness of poverty, its impact on the lives of PLHIV as well as strategic responses drawing on social work interventions but also the limitations and gaps in need of study are dealt with. The other key sections highlight the research questions and related objectives that provide respectively

the key concern of the research and clear statements of what was intended to achieve.

The literature review is presented in a manner that helps rationalise the significance of the problem. The material selected builds mainly on the concepts social work, empowerment, poverty and PAR though other important concepts such as vulnerability, association and collective action are referred to. The nexus between poverty and HIV/AIDS is particularly discussed and emphasis is put on the theoretical orientation favouring the Empowerment-Participation-strengths (EPS) model and on the way PLHIV gain capacity in interacting with their environment. Furthermore, a demonstration for the revitalisation of social work to impact further the lives of PIN is made.

In chapter three, the PAR applied as a suitable methodology to facilitate the involvement of the PLHIV in the problem solving process is focused on. More particularly, the pathways followed to effect transformative change through the simultaneous process of taking action and doing research is described.

The research findings are presented in chapter four and the presentation is organised by question. With the use of specific themes that emerged from the data collected and illustrated at different levels by quotations expressing the voices of the research collaborators, the information is well categorised. The considerations, perceptions and feelings of the participants in the study converge toward the fact that social work plays a great role in addressing poverty among PLHIV and that, above all, the enablement and inclusion of the latter in the

process of the battle is fundamental for the enhancement of their well being.

The last chapter concerns discussion and conclusion whereby, in light of the literature, an appraisal of the results is given. Here it is shown that the results corroborate what is expressed in the Rwandan proverb stating that ‘Udashinga ntabyina’ to mean that ‘He who cannot stand cannot dance’ and this translates the idea that when one is powerless, he/she can neither act autonomously nor control what can happen to him/her. Ultimately, it appears that poor PLHIV may be enlightened and empowered so that they can master their fears and weaknesses to expect them to take ownership of their problems.

1.2 Background and Statement of the problem

1.2.1 Background of the research problem

The world is plagued by all kinds of socio-economic ills including poverty, HIV/AIDS, food shortage, unemployment, and so on. It is important to note that the situation is severely deprived in developing countries and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa where great part of people live in extreme poverty earning less than one US \$ a day. Indeed, it is indicated that:

“approximately 9.2% of the global population, or about 700 million people, live in extreme poverty. Extreme poverty is defined as living on less than \$1.90 per day. This population is largely concentrated in developing countries, with about 90% of people living in extreme poverty residing in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.” (Socialincome, 2022)

The world we live in is full of many opportunities for the survival of everyone including

resources of different kinds but all people do not benefit appropriately from these opportunities. Indeed there are extreme inequalities i.e. high discrepancies between the haves and have-nots and thus there are various categories of people who live in critical conditions and whose situation is exacerbated by the problem number one in the world – poverty as ranked by the UN while establishing the SDGs in 2015 – that hinders the betterment of PIN’s lives such as PLHIV. In Africa, the situation is most alarming as expressed by Adjei (n.d.):

“Africa as a continent is blessed with wide variety of resources including human and natural resources. This begs the question of whether these resources have been transformed and utilized to the benefit of the average African. Africa is getting relatively poorer on average and other natural occurrences such as flooding, bushfires, etc. play roles in making the situation direr in Africa” (p. 3).

It is important to keep in mind that poverty remains a pervasive and complex issue under

the socioeconomic cluster threat that is shown through the literature as an issue to be put at top priority in the interminable fighting undertaken since a very long time. The core-preoccupation in this piece of work was to see if it is possible to find a feasible solution to poverty and how to overcome its serious consequences for the PLHIV targeted including mostly the unaffordability of decent living conditions. In this perspective, it was assumed that “... the only [main] long-term response to the [HIV/AIDS] epidemic may be poverty reduction” (Fenton, 2004 in Can, 2018, p. 58) through the empowerment of the victims and their involvement in collective action for effective participation in problem solving process and

enhancement of the living conditions. This is in the line of what is expressed by Bosc that: “for poor or marginalised groups, getting successfully involved in collective action increases confidence and self-esteem while improving living conditions” (Bosc, 2018, p. 7). The idea is well supported by different intervening actors and researchers in the social work domain; they argue that since its inception in the late nineteenth century in Western societies, the profession of social work has been striving to help people particularly the destitute people, overcome the burden of different forms of adversity.

In order to address the needs of these categories of people, an individualised paradigm that favours the remedial aspects of intervention was employed. Nonetheless, this paradigm did not necessarily fit in all contexts. This is declared by Fook (2016):

These models focused so squarely on the individual and intrapsychic explanations for behaviour and personal problems, that the idea of social context was either abandoned or, at worst, underdeveloped. However, in the 1960s, the emergence of radical critique put the issue of social context back on the agenda and broadened it to include understandings of how the socio-economic structure and historical conditions also influenced individual experience”. (p.5)

Indeed, with the spread of social work across the world, tremendous efforts have been made to liberate the PIN but unfortunately, it has not possible so far for the profession to “develop practice based on awareness of poverty” (Krumer-Novo and Monnickendam, 2009, p. 225). Developing countries have been particularly victimised and profoundly affected by the inadequacy of the teaching and social work practice models which considered

social problems exclusively through the Western lens. That is why the dominant Western-remedial practices are challenged by a number of writers from the global South, particularly those from Africa. Scholars such as Gray (1996), Midgley (2001), Chitereka (2009), Morena and Osei-Hwedie (2011) and Manyama (2018) advocate for a developmental model or a social development paradigm and “claim that the profession’s individualised, therapeutic approach is unsuitable to the pressing problems of poverty, unemployment, hunger, homelessness and ill-health that characterises the global south”. (Midgley, 2001, p. 28)

It is therefore devised that more than ever, the PIN may be made aware of their responsibility of being at the forefront in dealing with their problems, relying on available resources within their environment before thinking of outside aid. Social workers have a key role to play here in stimulating the PIN and empowering them both at the personal and the collective levels, particularly by facilitating the link between these people and the environment. It remains to know whether the previous-stated assumption that ‘empowering the PIN represented here by PLHIV can help them to win the battle against poverty and to uplift their livelihoods’ is possible. The verification of this assumption drew on the case of Rwanda whose contextual framework is particularly described here.

In Rwanda, poverty and HIV/AIDS remain among the most crucial problems that capture the attention of government and other stakeholders. In the aftermath of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, the government of Rwanda committed itself to rebuilding the country

by setting up a strong socio-economic development framework. The framework “aligned social welfare, economic, and political interventions with national and sectoral policies, strategies, and standards (Kalinganire, Gilkey and Haas, 2017, p. 318). In the last two decades, there have been tremendous achievements in different domains. In terms of poverty, the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR, 2018b, p. i) states in the fifth Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (EICV5) that 38.2% of the population was poor in 2016/2017 compared to 39.1% as measured by EICV4 survey of 2013/14. During the same period, extreme poverty went from 16.3% to 16.0%. This was quite insignificant compared to previous survey. The above report explained the factors responsible for this improvement such as access to electricity and improved sources of water.

Relative progress continued to be made in the health domain. In this context, up to 93% of the children under five received free vaccination as a result of which child mortality rate reduced while the people living with HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis had access to free medical care. These achievements and many others resulted, for a good part, from the establishment of a medical insurance scheme known as *Mutuelle de Santé*, which enabled Rwandans to access medical treatment anywhere in the country [under the facilitation of thousands of community health workers that intervened at village level across the country]. (Kalinganire, Gilkey & Haas, 2017, p. 321)

Regarding HIV, the government of Rwanda put in place adequate policies and instruments to control the spread and mitigate the

impact of the AIDS pandemic on society and the economy (National Institute of statistics of Rwanda (NISR), 2015, p. 8). Thus, the adult HIV prevalence rate stabilised around 3% from 2005. Overall, the health sector made significant achievements. For example, life expectancy increased from 64.5 years in 2012 to 66.6 years in 2017; maternal mortality rate declined from 476 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010 to 210 per 100,000 live births in 2015. As for access to health care, this also improved with 75% of the population being near a health facility within a distance of 5 kilometres (RR, 2017, p. 41).

However, despite all these gains, “recovery has not been a smooth and easy process” (Kalinganire, Gilkey, and Haas, 2017, p. 318); people have not adopted the same speed and the journey seems to be relatively long. More than ever before, it is time to correct what has been wrong and to empower the people, particularly PLHIV so that they can take part in development process to improve their wellbeing. Yet “many Rwandans are still poor and for many others, living conditions still need to be improved, especially in the areas of education and employment (National Institute of statistics of Rwanda / NISR, 2015, p. iii). Social inequalities remain a serious barrier and commitments to reduce the gap between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ is key to moving Rwanda towards sustainable development” (Kalinganire, Gilkey & Haas, 2017, p. 319) and relieving the plight of PLHIV. In this study, the people living with HIV fall in the category of the vulnerable who run the risk of living in poverty due, sometimes, to prolonged illness that deprives them of many services in the household, thus limiting alternative opportunities to get

resources upon which they could rely for their livelihood (National Institute of statistics of Rwanda NISR, 2015, p. 4).

In the perspective of sustainably improving the living conditions of its people, the Government of Rwanda (GoR) adopted a system of participatory development as a core strategy. Thus, working with civil society and the private sector and mostly involving the population in the development process became a top priority for the reconstruction of the country. With limited resources, GoR cannot solve all the people's problems from government revenues, donor aid etc. Instead, the GoR adopted a philosophy of self-reliance coupled with a people-centred approach that makes it clear that people are given priority in finding solutions to their own problems. Where they fail to cope, a lot has been done by government in the 28 years since the Genocide against the Tutsi, particularly in the areas of health, education and poverty alleviation. To a certain extent, however, government assistance tended to create a sense of dependence among the poor.

Consequently, a conviction was developed that sought to encourage people living with HIV/AIDS to put their efforts together under the umbrella of associations/cooperatives so that they could easily run small income generating projects (SIGP) to meet their economic needs. At the same time, opportunities were created where PLHIV would share their experiences in dealing with psychosocial problems. With this philosophy, around 540 associations were started across the country under the auspices of Rwanda Network of PLHIV (RRP+). These, in conjunction with different other stakeholders,

continued to assist PLHIV in different ways, particularly in empowering members to contribute to the betterment of their conditions.

These associations have been fruitful and have served as channels for enhancing the people's power. However, it has not been possible to address poverty successfully both at individual and family levels. Although the circumstances of the people living with HIV/AIDS have been improving in the aftermath of the genocide against the Tutsi, particularly due to the free provision of antiretroviral drugs mostly through donor aid, the economic and social transformation of PLHIV has remained challenging and could probably worsen if the situation is not addressed.

Taking Huye district as a case study, a needs assessment was conducted in 2010 by the social work teaching staff at UR in conjunction with partners from three Canadian Universities (York University, St Thomas University and University of Manitoba) and showed that genocide survivors, people living with HIV/AIDS as well as street children were the most vulnerable groups in the district. Furthermore, the lessons learned from vulnerable groups in Huye district during the field supervision of social work students over the last decade have also revealed that most of the people living with HIV/AIDS organised under associations generally experience absolute poverty.

1.2.2 Problem statement

In light of what has been said previously, it appears that poverty remains the social problem

number one that hinders the betterment of PIN's lives in the society like PLHIV. It is well shown that there are strong bi-directional linkages between HIV/AIDS and poverty in resource-poor settings. With conviction that reducing poverty levels will also reduce HIV utmost gravity and will help to uplift the victims' living conditions, many efforts have been made to reach this objective and more than ever, strategies continue to be devised from different sides with firm determination to 'Leave None Behind' as stipulated by the United Nations Organisations in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In the perspective of mitigating poverty among PLHIV from poverty-stricken families in different countries particularly in Sub Saharan Africa, it has been advised to mobilise these people in cooperative associations as means to encourage them unite efforts and cope more easily with the problem. This was indeed considered as a 'right thing' to promote collective action but in reality, it was apparent that in most of the cases, the necessary involvement of the associations' members in the problem solving process for effective success and the enhancement of their well being was not realised as expected. The case of Huye district in Rwanda is very revealing in this sense that the associations of PLHIV have not responded adequately to the needs of the members. Furthermore, it was noted that although the role of social work in helping people help themselves to address adversities they were faced with including poverty is indisputable, much more remained to be done.

The main concern in the current research was to know the exact reasons behind persistent poverty and the prevailing marginalisation among the people living with HIV/AIDS and their families. This study attempted to describe what has been and/or what should be the role of social work in addressing the problem under investigation. Thus, it was assumed that in the absence of a dedicated cadre of helping professionals, PLHIV feel helpless, discouraged, and powerless but once empowered, they could play an invaluable role in coping with social problems and particularly with poverty. Otherwise, without help, these people will “continue to lead unproductive and powerless lives” (Strydom and Tlhojane, 2008, p. 35)

In view of this situation, there was conviction that well-thought and empowering social work interventions could play great role in enabling more the PIN to transform sustainably their lives. It is in this perspective that I chose to examine the relevance and uniqueness of social work in operationalising the universal profession’s motto of ‘Helping people to help themselves’ by using Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology.

From all the foregoing arguments, it was necessary to formulate a set of research questions and objectives to guide this study as presented in the following sections. The main focus of this study rotates on an in-depth understanding of the contribution of social work interventions in improving the livelihoods of PLHIV through associations.

1.3 Research questions

The research questions for this study are as follows:

- (i) What is the extent, the nature and impact of poverty experienced by PLHIV? This question encompasses different aspects and helps to explore and understand comprehensively the scope of poverty among the targeted PLHIV, that is to say understanding the seriousness of poverty and its impact for PLHIV; and the effect of associations as a channel for poverty alleviation.
- (i) What is the nature of poverty faced by PLHIV within associations in HD and what is its impact on PLHIV and their families?
- (ii) How can poverty be addressed and by who?
- (iii) What is the role of the Social Welfare Workforce (SWW), intermediary social work actors and particularly of the Associations' members in empowering PLHIV within their associations?
- (iv) What social work – oriented approaches are suitable in mitigating poverty among PLHIV within associations in HD?
- (v) What should be done to achieve sustainable social transformation?

1.4 Purpose and objectives of the study

The research sought to investigate the role of social work in empowering people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) organised under cooperative associations in Huye district.

The specific objectives of the study were:

- (i) To assess the nature of poverty and its impact on the lives of PLHIV within associations in Huye district.
- (ii) To examine how poverty can be addressed by identifying key actors in the system.
- (iii) To examine the role of the Social Welfare Workforce (SWW) and that of social work professionals in empowering PLHIV for sustainable poverty mitigation.
- (iv) To examine the level of involvement and participation of PLHIV in activities aimed at problem solving.
- (v) To develop a communal action model and explore its place in supporting social work initiatives.

1.5 Significance of the study

As mentioned in the previous sections, a case study was carried out in Huye district on the role of social work as a tool for empowering cooperative associations to alleviate poverty. The study sought to contribute to social-work theory in Africa. In Rwanda, cooperatives are particularly highly resorted to as a strategy of solving social problems and helping people to move out of poverty.

The research findings will undoubtedly make a contribution to the body of knowledge, particularly on how cooperative associations can support and guide impoverished communities to emerge sustainably out of poverty. The results of this study may undoubtedly be applied to other parts of the country for purposes of alleviating poverty among the people living with HIV/AIDS in Rwanda.

Furthermore, the current work is crucial to the development of the social-work profession in Rwanda. This is because it provides a basis for a framework on community development strategies and how these can be applied in the social work discipline. It also offers an improved insight into issues, barriers, and community networks as well as NGOs which provide services to vulnerable populations including PLHIVs and those suffering from AIDS. This study also sought to make significant contributions to the development narrative in Rwanda, particularly in the areas related to social welfare, community development and the provision of sustainable social services that target vulnerable populations.

1.6 Scope of the study

This study was conducted in Huye, one of Rwanda's eight districts in Southern Province. It relied on PAR as its underlying methodology. It covered a period of 3 years ranging from 2015 to 2018. It was during this period that the constituent associations of the People Living with HIV/AIDS in Rwanda were given their autonomy and henceforth were independent of the umbrella association.

The researcher was interested in identifying and analysing the nature of behavioural change and the levels of dignity and self-reliance enjoyed by the association members ever since the latter started getting involved in the research process. In this context, the PLHIV association members were considered as a target group while the Social Welfare Workforce (SWW) was a group of Social Work Professionals (SWP) who were included in this research as

key intervening actors and informants. It was therefore important for the ISWA to benefit from the experience and expertise of SWP to “impact social change” (MacDonald, 2012, p. 35) and transform the mind set of PLHIV in Huye district.

1.7 Delimitations and limitations of the study

The scope of this work was expected to go beyond its immediate context of developing a model of communitarian social work intervention that would eventually contribute to Rwanda’s social work policy and practice. This would serve as a guide to bring about change in developing countries while at the same time providing some lessons to the global North.

One of the limitations of this study was that it exclusively focused on Huye district even though it could have been more practical to broaden its scope to cover a larger geographical area. In overcoming this challenge, a triangulation of different data collection strategies (observation, focus group discussions, and interviews) was used.

Another challenge was that, in some instances, it was difficult for the respondents to discern the difference between two major concepts used in the data collection process: ‘association’ and ‘cooperative’. This impacted on the process of quick collection of data. In addressing this problem, the researcher opted to empower the research participants by organising short and impromptu training sessions requested by the Intermediary Social Work Actors (ISWA).

Another constraint was the general perceptions towards social

work profession in Rwanda. This challenge dealt with the value attached to this profession which is still young in Rwanda. In fact, social work is often equated with sociology or psychology and this has led many Rwandans to undervalue its contribution in “bettering the human conditions and promoting social justice” (Dubois and Miley, 2005, p. 5). As a result, wherever the researcher went, he proceeded by making explanations on the mission and role of social work and social workers as a way of giving value to the profession.

Last but not least, the researcher was constrained by financial problems which impacted on the regular data collection procedures that were marked by some delays. In addressing this challenge, the researcher kept on informing the concerned departments, particularly the School of Governance and the Research and Postgraduate Directorate, every time this challenge set in and those concerned did their best to facilitate the research process.

1.8 Definitions of Key Terms

This section provides the meaning of concepts as they are used within the context of social work. For purposes of this study and in order to have a common understanding of terms and concepts, it was judged important to attach meaning to specific core concepts, focusing particularly on those appearing in the thesis title. The key selected and defined concepts are: social work, developmental social work, empowerment, poverty, association and participatory action research.

Social Work

Since its inception, social work has been understood as a profession whose great focus is on empowering and ‘helping people to help themselves’. According to the National Association of Social workers (NASW) Code of Ethics in USA, the primary mission of social work is:

To enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession’s focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces to create, contribute to, and address problems in living. (NASW quoted by Fook (2016, p. 17)

Further, a global definition proposed during the International Social Work Conference in Melbourne in 2014 and accepted by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) in conjunction with the International Association of Schools of Social Workers (IASSW) gives the core mandates and principles of social work. This definition states that:

Social work is a practice-based and academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. (IFSW & ISSW, 2014)

In the aftermath of the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994 in Rwanda, a social work advisory group specified the orientation of the emerging social work profession in the country considering it as:

A practice that applies specialised skills and knowledge to raise awareness on social problems and ensure that social services as well as interventions provided are self-strengthened, oriented and integrate the ethical values and social cohesion in order to achieve sustainable social well-being of the population. (Rwanda Social Work Advisory Group, as cited by Kalinganire & Rutikanga, 2015, p. 8)

In the context of this study, a derived working definition was formulated and specified that social work may be understood as a profession striving to help people, particularly those in difficult circumstances – at micro, mezzo or macro level – overcome social problems they are faced with by empowering and involving them in the process of finding adequate solutions within their environment in the perspective of enhancing their livelihoods for sustainable wellbeing.

Developmental social work

Since the 1960s, a debate has been going on within the sphere of social work practice, particularly in Africa where comprehensive approaches to social problems and mostly to poverty have been claimed. Indeed, it has been argued that ‘service-oriented approaches’ or ‘remedial solutions’ to individualised problems were not adapted to local circumstances within which the affected people were operating. It is in this perspective that developmental social work - favouring the empowerment of people to help them help themselves and by

focusing on their involvement in the problem solving process through collective action - was devised as “a panacea for social and economic problems facing the African continent” (Manyama, 2018, p. 45).

In this study, developmental social work may be understood as:

A type of social work that affirms the profession’s commitment to poverty alleviation and social inclusion, recognises the link between social and economic development, and construes welfare as an investment in human capital rather than a drain on limited resources. It is a type of social work which diverges from the residual, service-oriented approach directed at special categories of people in need to strengths-based, respectful people-centred approaches which place people in local communities at the centre of development. (Gray, 2002, p. 13)

Empowerment

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs /DESA (2012) conducted an online survey focusing, in part, on promoting empowerment of the people in achieving poverty eradication. In this context, some of the opinions gathered suggested that empowerment is a process of providing individuals, families, groups and communities with all that they need to succeed – particularly knowledge and skills through education and training – so that they are made aware of their rights and entitlements. In this way, they can take charge of their journey out of any hindering condition such as poverty. Furthermore, it was specified that empowerment aims to make people powerful, able and active to participate. As such, they get the power and the ability to work for poverty eradication. (p. 10)

For some other writers, empowerment is best seen as a process leading to the transformation of individuals or groups within their respective environments and can be experienced both on personal and collective levels, as illustrated by Rowlands (cited by Green and Nieman, 2003, p. 162). The latter argues that ‘personal empowerment’ is indicated by self-confidence, self-esteem, a sense of agency, a sense of ‘self’ in a wider context and dignity while ‘collective empowerment’ is manifested through group identity, a collective sense of agency, group dignity, self-organisation and management.

The ultimate aim of empowerment should be “to enhance the possibilities for people to control their own lives” (Rappaport quoted by Lord and Hutchison, 1993, p. 3) at personal, group and community

interactive levels by relying on their strengths. Consequently, as expressed by Pulla (2017), “all people have strengths and capacities; people can change and grow through their strengths and capacities ... people do have expertise to solve the problems” (p. 99). In order to help people, particularly those experiencing powerlessness, to enhance the quality of their lives, there is need to “create awareness of social, political, cultural/religious, and economic factors that subjugate them to oppression and discrimination/ [vulnerability]” (Ugochukwu Ude and Camillus Njoku, 2017, p. 1519). This should be done by using holistic approaches through consciousness-raising, information-giving, education, capacity building and training, etc. so that they become capable of looking after their own affairs.

In view of the above demonstration, the researcher noted that a common understanding of the concept empowerment could be summarised in reference to what is said by Lord and Hutchison (1993) who state that empowerment consists of “ processes whereby individuals achieve increasing control of various aspects of their lives and participate in the community with dignity”(p. 4). More concretely, a derived definition for the purpose of my PhD research was formulated as follows: empowerment may be understood as *a process of gaining capabilities to handle social problems and to engage in co-creation of solutions for social challenges by building primarily on personal/group/community strengths or existing resources within the environment.*

Poverty

Poverty is a very complex phenomenon and a concept that does not easily lend itself to definition. Poverty can be divided into three main categories: (i) ‘objective poverty’ comprising absolute and relative poverty (ii) ‘subjective poverty’, and (ii) ‘multidimensional deprivation’.

Objective poverty is understood via variables whose measurement is provided objectively by the people who use them; the most commonly used variables in this case are household income and expenditure. Subjective poverty refers to the perception that the individuals or households are themselves responsible for their situation while multidimensional deprivation is closely linked to social exclusion and is related to deprivation or the lack of access to certain goods and services – considered necessary for society – whether they are basic or not. Poverty is measured with non-monetary variables and deprivation indicators using breakdowns of these indicators to construct poverty measures. This type of multidimensional deprivation has also been called ‘severe poverty’.

Poor people are often faced with different interconnected problems and very often, they are caught in a vicious circular process. On this point, Cox and Pawar (2006) indicate that:

They [poor people] often lack adequate food and shelter, education and health, deprivations that keep them from leading the kind of life that everyone values. They also face extreme vulnerability to ill health, economic dislocation, and natural disasters. And they are often exposed to ill treatment

by institutions of the state and society and are powerless to influence key decisions affecting their lives (p. 186).

So far, there is no consensus on a standard definition of poverty. Thus, understanding poverty depends on the indicators taken into consideration or, in other words, on the measures referred to. Considering the ‘objective poverty’ that is focused on in this study, it should be understood as a “condition of a human being who is deprived of resources, means, choices and power necessary to acquire and maintain economic self-sufficiency or to facilitate integration and participation” (CEPE, 2009, p. 17).

When measured in absolute terms, poverty “refers to the financial means necessary for people to survive from day to day” (Strydom and Tlhojane, 2008, p. 34). Internationally, the measurement of poverty in absolute terms draws on a comparison of a person’s or family’s income to a set poverty threshold or minimum amount of income that is required to cover the basic needs. One of the absolute lines that is widely used fixes ‘a dollar per capita a day’ as the value of minimum resources needed for a person to be considered as being poor (INE, n.d., p.5).

In Rwanda, poverty is normally measured using an absolute poverty line based on daily food requirements and some basics. It is however quite difficult to estimate the household income for Rwandans and to have an exact indication on the poverty status. Indeed even though the income obtained by individuals or the household can serve as a good indicator to measure poverty, it is quite difficult to

determine the level that should serve as a basis for the decision on who is poor or not. It is why in this perspective, the government of Rwanda introduced since 2001 the concept of *Ubudehe* used to determine more fairly the level of poverty of people considering different characteristics of the family instead of only referring on income (status of family members, type of accommodation, assets ownership such as land, etc.). *Ubudehe* consists of a categorisation process by which communities periodically rank households in their area on a scale of 1 to 6 according to their perceived vulnerability status, with a score of 1 being the most vulnerable and 6 the least. In 2020 this stratification was revised and the new five categories are represented by letters A, B, C, D, and E; with A consisting of households with the highest income, while E consists of those who are the most vulnerable in the society.

To sum up, it is important to alert the reader that the researcher took into consideration the description above and devised the following working definition: *poverty may be understood as a situation, recognised by the community members, in which a person lives in difficult circumstances whereby he/she cannot apparently afford the requisites for enjoyable life and needs to be empowered so that he/she can strive to improve his/her livelihoods and to participate with dignity in society.*

Vulnerable person

The International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) defines vulnerability as:

The diminished capacity of an individual or group to

anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural or man-made hazard [but also biological as well as socioeconomic hazards]. The concept is relative and dynamic. Vulnerability is most often associated with poverty, but it can also arise when people are isolated, insecure and defenceless in the face of risk, shock or stress. (IFRC, n.d.)

The concept of ‘vulnerability’ appears widely in the literature but its definition remains quite elusive. Its meaning can vary according to people’s perceptions or to the context in which it is used. According to different authors, a vulnerable person can be one “*in danger, at risk, under threat, susceptible to problems, helpless and in need of protection and/support*” (Rogers, 1997; Sloboda, 1999; Spiers, 2000; Maroby, 2004; Grundy, 2006; Simpson, 2006 in Larkin, 2009, p. 1).

In the context of this study, the researcher chose to use the above IFRC definition in consideration of the GoR’s political orientation that puts a lot of emphasis on the above-mentioned concept of *Ubudehe*. The vulnerable people are indeed considered as those persons who live in particular circumstances that dissuade them from protecting themselves against significant harm; they need to be empowered in order to exploit their potential to participate in the problem-solving processes aimed at improving their living conditions. In particular, the PLHIV targeted in this research fall under a situation of vulnerability that makes them prone to a vicious circle of suffering if and only if they are not enabled to cope sustainably with their circumstances. In other words, vulnerable people are prone to sickness, stigmatisation as well as serious deprivation.

Association

In this study, an association should be understood to refer to a number of people who choose to come together and to combine efforts with the intent of helping each other through collective action, particularly with the aim of responding, first and foremost, to social and economic needs. An association is a type of social group, or a “collection of people who interact with one another and have a certain feeling of unity” (Thio, 2009, p. 112). A social group is more than either a social aggregate or a social category. It is characterised by an organised and a well-structured set of interactions that link group members together and help them to work constantly in cooperation and cohesion. An association contributes a great deal to its members’ empowerment. In this context, the aforementioned definition may be complemented by Kretzmann & McKnight (1993) on the role of associations as a channel of developing talents and skills of individual members. They state:

The basic community organisation for empowering individuals and mobilising their capacities is the association. An association is a group of citizens working together. An association is an amplifier of the gifts, talents and skills of individual community members (p. 109).

By adopting the above meaning that an association is a group of people who come together for a common purpose, be it social or business-oriented, we need to keep in mind that an association is usually inspired by particular persons or institutions, very often by government and later, its founder members recruit others progressively. It is in this perspective that the people living with HIV/

AIDS under associations in Huye district fall, like elsewhere in the country, under the auspices of RRP+. This is a body that guides them in the planning and management processes and provides them with technical assistance in conjunction with different partners. Even after providing some material assistance to its members, RRP+ always goes an extra mile to encourage the members to work hard for self-reliance. In this way, it plays “an important role in advocacy and representation in all decision-making bodies responsible for the HIV management. RRP+ is also involved in interventions for economic empowerment of PLHIV (through the formation and enhancement of cooperatives) as well as addressing stigma and discrimination-issues related to HIV” (RBC, 2013, p. 15).

In some instances, particularly when the economic aspect prevails, an association should be equated with cooperative as stated by Musahara (2012, p. 18) who specifies that an association is a grouping that performs the role of a cooperative. In this perspective, the term ‘cooperative association’ is expressly used to denote an association without a legal status but is expected to become a full cooperative after sometime (normally 2 years according to the law governing cooperatives in Rwanda).

Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is considered as a subset of ‘action research’, which is the “systematic collection and analysis of data for the purpose of taking action and making change” (Gillis & Jackson, 2002, p. 264) through generating practical knowledge. The action research discourse includes a myriad of terms: participatory

action research, participatory research, community-based participatory research and other forms of participative inquiry which may seem ambiguous for novice researchers intending to conduct action research. (Reenwookd & Levin, 1998; Gibson, Gibson & MacAulay, 2001 in MacDonald, 2012, p. 35).

PAR encompasses three main stages that include inquiry, action and reflection. Through this cyclic process “researchers engage with participants as collaborators who can inform the project design, propose methods; they facilitate some of the project activities, and importantly review and evaluate the process as a whole” (Mackenzie, Tan, Hoverman & Baldwin, 2012, p. 12). These processes help to create a new understanding that opens up new areas of inquiry. Ultimately, PAR may be understood as a qualitative research methodology that fosters collaboration among participants and researchers with the intention of improving a situation in a community or in a marginalised group of individuals. It is a valuable research methodology that should be considered by any researcher wishing to take action and bring about change (MacDonald, 2012, p. 46). PAR is a particularly suitable methodology for social workers in Africa – and Rwanda in particular – given the current shift towards culturally relevant research that seeks to integrate Home Grown Solutions (HGS). PAR facilitates the creation of a relationship between participants within a researcher-practitioner dynamic that minimises power balance between them. In essence, PAR involves several iterative activities that help to fix some transformational discrepancies throughout the intervention process.

In the light of this description, a short working definition for common understanding was devised and thus, PAR was considered as *a methodology seeking transformative change through the simultaneous process of taking action and doing research*. For more clarification and to supplement this definition, especially in the perspective of emphasising the aspect of PAR double objective it was suggested to draw on the idea expressed by Reason cited by Walter (2009, p.1) in the following terms: “One aim [of PAR] is to produce knowledge and action directly useful to a group of people through research, adult education or socio-political action. The second aim is to empower people at a second and deeper level through the process of constructing and using their own knowledge”.

Collective Action

Nowadays, there is an increasing conviction in developing countries, particularly in Africa, that people-centred and bottom-up development that leads to self-reliance is the only way to overcome the critical social problems that have been hampering the living conditions of citizens. It should be argued that people are endowed with various potentialities to handle challenges that they are often confronted with. In addition, people are also endowed with expertise to solve their problems (Pulla, 2017, p. 100). Hence, they only need to be stimulated and empowered to develop their own potential even if a certain degree of outside assistance may be needed (Heyne & Anderson, 2012, p. 112).

In Rwanda, the consideration that the country is poor in material resources but rich in terms of human resources leads to

the thinking that innovation and involvement of the people in the development process will help in achieving prosperity for all. In this regard, the GoR and its partners are convinced that by embracing the philosophy that when people join hands and execute specific productive activities together, they reduce their level of dependency and the burden of poverty as well as its consequences. These include a pessimistic mind-set and negative attitudes towards life. Thus, the idea of collective action has been developed and is considered as a good means of addressing life challenges through “lowering the barriers preventing the poor and marginalised people from uplifting their livelihoods” (Bosc, 2018, p. 10). In this study, collective action may be understood as an act of people who come together in a group to mobilise their efforts around common or shared concerns in the perspective of improving their lives and living conditions (Bosc, 2018; Evans & Nambiar, 2013).

People Living with HIV/AIDS

The acronym PLHIV stands for People Living with HIV/AIDS. HIV (Human immunodeficiency virus) has been identified as a virus that attacks the immune system, the body's natural defence system. On the other hand, AIDS (Acquired immune deficiency syndrome) consists of combinations of diseases to which the virus lays the sufferer open. A person is termed 'HIV-positive' when infected with HIV; conversely, one who is not infected with HIV is usually termed 'HIV-negative'.

For purposes of this research, we may understand PLHIV as HIV-positive persons, who throughout their life cycle are likely to undergo socioeconomic adversities as other citizens do within their respective environments but without ignoring their positive status that constitutes for them a threat to survival or puts them in a situation of vulnerability. In other words, PLHIV are people relatively at risk of various bio-psychosocial dysfunctions (suffering from diseases, family distortions due to poverty stresses, low morale, powerlessness and disengagement from socioeconomic activities; etc.). However, they have the potential to perform nurturing and cooperative roles once empowered to function within healthy systems. For their better performance, they may be provided with coping mechanisms and skills so that they can adapt to their surroundings and address their challenges. In such a situation, they behave in such a way that they are accepted by other community members and they are well integrated into society.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter, with the exception of its introduction and conclusion, deals with two main guiding sections that give an orientation to this study and prepare the reader for a good understanding of the findings. One of these sections presents the theoretical framework that focuses on empowerment theory but it is important to keep in mind that some underlying approaches it actuates including the ecological systems and the strengths approaches were referred to in the sense of exploring how to help PLHV take control of their lives. The other section covers the literature review.

Given that involving PLHIV in the process of solving their problems - particularly in the domain of poverty - presupposes the promotion of skills and the ability to adapt to life circumstances, their empowerment is of great importance. Thus, specific principles explaining different ways of working with PIN to enable them to care for themselves are referred to and are appropriately presented. Finally, it is argued that people are likely to succeed in the journey towards the sustainable enhancement of their well-being when they are resilient in the face of hardships in life. It is in this perspective that the principles of coping mechanisms are also highlighted.

Bearing in mind that this study focuses more on social interventions and their observed effects on the PLHIV's socio economic living conditions, and considering also the fact that very little has been done in the domain under investigation in Rwanda, the strategy adopted in this study was to work without being constrained by the problem of scanty literature. Instead, concentration was put on the emerging concepts throughout the research.

Consequently, the researcher mainly found information that emphasises the Rwandan context in which the current research was conducted. This was done by referring to the national social development policies and programmes, institutional annual reports and a few exploratory research findings. Both of these sources augur very well with the prevailing situation of the rebirth of the country in the aftermath of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

With regard to the typical role of the young social work profession in Rwanda, reference was made to the international literature but also to different studies in Africa. From this, the following key guiding considerations were taken into consideration. These were:

- (i) People and vulnerable people in particular are experts of their own problems and to help them thrive sustainably in their lives, they may be stimulated to participate in the problem-solving process by relying mostly on the available resources in their respective environments.
- (ii) Social workers have the potential to promote social change, justice and development by enabling and empowering people

to cope with their problems but also by contributing to building a decent environment within which these people function.

- (iii) In developing countries and particularly in Africa, Western social work methods are not adapted to local circumstances; hence, different authors (e.g. Gray, 2002, Gray, 2017; Chitereka, 2009; Midgley, 2013; Midgley, 2014; Manyama, 2018 and Kalinganire, Gilkey and Haas, 2017) propose to shift from remedial approaches to developmental social work.
- (iv) In the current days, the narrative tends to converge towards social work renewal and a return to its primary mission of effecting change to enhance the human well-being.

Overall, this chapter should be understood in terms of identifying suitable mechanisms in helping PLHIV within associations to thrive in their life thereby promoting the values of “group-based empowerment or group self-determination” (Silavwe, 1995 in Burke & Ngonyani, 2004, p. 46). Above all, the chapter explores the types of strategies that seek to attain effective social change and set up an ‘individual-collective’ approach with the conviction that social work will demonstrate, more than ever before, “its capacity to transform crises into better futures”. (Truell & Crompton, 2020, p. 40)

2.2 Theoretical Framework

In this research, the empowerment theory was privileged in the perspective of exploring in which sense its application would help to know the factors contributing to the blockage of PLHIV or their associations from thriving or to the growth of aptitudes for controlling

their lives. The sub-sections below describe the importance of the theory in guiding the research and helping the social welfare workforce think about strategies to achieving their clients' objectives and enabling their clients to participate in the decisions affecting them and increase their capacity for change.

2.2.1 Empowerment as Prevailing Guiding Theory

Throughout their life span, human beings, whether wealthy or poor, healthy or not, are every time proud of seeing their situation and living conditions change in a positive sense. Unfortunately, many people across the world continue to be faced with various adversities and injustices. One of the worst adversities pointed at very often is poverty. Poverty condemns its victims to a state of uncertainty, despair, and disempowerment.

To overcome these adversities, there is no God-determined or pre-established solutions and thus, PIN may be made aware of their own expertise and the need for them to be involved in the problem-solving process. They should be assisted or facilitated by building an enabling environment. In this connection, social workers, among others, should play a crucial role given that their unique and dual mandate is to “help society work better for people and help people function better within society” (Segal, Gerdes & Steiner, 2013, p. 2). In other words, in order to thrive and act responsively in changing the PIN's situation sustainably, the poor people should be empowered because “empowerment makes people powerful, able and active to participate. Then, they will get the power and the ability to work for poverty eradication” (United Nations Department of Economic

and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development [UNDESA], 2012, p. 10).

To examine what was prevailing in the PLHIV associations in Huye district, particularly in terms of personal and group growth, it was deemed interesting to use the empowerment perspective. The idea was not only to focus on assessing the person-environment fitness but also to appreciate the social work actors' role in helping associations' members to address poverty and its ramifications as well as increasing the level of client participation in the process of change. To have a common understanding, it is important to keep in mind that:

The empowerment perspective examines the ways that individuals and/or families can gain power or develop power to address current barriers and challenges. Lee and Hudson (2011, p. 160) define the empowerment approach as one that makes connections between social and economic injustices and individual pain and suffering. Adams (2008) further shares that empowerment is about taking control, achieving self-direction, and seeking inclusiveness rooted in connectedness with the experiences of people. The social worker using this perspective promotes reflection, thinking, and problem solving by focusing on person-in-environment transactions, including the client's role in these transactions and their experiences of oppression. (Lee & Hudson, 2011, p. 167 in Ruffolo, Perron & Harbeck Voshel, 2016, pp. 24-25)

During the empirical research, empowerment-based activities were designed. They aimed at raising awareness and building capacities of the people involved so as to “create favourable changes in the clients' social and physical environment in order to enhance

their abilities to function more effectively” (Dubois & Miley, 2005, p.63). It should be noted that participation in and inclusion of the association members were emphasised while empowerment at both personal and collective levels was also stressed.

Personal empowerment, as shown in a study conducted by Green and Nieman (2003, p. 162) is characterised by self-confidence, self-esteem, a sense of agency, a sense of self and dignity in the wider context. On the other hand, collective empowerment is experienced through group identity, a collective sense of agency, group dignity, self-organisation and management. Correlatively, the key indicators of empowerment consist of a number of things. These include: the manifestation of confidence and the ability to participate actively in a group or association respectively, the initiatives to run income-generating activities, the ability to interact with others and people in authority, the ways in which associations should change in their organisation and functioning, the activities undertaken, the interrelationships and interactions with the wider community and with different stakeholders, the ability to participate in public activities and advocate for themselves and to influence decision-makers; etc.

On the whole, it was assumed that PIN and PLHIV in particular have the potential and strength to play a greater role in addressing their own problems. The important thing for them was to know that:

- (i) Together, they can: when people come together and are determined to combine efforts, when they rely on their own potentials and are constantly empowered, they are likely to

overcome any kind of vulnerability or adversity compared to when they would act individually.

- (ii) Getting and feeling empowered is one thing but most importantly, keeping up with their concerns for effective integration within the community is another. Instead of being scared by continuous emerging problems, PIN and PLHIV were urged to be proactive and exploit the power embedded in them, considering every time what is expressed through these proverbs: “You can take a horse to the river but you cannot make him drink” (English proverb); Udashinga ntabyina” (Rwandan proverb) translated into English as “He who cannot stand, cannot dance”; Ak’imuhana kaza invura ihise (another Rwandan proverb that means: “It is better to be self-reliant because assistance from outside is unreliable and unpredictable”).
- (iii) PIN and PLHIV should remain tenacious and resilient.

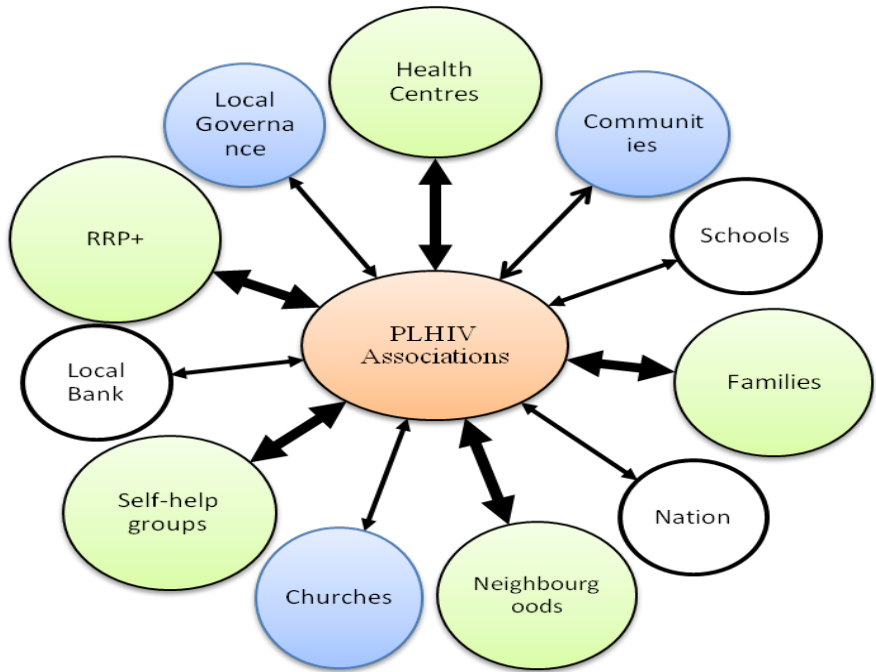
2.2.2 Actuation of the Ecological Systems Approach

Empowerment theory seeks to empower people in need (PIN) to gain personal, interpersonal and political power to improve their lives. This cannot be accomplished without understanding how these people and the environment within which they evolve transact with each other. Empowerment-based practice actuates the ecological systems approach, centering the social work process toward the maintenance of the homeostasis.

Usually, a system is considered as “a regularly interacting or interdependent group of parts forming a unified and bounded whole” (Haight & Taylor, 2013, p. 30). According to DiNitto & McNeece, (2008):

Systems are composed of component parts, or subsystems, that interact to serve a particular function within the structure of a larger system. A family system comprises individuals, each with distinct individual systems of personality, biological traits, and social habits. Likewise, a family system may be part of a larger system such as extended family, neighborhood, or religion. All these systems are parts of a community, which is a part of a city or town, and so forth. For example, a nuclear family (mother, father, and child) exists in its own right, but it is also a subsystem within a larger system of extended family (i.e., grandmother, grandfather, aunts, aunts, uncles, and cousins) (pp. 32-33).

The above systems within which individuals evolve help to shape their behaviours. Such systems enable people to interact and engage with one another to achieve ‘associational life’ of doing ‘things together’. This interaction helps them to overcome their social problems and to enhance their well-being (Oliver & Pitt, 2013, p. 52... 67). Usually, the micro-system promotes direct interactions as it constitutes the basic context that “includes those settings in which we have face-to-face, sustained, and significant relationships with others, for example, our families, peer groups, schools, workplaces, and churches” (Haight & Taylor, 2013, p. 32). Through the following ecomap, one can figure out which social systems PLHIV associations in Huye interact with, the closest being represented in green with big linking arrows.



Source: Primary data, 2018

Figure 1 Ecomap of PLHIV associations in Huye District

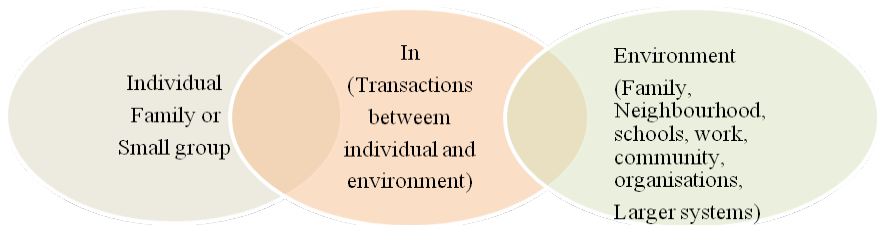
It is clear from the above figure that along their life span, people belong to different sets of interacting units within specific ecosystems that constitute the foundation for their survival. For purposes of this study, it was judged useful to take into consideration the fact that “[...] humans live in symbiotic interaction with the ecological and physical environment. Individually and collectively, they depend on the living resources and physical conditions of the environment with which they synergistically impact” (Schmitz et al., 2012, pp. 7-8).

Thus, it was crucial to place the designed social work interventions in the framework of the ecological systems approach

in order to find a suitable way of practice for the benefit of PLHIV organised within associations. This was indeed based on Ruffolo et al.'s (2016) ideas on the perspectives of ecological systems:

Using an ecological systems perspective, we look at exchanges within systems and across different systems and at how resources within systems can help to improve the problem or challenge experienced by the individual and/or family system. We are working to increase the fit between the individual or family system needs and the resources available within the individual, family, neighbourhood, community, and other relevant social systems (Ruffolo, Perron & Harbeck Voshel, 2016, pp. 20-21).

The following figure shows how systems impact the lives of PLHIV to provide a framework for social work practice that emphasises the concept of person-in-environment:



Source: Adapted from Ruffolo (n.d.)

Figure 2 Person-in-Environment Diagram

The ecological systems approach helps to explore and assess the relevance of empowerment activities conducted but most importantly, it serves as a good metaphor towards understanding the role social work actors should play to empower PIN for adequate

functioning within their environment so as to achieve their full potential. As proposed by Hopworth, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried and Larsen (2010, p. 16 in Ruffolo, Perron, and Harbeck Vashel, 2016):

[...] assessment from an ecological systems perspective requires knowledge of diverse systems involved in interactions between people and their environments, including:

- (i) Subsystems of the individual (biophysical, cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and motivational).*
- (ii) Interpersonal systems (parent-child, marital, family, kin, friends, neighbours, cultural reference groups, spiritual belief systems, and other members of social networks).*
- (iii) Organizations, institutions, and communities.*
- (iv) The physical environment (housing, neighbourhood environments, buildings, other artificial creations, water, and weather and climate)". (p. 21)*

To close this discussion, the researcher reiterates that, as realised by the pioneers in the field of social work such as Mary Richmond but also by other writers, the role of the environment in the social functioning of the client system is paramount. Thus, it was important to consider, while working with PLHIV in Huye district, the constant necessity to promote the transaction between them and the environment so that they could avoid to restrict their actions to internal entities (individual, family, association) but instead, to transact with different other stakeholders. It is in this perspective that they could claim their rights and benefit from the opportunities within the ecosystem.

The only challenge that remained was to know how this could happen. As assumed earlier, the response to this question might be linked with the empowerment and participation of PLHIV in problem solving process through well-thought social work intervention. Obviously, this presupposes to work “not only with the client, but also the systems that facilitate social functioning including the clients’ family, neighbourhood, community and other critical social systems”. (Pardeck, 1988, p. 141) It is opportune to mention here that an underlying assumption which concerned the strengths and resilience as influential factors to the realisation of empowerment was also taken into consideration throughout the collaborative action research.

2.2.3 Use of the Strengths-Resilience Lens

Empowerment is a wide concept that has been defined in several ways and encompassing a range of theoretical ideas including the strengths and resilience approaches. In my PhD research, I considered it as “an overarching theoretical framework” (Stepney, 2019, p. 332) to apply to work with the PLHIV in associations in Huye district by using and directing the lens towards the fight against poverty and the enhancement of their livelihoods and by utilising available strengths, resilience and resources.

The strengths approach believes that all people have strengths and capacities. People can change; people change and grow through their strengths and capacities. In my research, the preoccupation by using the strengths approach was to look to the strengths that PLHIV, their families and respective associations had to bring to the change

effort. Throughout the process, the research team drew on associations members' strengths in the planning and intervention phases.

In terms of resilience, people may develop new energy to adapt to their surroundings and to deal constantly with various adversities they are faced with. In fact, “resilience allows us [them] to bounce back from negative life experiences and to become even stronger in the process” (Mount Royal University, 2011, p. 1) so that you manage to cope with emerging problems. Usually, when you feel you are in control of the problem, it becomes easier to act effectively and when one is confident, one accomplishes one's task successfully. Determination and confidence help to strengthen the resilience built in people to face either good or bad times.

The word resilience, derived from a Latin term ‘*Resiliens*’ that means ‘springing, jumping or bouncing back’ refers to the aptitude or capacity to cope with different kinds of situations or events, usually aiming at promoting the people's well-being to move towards a better future. According to Greene et al. (2003 in Gitterman & Knight, 2016, p. 449), resilience may be understood as “the ability to overcome adversity and be successful in spite of exposure to high risk” or “the ability to sustain competence under pressure and the capacity to recover from trauma”.

Resilience was used in this PAR to help understand how people cope with adversities and adapt to their environment. Gitterman and Knight (2016) outline the scope of the resilience theory:

Resilience theory attempts to answer questions such as the following: Why are there such significant variations among

individual, familial, and community responses to adversity and trauma? Why do some people adapt, cope, and meet the challenges of physical and mental impairments, severe losses, chronic discrimination, and oppression, and others don't? Why do some people not simply survive but actually thrive in the face of life's tragedies?" (p. 449)

For purposes of this study, similar questions can be asked in relation with the situation of PLHIV in Huye: How have PLHIV operating within associations in Huye district managed to deal and cope with poverty? Why have some PLHIV associations managed to survive while others have lost their members? What approaches have been set up to help PLHIV in Huye to thrive and enhance their living conditions sustainably?

In an attempt to respond adequately to these questions, the use of resilience principles such as encouraging learning and broadening participation, helped to verify how PLHIV adapted themselves to the situations and how they supported each other progressively in dealing with emerging challenges.

Overall, the combination of the strengths and resilience approaches as supplements to the empowerment framework facilitated the process of reconstructing the feeling of power instead of adopting continuously the fatalistic position that nothing can change before the established cultural norms and/or beliefs labelling variously different categories of people in the society. It is in this context that the research team concentrated on activities helping to awaken the talents and strengths embedded in

the PLHIV and to stimulate them to express their insights by sharing experience in their respective associations. Thus, it was possible to scrutinise and to identify suited strategies or methods to use for better social functioning and improvement of the people's livelihoods.

2.3 Literature Review

This section deals with the literature review. It starts with preliminary discussion on how empowerment is nurtured by PAR through purposeful interventions. Thereafter, great attention is put on the poverty phenomenon and social work as an empowering profession, particularly in the context of Rwanda in the aftermath of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Throughout the section reading journey, the reader may think of specific questions: What has been done? What is done? What should be done and how to enhance people's empowerment and to involve them in the problem solving process?

This exercise will help everyone understand the following parts of the thesis, particularly in terms of PAR conceptual and methodological characteristics but and above all, its use in stimulating the PLHIV's empowerment.

2.3.1 Empowerment Process through PAR Interventions

Inspired by some specific studies - from the literature - that show the importance of participation by those concerned with the problem under investigation, and convinced that PAR can be a useful investigation model in the Rwandan context, the researcher chose to use this methodology not only to inform his PhD studies, but to

also provide an input for the empowerment of vulnerable people and their genuine social inclusion. Thus, such enriching ideas helped the researcher in framing his work and discovering the strengths of PAR.

The ideas referred to emanate from different researchers among whom are: (i) Freire (1970) in Brasilia who advocated for consciousness-awareness raising of the oppressed people so that they could claim their rights. (ii) Claeys (2001) in Belgium who particularly recommended the dialogue method (through associations in which they meet) in the process of engaging the poor in policy-making. (iii) McCleary-Sills, Douglas & Mabala (2011) who, in their research project on HIV-related vulnerabilities in Tanzania, demonstrated the importance of inclusive participation of adolescent girls in addressing sexual relationships and risks. (iv) Buettgen et al. (2012) who conducted a study in Canada on poverty and disability and showed the positive effect of PAR in empowering developmentally disable people and facilitating change in their living conditions. (v) Esienumoh, Allotey & Waterman (2018) who, through the process of PAR, related how their research project in the domain of preventing maternal mortality, motivated the people to have a better understanding of their circumstances so as to collaborate with health professionals in preventing maternal mortality (p. e1610). (vi) Despite the paucity of published PAR studies in Rwanda, the researcher identified an interesting work from a Rwandan researcher by the name of Nyiransekuye (2011) who conducted a study on the exploration of traditional cultural approaches revived in Rwanda to respond to the problems experienced by the survivors of the 1994

Genocide against the Tutsi. This work focused on consciousness-raising and participation of women organised under a heterogeneous group of survivors of genocide. This was in line with what Kim (2016) said about Paulo Freire's philosophy on PAR as recommended strategy to promote social change:

Freire proposed two important concepts that shape fundamental principles of PAR: conscientisation (critical consciousness) and praxis. Freire (1998) emphasised critical consciousness as an effective means of promoting action for social change. Critical consciousness includes a process of analysing the root causes of the problems from socioeconomic, political, and cultural contexts (Freire, 1998). Freire posited that critical consciousness encourages the oppressed to be aware of their situations, which, in turn, enhances their willingness to take collective action against the oppression. From his notion, developing critical consciousness is one of the essential purposes of PAR. (p. 41)

Another PAR study conducted in Rwanda by Mbabazi (2018) led to personal and collective empowerment of women in *Urubohero*. According to the traditional Rwandan culture, *Urubohero* was a peer learning centre where, beyond weaving as the main activity, young girls were taught (by their mothers and aunts) fundamental values of becoming 'good wives and mothers' and striving tirelessly for the prosperity of the family.

Ultimately, the social work intervention drawn on *Urubohero* led to personal and collective empowerment. Such empowerment was manifested through the women's openness whereby they were

capable of talking in public and expressing their concerns and advocate for the respect of their rights, particularly by influencing policy makers. As expressed by Nyiransekye (2011, p. 10), “this form of mutual healing is different from having an expert come in and meet with individual women to talk about what happened to them as victims [...]. In the *Urubohero*, there was no expert to assess or evaluate or direct.

In this study, the research privileged a system of information generation by stimulating a free-flow of narratives from the participants instead of simply listening to and counselling individuals. Different activities executed (focus group discussions, meetings, home visits, self-help activities, income generating activities) followed a series of iterative processes in different phases that helped women to increase their awareness of their problems. This helped them to develop coping mechanisms that facilitated the reshaping of their lives and their respective families. Both the above studies converge towards the same conclusion that PAR is a very helpful methodology that facilitates the emancipation of vulnerable people. It helps them to discover their potentialities to mitigate their adversities.

2.3.2 Ways of Fighting against Poverty and Mitigating Pains among PLHIV in Rwanda

2.3.2a Handling the Consequences of Genocide against Tutsi and Rebuilding the Country: The Role of Social Work

In the aftermath of the Genocide against the Tutsi, the major preoccupation was reconstructing the country, rehabilitating a large number of vulnerable people and rebuilding the destroyed structures.

Thus, “laws and policies have been promulgated to create work, improve health, empower people through education, embed them in their communities and the nation and in general to build social cohesion and inclusion – with considerable success, considering the low starting point”. (Abbot & Sapsford, 2021, p. 81)

As a result, great strides were made in terms of economic growth and the advancement of the quality of life, especially in the domains of health, education and gender, to name just a few. Some indicative figures show that in 2018, “the economy expanded at a brisk pace. Rwanda’s 8.6 percent growth was the highest on the Continent” (World Bank Group (WBG), 2019, p. iii). In terms of social transformation – considering the interconnectedness between economic and social transformation and keeping in mind that the latter helps to go beyond pure economic measures such as GDP per capita and to emphasise qualitative change in all aspects of people’s lives – there was relative great progress in improving the lives of the Rwandans. Specific indicators were particularly found in the health sector where 74% of the population had health insurance according to EICV5, compared to 70% in EICV4. It is important to note that these achievements in health were partly due to the establishment of “an affordable health insurance scheme (with support for those mostly under poverty) and the appointment of volunteer Community Health Workers who are unpaid but are encouraged and supported to form cooperatives for their own and their families’ support” (Abbot, Sapsford & Binagwaho, 2016, p. 103).

Some other indicators can be mentioned to show the social transformation that took place after the EICV4 conducted in 2013/2014. The improvement in living conditions is expressed in terms of life expectancy which increased from 49 in 2000 to 66.6 years in 2017. All these non-monetary indicators supplement very well the monetary poverty measure that was used in determining the poverty rate within the Rwandan context (National Institute of statistics of Rwanda / NISR, 2018a; National Institute of statistics of Rwanda (NISR), 2015). One was bound to be proud of these achievements but there was something hidden behind these figures. In fact, even if the progress seemed to be impressive there were many challenges that were predicted as stated by Kalinganire, Gilkey & Haas, 2017):

Social inequalities remain a key barrier and commitment to reduce the gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' is key to moving Rwanda towards sustainable development. Indeed, Rwanda is still recovering from the impact of the genocide against the Tutsi. Despite its growing economy, it remains [to a certain extent] aid dependant (p. 319).

In other words, the above achievements were not enough to get excited about. The 8.6% growth rate was quite an exciting figure by the global North standards, but the World Bank predictions of the time were that much higher growth would be needed to meet the economic targets of Vision 2020. By mid-twenty first century, the new Vision 2050 targets to take Rwanda to a higher standard of living and quality livelihoods. Public world targets were met during the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) period. However, if the

above growth was not sustained and if the resources were not fairly distributed, the situation of some vulnerable groups, including that of PLHIV was poised to worsen and thus, compelling the need to improve them.

In the following sections, the researcher chose to gather the existing information and to explore, on the one hand, the poverty phenomenon in the context of Rwanda and, on the other hand, to examine the strategies and responses devised to relieve the plight of PLHIV. In this endeavour, great attention had to be put on the role played or should hypothetically be played by Social Work in improving the situation. The reader will realise that the balance between international approaches and local practices constitutes the core preoccupation that orients this study towards the discovery of a suitable model that seeks to deal with poverty among the targeted people. The intent here is to investigate whether the empowerment-based practice within the framework of cooperative associations would promote ownership by the members towards sustainable transformation. Ultimately, the pivotal role of progressive Social Work interventions in this process is examined and the future of the profession in Africa as a whole and Rwanda in particular are debated.

In order to have a common understanding of this literature search, the guiding considerations below constitute the cornerstone of the content to be kept in mind:

- (i) Economic security, social inclusion, social cohesion and empowerment are crucial elements for engagement and involvement of the poor or any vulnerable person in the problem-

solving process as well as for the enhancement of their quality of life. These four elements are intertwined but economic security remains fundamental in nurturing the victim's potentialities and social functioning. This is what Abbot and Sapsford (2021) express in other terms: "Economic security is fundamental for individuals, households and communities – none of the rest [any aspect of life] is possible when life is from hand to mouth – but cohesion, inclusion and particularly empowerment enhance the ability of individuals to contribute to the national income" (p. 83).

- (ii) For poor people to thrive, they may be helped to help themselves by promoting their resilience to shocks and working towards the graduation from poverty and extreme poverty within a competent and decent society. This should be stimulated by Social Work empowering activities if we consider the mission of Social Work that seeks "to change society from one that creates and perpetuates poverty, inequality, and humiliation to one that is more consistent with social work's fundamental values of humanism and egalitarianism. In order to provide meaningful support to the client, social workers need to empower them" (Hossen, 2005, p. 196).
- (iii) Social workers should contribute a lot in helping others to look in a certain direction with social work's lenses because, indeed, "social work is not simply a way of intervening in people's lives drawing only on a common sense approach of 'doing the right thing'; instead, it goes about making sense of human reality and

uses an interpretive perspective concentrating on ‘doing the thing right’ (Gray, & Webb, 2009, p. 3-4).

(iv) In fighting against poverty, it is important that the People in Need (PIN) are put at the forefront and thus the social worker should consider them as partners and establish a dialogical relationship facilitating the bottom-up collaboration. According to Hossen (2005), this presupposes that:

In working with clients, the worker tries to establish a relationship of dialogue with them as opposed to a relationship of vertical imposition (Freire, 1970). This is done by reducing the unnecessary social distance between the worker and client. Practically, this requires, among other things, sharing information and demystifying techniques and skills used to help. (Hossen, 2005, p. 201)

Overall, for social work to contribute effectively to poverty alleviation among PLHIV, there is a need to enable the latter to participate effectively and sustainably in the resolution of their problems. Secondly, there is a need to realise that it is time to shift from remedial to developmental social work and seeking to indigenise the social work profession.

2.3.2b Understanding of poverty in Rwanda

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted on 25 September 2015 sets 17 goals to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030. Once again, goal 1 emphasises poverty as the first enemy and a pervasive social issue

that should be dealt with. When talking of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Gondwe (2019) specifies:

Goal 1 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development commits to end poverty in all its forms. Among other things, this entails a total transformation of at least 10% of the global population that are in extreme poverty. The poorest people of the planet are largely those that live in rural areas and are largely dependent on agriculture and other climate sensitive activities for their livelihoods. (p. 1)

Accordingly, poverty remains “the most widespread of global problems, and the most complex because of its interaction with such a wide range of other occurrences” (Cox & Pawar, 2006, p. 188). It takes various forms and thus it can vary from one context to another. Consequently, it can be perceived differently and its definitions abound; poverty can be perceived mainly in terms of income levels, human conditions, basic needs, or empowerment to develop capabilities. Furthermore, it is evident that “certain population categories will be more affected by poverty than will be other sections of the same population” (Cox & Pawar, 2006, p. 186).

Rwanda is among the countries that integrate long range global and regional commitments deriving from the UN Sustainable Development Goals and it is dedicated to addressing the poverty issue among other adversities that hamper the development of Rwandans and the vulnerable people in particular. With reference to the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda / NISR (2018b) in EICV5, poverty is measured through the households’ wellbeing using the real consumption per adult equivalent.

For each household, total consumption is obtained by adding up the amounts spent on a large range of items, including the value of goods produced and consumed at home. However, this system is not satisfactory since most of the population depends on subsistence agriculture. The total household consumption is then divided by the number of adult equivalents – adult aged 20-39 get a weight of 1, children under one-year-old are given a weight of 0,41 and so on – to arrive at a measure of consumption over adult equivalent. This measure is then adjusted for regional and monthly differences in prices and was expressed in the prices of January 2014. The headcount poverty rates were obtained by comparing real consumption per adult equivalent to the poverty line (RWF 159,375 per year) or the extreme poverty line (RWF 105,064).

The EICV5 findings indicated that poverty reduced from 39.1% in 2014 to 38.2% in 2017 and extreme poverty from 40% to 16% between 2000 and 2017. It also specified that the headcount poverty rates (%) since the 2001 EICV survey were 58.9% (EICV1 in 2000/01), 56.7% (EICV2 in 2005/06), 44.9% (EICV3 in 2010/11), 39.1% (EICV4 in 2013/14) and 38.2% (EICV5 in 2016/17) (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda / NISR, 2018b, p. v).

In addition to household consumption and indicators of material deprivation, poverty is also defined through household's ranking according to community members' perceptions towards the ability to meet their own needs. Under this system, the households are ranked on a scale according to their perceived poverty and vulnerability status, with a score of 1 being the most vulnerable and 4 the least

(before a scale of 1 to 6 was used). So far, two waves of categorisation, one initiated in 2001 and the new one established in 2014 sought to “ascertain the true socioeconomic status of each Rwandan household” (Dushimimana, 2019). Six appellations were given to the first wave of the 6 categories:

(1) Umutindi nyakujya: those in abject poverty; (2) Umutindi: the very poor; (3) Umukene: the poor; (4) Umukene wifashije: the poor with resources; (5) Umukungu: the food rich and (6) Umukire: the money rich. (Howe & McKay, 2005, p. 7)

To avoid being accused of unfairness when categorising people and to avoid claims of biased implementation that were arising, it was decided to revise these categories and as specified by Ladislas Ngendahimana, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC), interviewed by Mfitimana (2014) said, “The new classification of *Ubudehe* includes four categories instead of six and they will be used as a planning tool to facilitate the government in its bid to deliver different services to citizens.” The new categorisation was expected to help correct what has been wrong and to carry out a thorough analysis of the living standards of Rwandans. This new and second classification is presented in the following table.

Table 1: The 2015 categorisation of households in Rwanda under the Ubudehe System

Category	Description
i	Very poor people who do not have a house or are incapable of paying rent; have a poor diet and get food with difficulty; cannot respond easily to basic household needs (soap, clean clothes, lighting, etc.).
ii	Those who have their own house for accommodation or can pay rent; can get food at least twice a day; and earn a wage from others occasionally but without a chance to attain sustainable living conditions.
iii	Those who have regular earnings and benefit from sustainable living conditions. In these households, at least one of the members is a public servant or conducts private business; either they are famers who make surpluses to be sold or at least one of the members is a middle-level trader. Overall, they include independent farmers, middle-level professionals or employees of government and business owners.
iv	Those who have various possibilities and can afford a luxurious lifestyle

Source: Compilation by the researcher, 2018

Generally, the first and second categories are composed of households falling under the situation of poverty or run a risk of becoming poor and deserving special intervention to help them overcome their critical situation of belonging to poverty-stricken families. It appears from the descriptions made so far that poverty in Rwanda is measured in different facets. On the other hand, it becomes apparent that there has been positive transformation in the living conditions of the people though there is still a lot to be done. It is thus important to understand the pathways Rwanda used and

the anti-poverty strategies it adopted to make progress and sound achievements that sometimes exceeded the odds.

Overall, poverty in Rwanda refers, as previously indicated, to a level of consumption below the official poverty line fixed at RWF 159,375 per year in terms of 2014 prices (MINALOC, 2020, p. iv). This income-based conceptualisation is complemented or even replaced by the *Ubudehe*-based categorisation. The latter is considered as being more comprehensive because it is expected to encompass different kinds of deprivations a human being or a household is likely to experience according to the judgements of the community members.

These *Ubudehe* poverty categories have very often been subject to constant appeals and complaints from people who wanted to be placed in lower categories so as to benefit from some social protection advantages, some using bribery and nepotism to attain their goal. That is why an updated *Ubudehe* categorisation was proposed in 2020 to attempt to re-classify households according to their socioeconomic status and to shift from four numerical numbers to five alphabetical letters (A, B, C, D, E). The updated *Ubudehe* approach puts emphasis on the graduation principle, fostering upward social mobility. (Rwandapedia, n.d.) In short, these five categories are described in the following table.

Table 2: Characteristics of the 2020 Updated Ubudehe Categories

Category	Description
A & B	Category of households with diverse life choices and self-reliant households that spur community empowerment and graduation from poverty and help other households graduate from poverty. Households in categories A and B do not benefit from social protection schemes but are expected to be partners in community development through their own investments and skills, which can create jobs through application of principles of corporate social responsibility.
C & D	Category of self-reliant households that benefit from social protection interventions and multi-sectoral interventions and have to sign performance contracts (<i>Imihigo</i>) for graduation within a period of 2 years.
E	This category of households is expected to benefit from full state social protection and individuals in this category are not expected to graduate and will not sign performance contracts. It is a special category and concerns all vulnerable people, as listed in the social protection policy, who have no skills to pursue any job. These households benefit from full state social protection, accessing everything from the Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme, subsidies for solar-based domestic electrical systems, community-based health Insurance, fortified blended foods, Girinka programme, and other schemes.

Source: Adapted from Bizimungu (2020) & Rwandapedia (n.d.)

The above description covers different aspects that underlie poverty indicators commonly recognised in various spheres of life, including those mentioned by Handley et al. (2009) about poverty and poverty reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa:

Poverty is multi-dimensional, complementing an income-based conceptualisation of poverty with a more holistic approach to the

deprivations a human being may suffer. Thus, poverty includes low life expectancy and lack of a decent standard of living, lack of opportunities and access to basic services as well as the perceptions of the poor themselves: their sense of hopelessness, powerlessness, dependence and lack of self-confidence. (p. 33)

2.3.2c Rwanda Government Action Against Poverty

After a huge devastation of the country that was caused by the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, one can ask how it was possible for Rwanda to recover from the ashes to rise and shine again within a short period of time. As depicted in the literature reviewed, “the genocide shredded the social fabric of Rwandan society; decimated families; and greatly reduced the capacity of communities to meet their own needs. Among the lasting legacies of this genocide were the increase of vulnerable groups and the worsening of poverty. Globally, Rwanda became known in 1994 to the whole world as ‘scene of the last genocide of the 20th century’” (Murigande, 2012 in Kalinganire & Rutikanga, 2014, p. 111).

Among the changes that took place in the aftermath of the genocide was the commitment “to undertake the journey of reconstruction relying greatly on “broad and inclusive-base governance” (Kalinganire and Rutikanga, 2014, p. 111). To move effectively and progressively towards sustainable economic and social transformation, GoR chose to establish a coordinated and harmonised framework that depended on the private sector, development partners and other stakeholders (Kalinganire, Gilkey and Haas, 2017, p. 318). Throughout this process, “priority has been investment in the

development of the country, with government through dialogue and consensus, a rigorous suppression of corruption at all levels and mainly pro-poor evidence-based policies” (Pamela, Sapsford and Binagwaho, 2016, p. 103). The mentioned framework aligned social welfare, economic, and political interventions with national and sectoral policies, strategies, and standards as follows:

i. Political and legal framework: robust governance and enactment of specific laws relating to *Gacaca* (Traditional community justice), inheritance, gender-based violence, land rights, and so on.

ii. Development programmes and strategies: aligned with the MDGs, Vision 2020 (Republic of Rwanda, 2000, 2004), and the economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS 1: 2008-2012 and EDPRS 2: 2013-2018) and the *Girinka* programme (one-cow-per-one-poor-family) policy.

iii. Reconciliation mechanisms: The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) was formed in 1999 by act of Parliament, to rebuild social trust and social cohesion by promoting unity and reconciliation and striving for a peaceful, united, and prosperous nation.

iv. Local community-based solutions comprised of *Gacaca* (traditional courts), *Ubudehe* (mutual assistance), and *Umuganda* (Collective community development work) (Kalinganire, Gilkey and Haas, 2017, p. 318).

To achieve national transformation, there was a firm

conviction that ‘grassroots participation’ in decision making and effective ‘empowerment of all groups’ were key factors which would promote inclusion in the social development process. The above strategies demonstrated that Rwanda was determined, more than ever before, to make a difference in mitigating poverty by building on the involvement of genocide victims in the problem-solving process. This was achieved thanks to the joint efforts by development stakeholders identified “tapping into home-grown solutions (HGS) and values” (RR, 2017, p.v) as a good means to bring about success. While underscoring the importance of people empowerment as a privileged asset for the development of the country, President Kagame, in a meeting held with Southern Province leaders in Huye district in February 2019, declared that serving people was far from doing them a favour. He stated:

When we talk about building our country it does not mean physical infrastructure, it means building the ability of our citizens, enabling them to improve their own life. Nothing else matters if we do not achieve this; it is the foundation of everything... Addressing poverty is not a favour you are doing to our citizens. When the wellbeing of our citizens is affected, then we are all affected. People who misuse public resources think they will be better off, but you cannot be better off if our citizens are not. (President Kagame in Mwai, 2019)

Poverty has always taken centre stage in the development narrative at different levels and has ceaselessly continued to preoccupy planners, legislators, developmental actors, researchers and professionals

from a variety of sectors. In the past, several initiatives were made on several occasions to tackle the problem of poverty but in vain. Even today, poverty is considered as Priority Number One of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Rwanda National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) was set up in 2017 with the aim of eradicating extreme poverty by 2024, particularly through the enhancement of programmes designed to support vulnerable groups (RR, 2017, p. 11) and the promotion of ‘locality development’.

It is important to note that grassroots-based development emphasises democratic procedures, voluntary cooperation, self-help, and the development of indigenous or local leadership. It helps to revive the traditional practice of solidarity and hence, reinforces social capital that is a genuine source of Home Grown Solutions (HGS) capable of building a sense of community ownership. In traditional Rwanda, an informal but well-established system of kinship and community structures existed. Individuals existed within the identity of the extended family and community while the concept of kinship carried with it an extensive network of obligations and duties by the members who constituted the communities. The above community structures were revived and used to provide social welfare and care to those affected by death, disease or hunger. It was under this backdrop that the initiation of Home grown Solutions (HGS) was born to combat various adversities in the country among which was poverty.

2.3.2d Home Grown Solutions versus the Problem of Poverty

Referring to the previous sections, it has been demonstrated that there are specific factors that characterise the poor not only in

Rwanda but also in other parts of the world, especially in Africa. These factors should be taken into consideration while analysing the problem of poverty and while attempting to explore suitable solutions to combat it. These include geographic or structural factors (availability of and access to resources), the number of dependents (poor households are on average larger), the level of education which constitutes the most salient characteristic of the ordinary households), dependence on subsistence agriculture (the poor and extreme poor households very often rely on subsistence farming or farm wage labour), isolation/exclusion (poor households tend to be more isolated and/or excluded and they benefit less from different opportunities, their vicinity is always devoid of empowerment): very often “the poor live far away from key infrastructure such as markets, public transport facilities, and health centres” (WBG, 2015, p. 14); inadequate environmental health facilities (inadequate access to clean water, improved sanitation, and immunisation, etc. which are predictors of stunting); inequality in terms of education and occupation as well as the problem of benefiting from an effective social safety net and the difficulty of running prosperous income generating projects.

From the above demonstration, it is therefore clear that poverty continues to be regarded as a complex phenomenon. It is also understandable that the strategies for combating it are not obvious. One may ask whether ‘thinking locally and acting globally’ or, conversely, ‘thinking globally and acting locally’, should help find adequate solutions to poverty. Still here, there is no consensus

about any alternative solution to be adopted. However, suffice it to say that it is very often suggested to resort to the expertise of intervening actors in the first instance or to focus, first and foremost, on the experience and wisdom of those who may be experiencing the problem. In any case, it may be prudent to keep in mind that addressing the issue of poverty fairly presupposes a consideration of all its embracing dimensions (economic, social and political aspects) such as income, landlessness, unemployment, lack of education, lack of health insurance, helplessness, exploitation, exclusion, etc. Above all, it should be argued that the drivers of poverty alleviation can be found in the bottom-up and in the effective participatory development processes that embed cultural-based practices.

In the aftermath of the Genocide against the Tutsi, GoR decided to adopt a philosophy of reviving the best local practices termed as ‘Home Grown Solutions’ or ‘Home Grown Initiatives’ by emphasising people-centred approaches towards development. This was done by promoting citizen participation in the problem-solving process. Home Grown Initiatives (HGI) have ultimately become “Rwanda’s ‘trade mark’ solutions built on Rwanda’s history and culture. These policies offer a direct response to the economic and social challenges that have jointly contributed to fulfilling the developmental vision of Rwanda. The most extensive and transformative HGI include *Umuganda, Gacaca, Abunzi, Imihigo, Ubudehe, Itorero and Ingando, Umushyikirano, Umwihereho and Girinka*” (Rwanda, 2014, p. xix). HGI have been and continue to be Rwanda’s driving force and their integration in government policies and development programmes has

seemingly contributed a great deal to yielding good results. So far, the practices of *Gacaca*, *Girinka*, *Imihigo*, *Ubudehe*, *Umuganda* and VUP have particularly been hailed as being very efficient and to have played a key role in improving citizens’ welfare (Niwe, 2021). They are described in the following table:

Table 3: Description of key Home Grown Initiatives for poverty alleviation

Home Grown Initiative	Year of establishment	Key targeted domain	Description of the HGI
Gacaca	18 June 2002	Governance & Justice	Traditionally, <i>Gacaca</i> refers to the grass compound where community members would meet to discuss issues of concern. People of integrity (elders and leaders) in the village known as ‘ <i>Inyangamugayo</i> ’ (people of integrity), would facilitate a discussion that any member of the community could take part in. <i>Gacaca</i> acted very much as a traditional court. In modern terms, <i>Gacaca</i> consists of a local community-based justice system with the aim of restoring the social fabric of society.

Girinka	2006	Social Welfare	Literally, <i>Girinka</i> can be translated as “may you have a cow. It is a programme meant to provide poor families with cows. The intention is to reduce poverty and malnutrition (through milk production) among the poorest in the nation [although the beneficiary may double their effort to feed the cow provided!].
Imihigo	2006	Governance	<i>Imihigo</i> was a pre-colonial cultural practice in Rwanda according to which an individual would set targets or goals to be achieved within a specific period of time, most often, leaders and chiefs. In other words, <i>Imihigo</i> consisted of publically setting challenging targets and committing oneself to their achievement. Today, <i>Imihigo</i> is used across government as a system of performance contracts (usually between the President and each District’s Mayor) to ensure accountability. Overall, each leader makes a reciprocal contract with the authorities above and below, up to the household level.

Ubudehe	2001	Social Welfare	<p><i>Ubudehe</i> refers to the long-standing Rwandan practice and culture of collective action and mutual support to solve problems within a community. The focus of traditional <i>Ubudehe</i> was mostly on cultivation. Today, <i>Ubudehe</i> is a poverty reduction initiative by the Government of Rwanda which provides communities with skills and support necessary to engage in problem solving and decision making for purposes of development. It contributes to the analysis of the nature and extent of poverty at community level.</p>
Umuganda	2007	Economy	<p>The word ‘<i>Umuganda</i>’ can be translated as ‘coming together for a common purpose to achieve a targeted outcome’. In the traditional Rwandan culture, members of the community would call upon their family, friends and neighbours to help them complete a difficult task. Today, <i>Umuganda</i> can be described as community or communal work.</p> <p>On the last Saturday of each month, communities come together to do a variety of</p>

public works, which often include activities that promote infrastructure development and environmental protection. After performing the planned activities, community members discuss different issues and solve specific problems or respond to claims raised by ill at ease individuals or groups of people under the auspices of local leaders.

VUP	2008	Economy	The Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) is Rwanda's flagship social protection programme managed by the Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA) within the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC). VUP has four components: public works (for the provision of employment for extremely poor households), cash transfers (direct support to households in crisis or to Rwanda's poorest and most vulnerable households) financial services (Credit Packages: to extend credit to the extremely poor to help them run small income generating projects) and sensitisation.
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Source: Adapted from Corry (2012, pp. 17-25); FAO (2016); RDB (2014) & Rwandapedia (n.d.)

Convinced that Rwanda is not rich in terms of mineral and agricultural resources, and given that, instead, the country is endowed with human resources, government chose to constantly engage its people – particularly the most vulnerable – and stimulated them to form associations and/or cooperatives to ensure that they achieve a better livelihood. Through the above mentioned HGI, Rwandans have progressively been encouraged to participate in their respective communities instead of being passive, simply expecting government or other donors to come to their aid.

2.3.2e. Inclusive Strategies and Mitigation of Poverty among the People Living with HIV

Efforts have mostly been made to end or at least to reduce or alleviate poverty. Nonetheless, it is evident that the battle is far from being won. In the beginning, the Millennium Development goals (MDGs) set by the UN comprised eight goals with goal 1 targeting the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. As for goal 6, it referred to the fight against HIV, malaria and other diseases. Today the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted on 25 September 2015 consists of 17 goals to be achieved by 2030. Once again, goal 1 puts emphasis on poverty as the first enemy and a pervasive social issue that ought to be combated. When talking of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Gondwe (2019) specifies:

Goal 1 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development commits to end poverty in all its forms. Among other things, this entails a total transformation of at least 10% of the global population

that are in extreme poverty. The poorest people of the planet are largely those that live in rural areas and are largely dependent on agriculture and other climate sensitive activities for their livelihoods. (p. 1)

Without affirming systematically that the PLHIV who are focused on in this study are necessarily poor, their households, in one way or another, are likely to suffer from poverty. Indeed, HIV/AIDS positives are required to respond to a series of fundamental needs that plunge them in critical conditions that lead them to economic and psychosocial dysfunction. The expenses they incur erode their socioeconomic living conditions and, for those who are already in difficult circumstances due to poverty, it becomes quite difficult to meet their daily demands in terms of nutrition, health and education. In this perspective, UNAIDS (2018, p. 171; 173) declares:

Poor individuals may not necessarily be at higher risk of acquiring HIV, but they are differentially affected by its health, economic and social consequences. For example, income level appears to be an important variable in HIV treatment outcomes. A review of 10 studies from between 2006 and 2014 in South Africa comprising data from 175000 individuals has indicated that persons living with HIV with low socioeconomic status (based on income, assets or employment status) had more than a 50% higher risk of dying from HIV-related causes than their counterparts with high socioeconomic status. Food insecurity, the impact of HIV-related illness on household income, and difficulties affording transport and other expenses related to health care appear to contribute to that disparity.

In the aftermath of the Genocide against the Tutsi, Rwanda signed a declaration with other UN member States committing herself to work towards achieving MDGs for purposes of combating poverty, hunger, disease including HIV/AIDS, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and the discrimination against women. Since then, policies and implementation strategies have been set up to achieve this goal.

Considering that HIV/AIDS and poverty are inextricably linked, the strategy of creating and strengthening associations/cooperatives as a way of “reducing poverty was adopted. This was coupled with promoting the culture of saving” (RRP+, 2018, p. 50) as a strategy of mitigating the impact of AIDS. Thus, by combining efforts with their counterparts and assuming a certain degree of responsibility in their own empowerment, the poor people were expected to generate and manage their income to respond to their health, nutritional and medical needs.

Overall, specific strategies were needed to address poverty and in this perspective, Rwanda adopted the joint action forum composed of different stakeholders through which decisions and development plans towards the improvement of the living conditions of all categories of people were to be devised. In response, people involvement as a key role in coping with their situation was encouraged and promoted. More particularly, vulnerable people or people at risk of poverty like PLHIV were concerned.

In this study, PLHIV were chosen because, despite the tremendous progress made in Rwanda towards improving living

conditions of the population across all the MDGs, this category of people (PLHIV) still faced significant challenges with respect to health, nutrition and economic stability (WHO, 2017; Fehringer, 2018). Keeping in mind that Rwanda was among the countries that were effectively committed to stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS from 2005, thereby listing “among one of the first countries to achieve the UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets to end Aids by 2030” (Bridget et al., 2019, p. 13), it was crucial to keep up the momentum and ensure that PLHIV move towards self-reliance in order to improve their living conditions.

However, in the existing studies, very little is known about how people infected with HIV/AIDS have managed to cope with their situation. This study hypothesises that through social work empowerment activities within associations / cooperatives, PLHIV can act collectively to fight the poverty problem sustainably and can ultimately mitigate its consequences. Throughout the current research, the interconnectedness between economic and social transformation has been put at the centre of the investigation. As declared in the Rwanda National Strategy for Transformation (NST1), social transformation may be understood as a process that involves moving the country’s citizens from a lower to a higher level in terms of quality of life. This means providing living conditions where every Rwandan is devoid of poverty, and where food is adequate to all and where everybody is protected from natural disasters and has access to adequate infrastructure and services. Such infrastructure and services include those in the fields of water, sanitation, shelter, internet and

mobile phone connectivity, health, energy, finance, social protection, literacy, accessible and inclusive schooling, family social life, decent work and leisure, all of which make life satisfying and enjoyable (RR, 2017, p. 40).

This kind of transformation falls under the framework of VISION 2050 which is itself a reflection of the commitments made in international agreements. These include: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the AU Agenda 2063 and its First 10-Year implementation Plan (2014-2023) and the EAC Vision 2050. All these engagements aspire to improve the citizens' quality of life (RR, 2017, p. 41).

With regard to the description made above, it is important to know how and by whom vulnerable populations like PLHIV should be empowered to become part of the sustainable development process. It was envisaged that by building on the strengths of the individuals, families, groups and communities, the livelihoods of many PLHIVs will be transformed for the better.

What should be borne in mind is that according to the United Nations (2015) as cited by Dugarova et al. (2017): "The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development pledges to leave no one behind, envisaging a socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met and endeavouring to reach the furthest behind first" (p. 4). This reinforces the idea that the affected people or those at risk of becoming vulnerable to poverty as it is the case for PLHIV in Huye district need to be accompanied in order to be part of the problem solving process. There is no better strategy than empowering

the People in Need (PIN) to be aware of and own their problems so as to thrive in life. In the literature reviewed, there is a conviction that “people feel powerless when they are unable to participate, have no opportunity or forum to have a say in matters that affect their lives. Among others, it is imperative that empowering people must include an enabling environment to have a say in decisions that affect their lives and that they are respected” (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development, 2012, p. 46). In summary, “individuals and communities are fundamental actors in the realisation of their rights. Thus it is of utmost importance [for intervening actors] to empower vulnerable populations so that they can lift themselves and their families out of poverty and enjoy basic human dignity” (Sawyer et al., 2019, p. 42). In this endeavour, social work professionals in conjunction with other stakeholders, have a great role to play in both direct and indirect interventions intended to make people living in poverty responsible, resilient, innovative, and proactive in their journey towards attaining sustainable livelihoods.

The following section examines the ups and downs of the social work profession since its inception in the eighteenth century and its current focus, particularly in Africa and Rwanda, in contributing to the enhancement of living conditions among PIN.

2.3.3 Progressive Social Work: Empowering and Growing Profession

2.3.3a The Birth of Social Work

Social work has been evolving both as an important profession and a specific scientific discipline. Fundamentally, social work developed in England and America and progressively expanded to other areas around the world (Kalinganire, 2002, p. 49). Social work practice originated from charitable interventions that were mostly church-based in the Middle Ages. The intervening benefactors were connected to the tenets of compassion, fairness and community progress with a firm conviction that charity should be a social obligation with a duty to help the poor, considering this as a sign of piety (MSWcareers, n.d.). Progressively, precursors using home visits from a range of people – the upper class and the Church started supplying foodstuffs and medicines. However, later (18th and 19th Century) middle-class ladies concentrated their efforts on teaching hygiene and baby nutrition to working class women.

The services rendered to the poor by the Church decreased on the eve of the Industrial Revolution in Europe and North America. They were replaced by more formal social welfare services. As stated by Kalinganire (2002):

The roots of formal or structured social work are normally traced to the work of the Charity Organisation Society (COS) and the Settlement Movement in the late nineteenth century. The COS was started in Buffalo, New York, in 1877 and

thereafter was rapidly adopted in many American cities. In the Charity Organisation Societies, private agencies joined together to:

- *provide direct services to individuals and families (promotion of social casework and of family counselling approaches);*
- *plan and coordinate the efforts of private agencies to meet pressing urban social problems (emergence of community organisation and social planning approaches) (p. 50).*

In terms of establishing settlement houses, Toynbee Hall was established first in 1884 in London while many others were soon formed (1886) in the larger United States' cities. In the Settlement Movement, focus was put, respectively, on the provision of education and leadership education, especially leadership to the poor as means of improving their lives. This approach stemmed from the belief that the environment had a major influence on character. It was therefore argued that a better environment would help to improve the general ability of the people to maintain themselves (Kalinganire, 2002, p. 50).

Later, social work practice started growing across the world from the 1960s, spreading across developing countries, particularly in Africa. In the latter case, social work education and formal practice have been in existence for over 50 years (Twikirize & Spitzer, 2019, p. xiii). Nonetheless, many social work imported models have tended to emphasise case work and remedial-oriented practice. As far as the African context is concerned, such models have proved to be inadequate given that they have provided insufficient responses to

contemporary challenges, consequently failing to reflect local socio-cultural realities on the ground (Spitzer, 2017, p. 371). This explains why there is still a need for a paradigm shift that seeks to “liberate and empower people instead of having them rely on the state for assistance” (Chitereka, 2009, p. 151).

2.3.3b History of Social Work in Rwanda prior to the Genocide against the Tutsi

The development of professional social work in Rwanda is linked to the major historical, social and cultural changes which the country has undergone. Two main periods can be considered to characterise its evolution – the periods before and after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. As elsewhere in Africa, there have been specific ‘indigenous’ approaches to social work, before the advent of colonialism which bound the population together. The concept of ‘indigenous knowledge’ is used as specified by Twikirize (2019), to “refer to distinct knowledge, practices and ways of living and doing that have their majority origin within specific local communities [...] [the term indigenous] is not used to strictly refer to practices with or for those officially acknowledged as Indigenous Peoples [...]”. (p. 8).

The arrival of the Belgians in Rwanda and during the subsequent governance of Rwanda’s First and Second Republics, some formal social services were established. However, “much of the emphasis on helping people was based on informal kinship and community networks focusing on self-help processes” (Rankopo & Osei-Hwedie, 2011, p. 140). Overall, some key characteristics of the period before the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda are well

highlighted by Kalinganire (2002) as follows:

- Existence of informal structures that provided support/help to people in need (Community self-help mechanisms; kinship ties);
- Emergence of formal structures initiated by the Belgian Missionaries from 1949 with the ultimate objective of empowering women in taking care of their families, particularly their husbands;
- Systematic education and practice of social work with the creation of schools for a high class at Karubanda in the Southern Province in 1956 and 4 other schools throughout the country in 1979. The objective was to produce trained Assistant Social Workers (ASW) equipped with minimum knowledge and skills needed to perform in various settings (poverty alleviation, mental health, child care, the welfare domain and development in general).

As stipulated earlier, social work training was initiated in Rwanda in 1949 under the form of social clubs in Astrida (Butare – the current district of Huye), particularly in the perspective of helping ‘civilised women’ to adapt to conditions of urban life stresses and to know how to manage their families adequately. These social clubs were later transformed (1973) into ‘*Centres sociaux de développement*’ (Social Development Centres). These in turn, were integrated a little later into ‘*Centres communaux de développement et de formation permanente*’ (CCDFP,) or Communal Centres for Development and Lifelong Training.

A formal professional social work programme was established in 1956 at Karubanda in Butare (Huye today) with the creation of a social school at secondary level. Training in this school emphasised a certain number of skills: feeding, hygiene, obstetrics and nursing, family and social life, literacy skills, cookery, sewing, knitting and gardening, and community development. On completion of the programme, graduates were immediately appointed by the Ministry of Labour in a variety of public institutions where they would be in charge of providing direct services according to the domain of intervention in each employing institution (child and family welfare; youth development; school education; health care; etc.). It is important to note that they were very often employed in local administration (*Communes*) and were mostly given the title of ‘managers’ of the above-mentioned centres. Considering the importance of their role, a decision was taken to train more and more assistant social workers and thus, four additional schools were created in 1979, in Byumba and Rwaza (Northern Province), Rulindo (in Kigali) and Rambura (Western), respectively. The curriculum taught was enriched with the aim of preparing future service providers capable of acting as auxiliary counsellors and case managers, advocates, advisers and community developers.

The training of auxiliary social workers, commonly called ‘assistant social workers’ or ‘*Abasosiyali*’ in Kinyarwanda, was terminated in the aftermath of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. This was done following the introduction of the social work programme in 1999 at the former National University of Rwanda that

aimed at training qualified professionals up to bachelor's degree level (Kalinganire, 2002, pp. 55-57).

2.3.3c History of Social Work in Rwanda after the Genocide against the Tutsi

In Rwanda, the social work was officially established as an academic discipline in the direct aftermath of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. This was done in 1999 at the former National University of Rwanda (NUR) in Southern Province. Subsequently, two additional programmes were opened at Byumba Polytechnic Institute (IPB) in Northern Province, Gicumbi district in 2006. Another programme started in the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR) in Southern Province, Huye district in 2010. The statistics compiled in 2018 from these three High Education Institutions (HEI) show that 970, 915, and 235 people have graduated from the University of Rwanda (UR), IPB and CUR, respectively.

Since the graduation of the first intake of 10 individuals in 2003 at NUR, qualified social workers have been playing and continue to play a big role that has led to significant changes in the clients' levels of functioning and coping. More practically, social work professionals – in collaboration with professionals from other fields – have been concentrating their efforts on people's participation in the resolution and ownership of their own problems. This has progressively led to a radical change in behaviour towards handling socioeconomic issues.

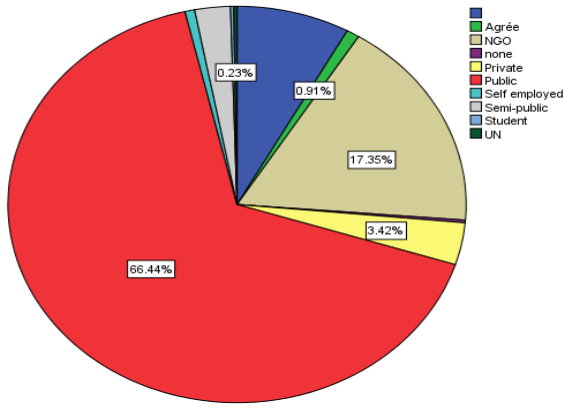
In a study carried out by Kalinganire and Rutikanga (2014), it was reported by their informants, that “[...] with the participatory

poverty assessment, the population has been discovering priority needs and initiating in consequence adequate activities to help them generate income and to handle specific problems such as malnutrition, health and education issues” (p. 238). Furthermore, when asked to indicate the focus of their activities, social work professionals specified in the same study that their interventions focused mostly on the domains of cooperatives, income-generating projects and community development. The domains of empowerment, education and gender promotion were also mentioned. They also said that they participate in activities targeting behavioural social change, raising awareness in terms of poverty reduction and social development (Kalinganire and Rutikanga, 2014, p. 239).

It should be noted that social workers in Rwanda are mostly employed in the public sector and by the ministries involved primarily in the domains of social welfare promotion. These include the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development (MINALOC), the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) and the Ministry of Health (MoH).

In the figure below, different categories of institutions that employ social workers are shown. These findings are reported from a study conducted by social work lecturers from the UR Department of Social Sciences in 2016.

Figure 3 Categories of employing institutions



Source: Unpublished research report by Hakizamungu, Hahirwa, Kalinganire, and Uwihangana (2016)

The figure shows that social workers in Rwanda primarily work in the public sector (approx. 67%) and NGOs (approx. 18%). The latter encompass local and international organisations, Faith-Based Organisations (FBO) and Community-Based Organisations (CBO). The above study showed that, very often, social workers, including those who work in local government (district, sectors and cells), combine different roles and perform various activities. It should also be noted that they provide professional and ethical services by playing the roles of counsellors, coaches, facilitators, mediators, negotiators, trainers and educators.

Another important thing to mention about social work in Rwanda is that it is really a very young profession that emerged at the moment when the shift towards the development narrative was

high on the agenda. The social work profession in Rwanda has been evolving and growing, drawing on a hybrid model that combines both the Western model of practice (principles and methods) as well as GoR's "development agenda built on the philosophy and practice of 'home-grown solutions [initiatives]" (Ndahiro, Rwagatare and Nkusi, 2015, in Twikirize & Spitzer, 2019, p. 4). Home-grown initiatives (HGI) are "Rwanda's brain child in the path to economic and social development. They consist of practices developed by the Rwandan citizens based on local opportunities, cultural values and history to fast-track the development agenda. Being locally-inspired, HGI are appropriate to the local development context and have been considered as a bedrock for the Rwanda's development successes [...]" (Rwanda Governance Board [RGB], 2014, p. 1).

The main purpose of considering HGI was to embark on a reconstruction and sustainable development agenda that is based on the involvement of the people in the problem-solving process. This was done with firm determination to find specific solutions to particular social problems resulting from the genocide against the Tutsi. This served as a good foundation for the orientation of the new social work profession's mission even if the profession was still in the offing. In effect, the key concern of the social work profession in Rwanda has been "to craft a social work practice model in Rwanda that attends to traditional values and practices" (Kalinganire, Gilkey & Haas, 2017, p. 320).

2.3.3d The Need for Developmental Social Work

The above historical review of ‘case work’ and ‘case management’ has shown that social work began in Western countries with the efforts of voluntary charity workers who tried to help victims of poverty generated by the mid-nineteenth century Industrial Revolution. Progressively, it was realised that poverty was not a private, but a public issue and thus, specialised social programmes known as welfare state programmes needed to be institutionalised.

These programmes were of great importance in relieving clients through the provision of direct services. The use of service-oriented and clinical psychosocial approaches prevailed in the so-called ‘social case work’ interventions. Over time, however, it was realised that such interventions were keeping the people in a vicious circle of inextricable problems, including poverty as one of these.

Against this backdrop, many social work writers from developing countries, particularly from Africa, raised the claim that “the profession’s individualised, therapeutic approach is unsuited to the pressing problems of poverty, unemployment, hunger, homelessness and ill-health that characterise the global South” (Midgley, 2001, p. 28). Thus, these scholars have been advocating for development approaches to replace the ‘remedial approach’ that “has been accused of lacking in terms of sensitivity to the demands of African culture. It tends to ignore traditional, informal forms of welfare and the role of the extended family network in particular in social welfare provision” (Chitereka, 2009, p.151). With this recommended shift, social workers were expected to help PIN to

thrive within their respective environments. As such, they were required “to talk to clients as partners who know the solutions to the challenges they encounter [a client being a person, a family, a group or a bounded community who need to be empowered to change or to be motivated and resourced to fight the various adversities that endanger their lives]”. (Gray, 2002, p. 1)

It is evident that appropriate responses to people’s needs require a continuous struggle that should adopt a holistic approach. These ideas have continued to grow in terms of importance. As a result, a concrete conceptualisation of the profession and practice of social work, though still controversial, has emerged to give a real identity to the profession in developing countries and this is particularly needed in Rwanda. Indeed, the concept of “developmental social work” was adopted and continues to be privileged in these countries. According to Gray (1996; 2002), developmental social work is understood as:

A type of social work which diverges from the residual, service-oriented approach directed at special categories of people in need to holistic, planned, development strategies which place people and human rights at the centre of social planning... It means basically employing community development as a major intervention strategy (p. 12).

Gray further indicates that developmental social work promotes the following:

- a people-centred philosophy;
- welfare as a human right;
- the prevention of social problems;

- awareness through education;
- equality of resource distribution and a reduction of inequities in service provision;
- populist forms of intervention, including community development;
- community participation in all stages of care from planning through to evaluation;
- multisectoral work. (p. 12)

Different approaches designed to mitigate the plight of the people associated with social work have been tried in African countries since independence. The former have consequently proved to be efficient. While paraphrasing Spitzer in the research conducted in Tanzania on the above point, Manyama wrote:

Although not explicitly stated in the literature, available evidence shows that developmental social work thinking was very instrumental towards achieving African social and economic development after attaining independence i.e., Ujamaa and self-reliance was applied in Tanzania, Harambee in Kenya and Ubuntu in south Africa, to mention a few, were focusing on helping the vast majority of the vulnerable population using community resources (Manyama, 2018b, p. 44)

However, the commitment to the favoured developmental social work paradigm as a tool for transforming the living conditions of the poor, the marginalised and the vulnerable failed despite the multiple programmes aligned with international agreements or

continental initiatives. Indeed, “African politicians, academics, policy makers and administrators, because of the Western education they had attained, developed a colonised mind-set that still exists and persists today. This explains why they undermine and undervalue indigenous knowledge in education and development” (Shizha, 2013 in Uwibereyeho King, Bokore & Dudziak, 2017, p. 54).

More than ever before, it has been argued that Africa may revive from different types of non-healed wounds and there is a conviction that it is possible to curb problems related to development such as poverty. This can be done by strengthening unity, cohesion and solidarity among people who should be empowered towards achieving self-reliance and sustainable development. Empowerment will continue to be the cornerstone in shaping PIN and, in this endeavour, a renewed social work practice that draws on local practices in the problem-solving process is expected. This will be achieved through empowerment-based practice as a remedy of choice for difficult circumstances endured by diverse categories of people suffering from various social ills, especially poverty. Obviously it is shown that the application of the empowerment approach helps people experiencing poverty to improve their capacities in the fight against the poverty phenomenon. In light of this description, it was assumed that putting much focus “on the achievement of goals and change of systems by utilising available strengths, resilience, and resources” (Hossen, 2005, p. 208) while at the same time using associations to organise the PLHIV to be at the forefront in the battle against poverty should help them win collectively and sustainably the war.

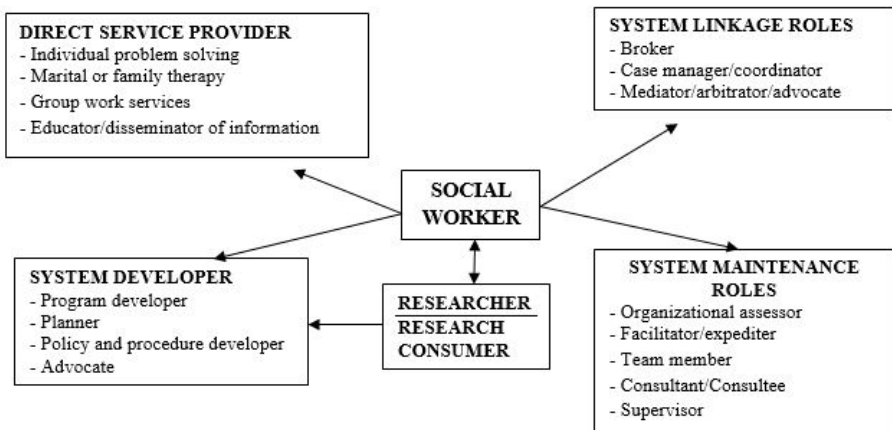
2.3.3e Social Work Practice in PLHIV Associations in Rwanda and Fight against Poverty

From its inception at the end of the nineteenth century, the “social work profession has voiced a long-term commitment to dealing with the problem of poverty” (Krumer-Nove & Monnickendam, 2009, p. 225). It has strived for the enhancement of “the individuals’ well-being in a social context and the well-being of society” (Ruffolo, Perron & Harbeck Voshel, 2016, p. 17). In fulfilling this mission, the social work professionals pursue the following key goals:

- To enhance people’s coping mechanisms, problem-solving, and developmental capacities;
- To link people with systems that provide opportunities, resources and services;
- To develop and improve social policy;
- To promote human and community well-being. (Cox , Tice & Long, 2015, p. 6)

The social work mission, as specified by the US National Association of Social Workers (NASW) in 1999 is dedicated “to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (Hepworth et al., 2006, p. 5). Social workers have been and will continue to be at the forefront in making interventions for those affected by various problems, including poverty, HIV and AIDS, unemployment and underemployment, crime, addictions, disabilities, conflicts, violence, trauma, illnesses and disasters.

Considering particularly the HIV/AIDS phenomenon, it is important to mention that social workers have been among the key actors in creating change, resulting in more humane social conditions. They have shown that they are in a better position to help PLHIV, especially those who are faced with the persistent threat of poverty. To this end, they have frequently been committed to developing healthy human relationships. This means “attending to all aspects that affect people living with HIV [...] including social, cultural, psychological, occupational, and economic well-being, among others” (Poindexter, 2010, p. 33). While addressing the needs of the vulnerable, social work interventions should focus at various levels (micro, mezzo and macro) by playing the roles of service providers, brokers, system developers or system maintainers and researchers, as shown by the following figure.



Source: Adapted from Hepworth (2006, p. 27)

Figure 4: Roles played by social workers in addressing vulnerable people's problems

Social work professionals in the domain of HIV/AIDS and poverty can best serve their typical clients by seeing the latter “as part of multiple, overlapping systems that comprise the person’s social and physical environment” (Netting et al., 2012, p. 8). It is important to bear in mind that vulnerable people’s problems are better dealt with when social work interventions stretch beyond purely intra-psychic concerns to embrace a larger context where “individual needs can be met by collective action” (Bradshaw, 2007, p. 8).

It should be noted that social work professionals in Rwanda have been playing – in collaboration with other professionals – an invaluable role in releasing and relieving the vulnerable and disenfranchised. Their contribution in the area of poverty and HIV/AIDS is undisputable; they have managed to intervene in a variety of settings, helping PLHIV to emerge from overt and/or covert degrading situations, and accompanying them at home, in health centres and in the last days of their lives. However, many challenges in this domain still lie ahead, including the empowerment of the poor PLHIV by lifting them out of poverty. Referring to Poindexter (2010), social workers are expected to “[...] facilitate wellness for people living with HIV in three areas: the personal, the relational, and the collective; at the centre of wellness are power, capacity and opportunity” (p. 34). Their main task, as social change agents, is to empower or build the capacity of PLHIV.

From its inception, even though the ultimate objective of social work has been to ‘help people help themselves’ and “despite [its] profound commitment towards people living in poverty, it

is unfortunate to note that the profession has failed to develop [so far] practice-based awareness towards poverty” (Krumer-Nove and Monnickendam, 2009, p. 225), particularly in African countries. This is why there is a need to reinvigorate the profession and think of African models that “draw on participation of people in local communities to create development programs and a community infrastructure that is culturally compatible with their lifestyle and worldview”. (Gray, 2002, p. 3)

The best pathway in this perspective – as prescribed by many African governments in the aftermath of independence – was to promote associations/cooperatives which were initiated by the colonisers. By and large, it was assumed that people who were traditionally bound together by cohesive relationships could easily be mobilised and engaged in collective action so that they could hasten their development. Furthermore, the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA, 2018) commented on the role and essence of cooperatives:

In the aftermath of violent social conflict, cooperatives have often emerged as sources of positive social capital, fostering a strong sense of community, participation, empowerment, and inclusion among members and restoring interpersonal relationships and peace. In post-genocide Rwanda, in addition to dealing with structural causes of grievances, cooperatives provided emotional support for members seeking justice. (p. 11)

In this study, a cooperative can be understood to mean “an autonomous association of people united voluntarily to meet their

common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise” (ICA, 2018, p. 2). In this context, a cooperative is an advanced association that functions as an enterprise.

It is commonly argued that the clue for successful interventions in the fight against the erosive pain of poverty lies in mobilising the grassroots through well-structured groups referred to as ‘associations’ in the current study. It is important to note that associations set up and embedded within decent and competent communities should be inclusive and should help members feel united and capable of stopping negative consequences of the problems with which they are faced. For this to happen effectively, association members should be cognisant of the fact that they have the potential to overcome powerlessness and influence change at micro, mezzo and even at macro levels.

The Rwandan traditional culture summarises the above aspect in proverbial terms – ‘*Inkingi imwe ntigera inzu*’ (One pillar cannot make a house). This proverb implies that when people come together in specific social groups, through which they help one other, they can achieve much more compared to when they struggle individually. Indeed, they undertake activities that help them to overcome individual as well as common social problems. These activities include: ‘*kubakirana*’ (building houses for those in urgent need); ‘*guhingirana*’ (cultivating for each other); ‘*guhekerana*’ (transportation of the sick to health centres) and ‘*kugobokana*’ (self-help and provision of any service).

Such ways of doing or behaving are in the line of social theories that contradict Spencer's 'survival of the fittest'. When individuals are isolated, the fittest will survive, but once they come together it is the whole community or association that survives. This theoretical standpoint is based on the principle that "[...] human beings can cooperate with one another as well as fight and, the more effective their collaboration, the better their collective adaptation to the demands and the dangers of their social and material circumstances is likely to be" (Noble, 2000, p. 54). This argument supports the view that people functioning in associations embedded in communities with strong social capital can handle or resolve collective as well as personal problems.

To close the discussion under this heading, it is crucial to bear in mind that social work in Rwanda has contributed significantly to the transformation of the lives of PIN, very often through various categories of associations. It has been realised that "associations and cooperatives of PLHIV and affected people have been key players in the implementation of activities aimed at mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS, including income-generating activities" (RBC, 2018, p. 60). In the same domain of HIV/AIDS, the RRP+ umbrella organisation has been mobilising PLHIV to form associations and has progressively urged them to turn into cooperatives in order to boost their income. The trainings organised mainly focus on cooperative governance and refer particularly to the importance of cooperative values that include honesty, transparency, efficiency, accountability, participation, efficacy and capacity building. (RRP+, 2018, p. 28).

In light of what has been discussed so far, it is undisputable that associations or cooperatives provide space for social work practice. However, very little or nothing is known about the real contribution of the social work profession in uplifting the lives of PLHIV through associations. Hence, it was found useful to undertake an evidence-based study on the relevance of social work approaches in addressing the adversities faced by PIN while promoting social change. The study focused on PLHIV from poverty-stricken families and gathered in associations apparently confronted, in one way or another, with a triple-crisis of identity, environment and management (International Co-Operative Alliance: ICA, 2017, p. 9).

2.3.4 Shaping the Social Work Professional

In shaping the curriculum of the social work professional, Mansaray & Star (2020) provide the nature and type of skills needed in training a social worker. They have this to say:

“There is already debate about whether social work education is about training for a job defined by employers, or a social work education that will equip practitioners who are competent and confident in their creative skills as they take on the social work roles in the community[...] Our proposition is that social work education should be able to develop professionals with a range of knowledge, analytical and personal skills that are transferable to many different situations [...] [There are] very real challenges for social work to keep the conversation going between academia and practice if we are to equip our students for the tasks ahead”. (p.187)

In line with the above quotation, social workers should be adequately knowledgeable and should exhibit intellectual as well as cognitive skills so as to contribute adequately to the wellbeing of those suffering from different kinds of adversities, particularly poverty.

Through the ideas and views emerging from the explored literature, an important concern of the typical social work professional needed in the process of uplifting people's lives was raised. Obviously, this leads us to think about shaping the future social worker, starting by the classroom, field training and curricula up to the level of professional socialisation. Social workers are expected to promote interactions between people and their environment in order to help everyone access available resources.

There general consensus is that shaping competent professionals is not a simple affair and that this cannot be accomplished only in a classroom setting. On the contrary, the practical contribution from the field is also equally important. Thus, two types of programmes should be envisaged: a university-based as well as an agency-based programme. Whereas, on the one hand, the former emphasises research and academic-based knowledge, on the other hand, the latter emphasises the idea of learning by doing. As stated by Larkin (2018), "Future practitioners are taught the fundamental dimensions of professional work in their discipline – to think, to perform, and to act ethically and with integrity" (p. 2). The university-agency relationship should continue to be extended to the community as the whole where the social worker intervenes after graduation. This is very crucial for the

development of the practitioner in upholding social work competence which is understood as “the ability to integrate and apply social work knowledge, values, and skills to practice in a purposeful, intentional, and professional manner that promotes human and community wellbeing”. (Larkin, 2018, p. 6)

In the ever changing current world, fresh literature suggests to rethink the social work education and practice by emphasising the contextualisation and indigenisation of the profession. In this perspective, afro-centric authors stress the need for transformation and shift from individual to collective-centred approaches; they reiterate the idea of recognising the potentialities/strengths of PIN and that of engaging them in the problem-solving process through a constant- empathetic collaboration. This collaboration is explained by Hossen (2005) as follows:

In working with clients, the worker tries to establish a relationship of dialogue with them as opposed to a relationship of vertical imposition (Freire, 1970). This is done by reducing the unnecessary social distance between the worker and client. Practically, this requires, among other things, sharing information and demystifying techniques and skills used to help... The essence of the dialogical relationship is one wherein all participants in the dialogue are equal, each learning from the other and each teaching the other. Of course the social worker will have some skills and insights that the service user does not have, but the service user has experiences and insights that the worker does not. (p. 201)

In the African context, the authors urge social work practitioners to be conversant with developmental perspectives and to promote the traditional/indigenous practices putting the values of solidarity, self-reliance, dignity, etc. at the centre of their planned interventions and work. (Gray, 2002) expresses this desire in the following words:

consult with people at all levels to further the aims of developmental social work whether this consultation be at an international, national, regional, or local level. The fundamental difference to these extreme levels of the consultation spectrum is that at the international level the social worker needs to operate as an expert while at the local level, the social worker needs to pay full attention to the experience and knowledge of participants who best know their own capacities and strengths. (p. 11)

In the Rwandan context, social workers have embraced this new thinking. They are encouraged to make a difference in their interventions and have strived to empower people at micro, mezzo and macro levels so that the latter are part of the solution and not part of the problem. Considering the fact that Rwanda is committed to achieving a people-centred development – aimed at the revival and modernisation of traditional practices –, this has provided a good opportunity to future social work practitioners. These should be to get sufficiently prepared and continuously equipped in such a way that they become “acquainted with evidence-based as well as innovative practice with people living in poverty, their basic assumptions, the values they hold, and the specific strategies and methods that they use” (Krumer-Novo & Monnickendam, 2009, p.

230). Thus, social work students or future social work practitioners may benefit from emancipatory education and become empowered to “overcome the legacy of imported Western models of intervention which are too often unsuitable with regard to the distinctiveness and complexity of African cultures” (Spitzer, 2014, p. 15). This does not mean that they should forget the residual conceptions which have remained entrenched so far (Ngwanamont, 2014, p. 100). In fact, and as specified by the participants in a recent study conducted in Rwanda by Uwibereyeho King, Bokore & Dudziak (2017), what is important is “not a total rejection of Western knowledge but that in reality Rwandan practitioners must create hybrid practices as many prefer to opt for a “complementary” approach where they can pick and choose accordingly.” (p. 55)

In this endeavour, educational institutions and social work professionals in particular seem to be the most concerned ‘players’ regarding the consolidation, legitimacy and effectiveness of social work as an empowering agent. The crucial role of the educational institutions should be to collect objective information through action research. They should also refine the curricula in order to help prepare skilful and knowledgeable social workers. For social work professionals, they should provide clients with the most effective interventions possible. To achieve this, they should mostly use evidence to help people change. Lastly, they should put emphasis on research and refer constantly to participatory approaches. In the context of present-day Rwanda, professional social workers should stick to their important role of helping the poor people cope with tricky

and interconnected social problems, including particularly poverty, HIV/AIDS, gender issues, family violence and socioeconomic conflicts.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt, first and foremost, with selected theoretical perspectives that have informed the research framework. It has been demonstrated that there is a high degree of interconnectedness between resilience, ecosystems theory and empowerment. Through these mechanisms, it has been possible to understand the causes and effects of poverty on the livelihoods of PLHIV in Rwanda. The strategy to plan for their empowerment is by focusing on functional systems while “utilising available strengths, resilience and resources”. (Hossen, 2005, p. 208)

In this section, the researcher has concentrated on the description, understanding and examination of alternatives for mitigating poverty in the Rwandan context, particularly in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. In the latter case, the role of social work has been emphasised and although the profession is so young in the country and although studies are limited in this domain, the social work profession seems to be taking roots to positively shape plight of the disenfranchised people. It has also been shown that the social work profession was born in Rwanda at a critical moment when the country was faced with complex social problems that followed the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. In other words, social workers in Rwanda have all along been intervening in difficult circumstances and their actions have been oriented within the

framework of implementing government programmes that emphasise people-centred and inclusive approaches.

It has been indicated that the future of social work will depend upon the shift from traditional ways of serving people to a new paradigm that favours collective action. In this perspective, the concept of ‘developmental social work’ has been discussed, and it has been pointed out that it is of paramount importance to strike a balance between ‘indigenous practices’ and ‘Western approaches’ in order to initiate a culturally relevant social work practice in Africa in general and Rwanda in particular.

Overall, it has been shown that social work intervention processes are guided by the principle of ‘helping people to help themselves’ which is the core motto of social work practice. It has also been demonstrated that social workers in Rwanda, in collaboration with other professionals elsewhere (para-professionals and volunteers) have occupied centre stage in addressing poverty. As far as poverty among PLHIV is concerned, it has been stressed that social work empowering activities under the framework of associations should be devised as a means to attain the desired goal. However, concern has been expressed on how to proceed to overcome the pitfalls of the past: that is to say, whether social work practitioners have been conversant with ‘participatory approaches’ that are assumed to be suitable to effect change and to help PIN to thrive. The current experiential study sought to find responses to these concerns using a PAR methodology that has constantly been referred to throughout this exploration.

Before ending this conclusion, a note is worthy of further consideration. Indeed it is important to keep in mind that this PhD research was directed expressly to the case of Rwanda; the intent was to explore and to get an in-depth understanding of the role of social work in empowering the PLHIV so that they could be able to handle the poverty problem, to improve their livelihoods and to influence change. A literature review conducted concomitantly in reference to the international context showed that there are scanty scientific studies on the topic of interest. All views I managed to gather have a threefold common denominator. First, it is specified that poverty is one of the most hampering problems across the world that may be eradicated; second, social work is an incontestable empowering profession but there has not been yet a related perfect practice model helping to release the poor; and third the Western-based teaching and practice models do not fit the mass problems in the global south and in Africa in particular. Furthermore, the Afro centric writers including very few scholars from East Africa and Rwanda converge on the fact that there is need to shift from remedial-based to developmental approaches. However there is a gap in research and teaching towards integration of international theories and local practices. By undertaking this PhD research, there was desire to bring my contribution, albeit small, to the discovery of the ways to help the PIN to move from their deprived situation to powerfulness and to strive for their socioeconomic betterment.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY AND METHODS OF RESEARCH

3.1 Introduction

As previously indicated, this research sought to make an in-depth examination of the role of social work in empowering people living with HIV/AIDS organised within associations in Huye district. To guide the investigation, specific research questions relating to the nature of poverty and its socioeconomic implications to the livelihoods of PLHIV in Huye district were formulated. In addition, other issues addressed in this research included: the strategies needed to address poverty, the role of social work in empowering PLHIV as well as the suitable approaches needed to improve the livelihoods of PLHIV. The formulated research questions aimed mostly at mapping the processes aimed at understanding who does what, who should do what, with what interventions and with what strategies. This was done in order to make PLHIV “powerful, able and active to participate so that they will get the power and ability to work for poverty alleviation” (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development, 2012, p. 10).

To answer the above questions, a ‘Participatory Action Research’ (PAR) was used as the core methodology for this study. The justification for this methodology lies in its ability to engage with different categories of participants who, collaboratively, provided real information to the researcher. In turn, the researcher

facilitated the process and systematically identified key problems needed to be addressed so that social change could take place. This key methodology was operationalised by triangulating specific data collection techniques (interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and meetings during planned field visits). Eventually, this helped not only in exploring the research problems faced by the people directly concerned (PLHIV) but also in informing stakeholders (social work professionals, local leaders, RRP+ and other community members) about the needs towards empowering association members. In terms of PAR, the following overall typical cycle of ‘Planning-Action-Reflection-Evaluation’ procedure was followed.

Apart the introduction and conclusion, this chapter covers six sections respectively the overall research design, the study area and selection of associations of PLHIV, the study participants (primary and secondary), data collection methods, data analysis, ethical considerations and challenges encountered.

3.2 Overall Study Design

In this study, the central idea for the researcher was to interact and work in tandem with participants in order to explore and understand the ways of empowering PLHIV within their associations and families in the face of the poverty pandemic. Thus, it was important “to have an in-depth understanding of the different views regarding the reality as seen by the participants... and the significance of life experiences and meanings attached to those experiences while considering the context which is the natural setting of the experience” (Mbazima, 2017, p. 39). Furthermore, the researcher was interested in promoting

the problem solving process by applying directly to the associations of PLHIV interim solutions/strategies emerging from the progressive investigation. Thus I chose to refer to ‘applied research design’ in the perspective of “engaging them in their own enquiries into their own lives” (Walter, 2009b, p. 1)

Thus, the main preoccupation was a bottom-up collection, analysis and interpretation of adequate data drawing on key study features, including particularly the participation of PLHIV organised within associations in Huye district and the extent to which their lives were progressively transformed. Over a period of around three years, a flexible investigation that adopted the PAR in order to understand the process of personal and collective empowerment of the targeted people confronted with poverty. Throughout the process, the researcher managed to understand the lived experiences of the participants in the study by talking directly to them, seeing them behave and act within their context and having face-to-face interaction (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 295). Overall, the design was conceived in a manner that helped to gather repeatedly relevant information that facilitated a deeper understanding of the problem under study. Concurrently, the researcher implemented social work intervention plans elaborated in tandem with the participants. All this was done in the framework of the study objectives already formulated, particularly in the perspective of responding to the WHAT-WHO-HOW stated axial research questions.

With the PAR methodology, it was easier to explore the livelihoods of the PLHIV but also to probe the SWWs’ opinions and

patterns of thought, the extent and causes of poverty, and at the same time, identify some strategic actions and/or sustainable solutions to the problem of poverty, particularly among the PLHIV association members.

3.3 Description of the Research Area and Selection of Participants

As stated earlier, this study was conducted in Huye district which is one of the eight districts that make up Rwanda's Southern Province. It has a total surface area of 581.5 square kilometres and has 14 sectors divided into 509 cells. Huye was chosen among other districts due to the fact that it was geographically convenient to the University of Rwanda for fieldwork, but so far, very little is documented on the role of the profession in uplifting the lives of the people. Furthermore, PLHIV cooperative associations were considered as good channels for social welfare promotion. Although it has been asserted in the literature that "much more can be achieved there [in associations] in poverty reduction" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development, 2012, p. 10), there was therefore a need to provide researched evidence to prove the above assertion.

The study population was composed of PLWHA's associations in Huye district, social work practitioners and other social welfare actors working in the targeted Sectors. As it was quite impossible to cover all the sectors, it was deemed opportune to restrict the investigation to a well-defined sample of PLHIV associations. To select the PLHIV, a two-stage sampling technique was used.

(i) The first stage concerned the choice of sectors, and 9 out of 14 were purposively chosen according to the 'urban-rural' criterion but also taking into consideration their location, to include different geographical areas. The selected sectors are Huye and Ngoma in urban area; Karama, Kinazi, Maraba, Mukura, Ruhashya, Rusatira and Simbi in rural settings. (ii) The second stage was the selection of associations where, once again, purposive sampling was used to get one or two units per sector according to the number of associations in each sector and, 12 associations in total were selected. Thereafter, a specific group of 12 presidents of these associations plus the overall president at district level was constituted to play the role of key participants/co-researchers in the study as they had to take part in 5 planned FGD but also to act as enablers of the colleagues within their respective associations. In the research, they were called 'Intermediary Social Work Actors' (ISWA) and they worked as the social work researcher's spokespersons and first implementers of the PAR agreed activities.

The second category of key participants in the study consisted of the Social Welfare Workforce (SWW), including particularly social work professionals; at least one available and willing professional per Sector was involved in the research process. 13 people in total composed of 8 social workers and 5 allied professionals with clinical psychology and social administration backgrounds participated in the study.

3.4 Role and Responsibilities of the Researcher and Co-researchers

As mentioned above, the researcher worked with two categories of co-researchers and each party had specific roles and responsibilities to play and accomplish, respectively. For this particular study, the researcher was committed to assessing the ‘contribution of social work services in empowering PLHIV for poverty alleviation’. In this perspective, the researcher combined various roles: research initiator, researcher, collaborator, stimulator, facilitator, advocate, educator-trainer, organiser and above all, coordinator of research activities. The ultimate intention was not to privilege any of the dual PAR aims namely action and research but instead, to ensure that outcomes were achieved on both sides.

Throughout this endeavour, the researcher’s preoccupation was to effectively involve all parties in the process by targeting the identified aim of “conducting research, and acting on the findings of that research all in the interest of bettering the lives of a community of marginalised people” (Floreczak, 2016, p. 12). Ultimately, the researcher was not only interested in producing a good dissertation but also in challenging the structures in place that do not use social work in a perfect manner, that is to say structures where professionals do not engage PIN in the problem-solving process and make them real owners of their lives. In the long-run, the researcher was convinced that in doing so, the participants in this research would familiarise themselves with PAR which is a suited methodology to the social work profession, particularly in Rwanda where the people-centred

approach is favoured.

Co-researchers from the targeted associations were privileged because of their commitment to immerse themselves in the work of revitalising their associations. ISWA were urged to represent faithfully and competently their colleagues by participating in the planned learning activities. In turn, they were expected to help the association members to get back on track by enabling them to work collectively and engage in yielding business. Furthermore, they had the role of conveyors of messages between SWW and associations' members as well as other intervening actors. They also participated in data collection and interim data analysis to provide the needed research information and understanding of the findings so that decisions would be fairly taken to perform or strengthen some actions.

In terms of role distribution, SWW collaborated as technical co-researchers, helping in designing and orienting data collection instruments. The researcher worked closely with them (SWW) in the monitoring process to assess how ISWA were using the training content or organising the colleagues in general. The SWW proceeded by embarking on consciousness-raising to empower PLHIV to become responsible for effecting change. The SWW also played the roles of brokers and advocates, mainly through the RRP+ field officer as their team focal person. As professional insiders, they were more knowledgeable about the context and they provided the researcher with useful insights that facilitated the data analysis process and the discussion of findings. Even though they were from different backgrounds, they were assigned to work as generalist social work

practitioners, striving for the improvement of the wellbeing of the people. Thus, there was no discomfort in gathering information that corresponded to the aim of the study. Instead, this heterogeneity helped to give a better understanding of the interdependence between different disciplines and to discover the efficacy as well as the uniqueness of the social work profession in responding to the needs of clients.

To avoid any kind of inconvenience and to keep a uniform understanding, research boundaries were set up through two preliminary meetings with the co-researchers. It was thus agreed that to attain the objectives of the study, focus should be put on the experiences of the participants working with PLHIV (from poverty-stricken families) gathered in cooperative associations. Focus was also put on how, beyond scientific knowledge, the poverty problem could be addressed by promoting empowering interventions that involved locally-based and trained intermediary social work actors. The participants were encouraged to express their insights in view of the realities encountered during their day-to-day practice. Also considered were the “ideal aspirations of the social work profession that emphasises the pursuit of human rights, social justice and a better life for all (Green, 2015, p. xxii).

3.5 Data Collection Methods and Processes

3.5.1 Data Collection Types

In accordance with PAR procedures, the researcher insisted on strengthening the collaboration strategy between him and various participants in the study as well as the community concerned. This was guided by the recommendation made by Maguire (1987 in MacDonald, 2012) in the following citation:

The ultimate aim of PAR is the empowerment of oppressed individuals to partner in social change, which encourages capacity development and capacity building of all who participate (McTaggart, 1997) [...] Ideally, it is the community group, in collaboration with the researcher, which determines what the existing social issues are, and which one (s) they want to eliminate or change. (p. 40)

Throughout the research process, the data were processed in such a manner that the researcher and participants were both considered as learners. They worked collaboratively and were both involved in the process, resulting into improving the situation of PLHIV. For data collection, the researcher was helped by a social work research assistant. Overall, the data collection methods consisted of FGD interviews and note-taking during participant observations, meetings or talks with the participants during monitoring field visits. These methods and the corresponding data collection instruments are described below:

3.5.2 Focus Groups with the Intermediary Social Work Actors

During the FGD, a social work research assistant was charged with tape-recording and, whenever necessary, took notes on the information provided. In addition, ISWA had to complete specific forms and responded to concrete questions in relation to the theme discussed. This was done to cross-check the validity and consistency of the information given.

The themes for discussion and guiding questions were determined on the basis of reconnaissance visits made and the preliminary talk with the ISWA and SWW. However, these were refined or readjusted at the phase of PAR to fit the expected output, taking into account the lessons learned from the field. One change that was made to the procedure was that after the second FGD, ISWA suggested that it would be valuable to delve deeper in the discussions so as to provide sufficient information on specific topics (income generating projects, leadership, group facilitation and conflict management). Thus, the discussion sessions were divided into two parts: one for general exchange of views on the core theme and the other for a brief training on the agreed topics. Even though this was not initially planned, it provided an opportunity to generate more knowledge and skills. This helped to revitalise the PLHIV associations and to effect change in the members' behaviour. At each phase, the ISWA had (i) to share the lessons learned throughout their interventions, (ii) to discuss the planned theme and to learn more about emerging topics, and (iii) they were given a 'take-away' assignment guiding their next intervention. The researcher, in conjunction with the SWW on the

ground, ensured that the ISWA were coordinating activities in their respective associations and disseminating the information strictly in accordance with the schedule agreed with the members. Depending on the usual calendar of weekly or monthly collective activities (based on the internal organisation of each association), monitoring was carried out on telephone or during planned field visits. The key prevailing themes - linked with the research questions - are stated as follows:

- (i) Understanding poverty and its impact on the PLHIV and their families.
- (ii) Mitigation of poverty and self-reliance through cooperative associations.
- (iii) Social work services in empowering the PLHIV in associations and intervening actors: The role of the SWW.
- (iv) Social work approaches to mitigate poverty among PLHIV in associations: Towards the developmental social work.
- (v) The way forward: Indigenisation of Social work.

3.5.3 Interviews and Focus Group Discussions with Social Welfare Workforce (SWW)

SWW refer to people who intervene in the domain of welfare promotion, particularly those charged with the management of social protection programmes; they intervene in the first instance in favour of the vulnerable people and are expected to work for the enhancement of the population's living conditions as a whole. They are employed in various settings and are composed of different qualified

professionals, including those with social work qualifications. Those who participated in this study worked in local government as public servants at cell, sector and district levels as well as in health centres and in RRP+.

Apart from the preliminary contacts established with both participants to define the guidelines of the study and to agree on the delimitations for this particular PhD research project, the SWW provided their opinions, experiences and insights on the above-mentioned themes as individuals and through group interviews and the final in-depth group discussion (FGD) that took place on 28th December 2018. On the account of being overwhelmingly busy, it was quite impossible for the SWW to regularly attend FGD with ISWA. Whenever necessary, their input was shared through the RRP+ officer as the focal person or through the researcher. This even helped the ISWA to feel at ease and disclose how they assess social work professionals, and what they may not be able to do in the presence of the latter. In the exit FGD, the SWW were asked to give their impression of the research with a focus on the role played by ISWA in the targeted associations and to indicate the challenges they were confronted with while dealing with PLHIV. On the other hand, an in-depth discussion on the PAR methodology was initiated and they gave recommendations for a brighter future in their work with PLHIV and PIN in general.

To elicit the views and opinions from SWW, the above-mentioned themes were complemented by open-ended questions (at least two questions per theme). The questions were administered

every time after each session with the ISWA and this facilitated the reconciliation of ideas and the process of interim data analysis. These guiding questions were formulated as follows:

Guiding questions for the understanding of the social work contribution in mitigating poverty

- (i) What is meant by the concept of ‘poverty’?
- (ii) What is the nature of poverty faced by PHIV in Huye?
- (iii) What is the impact of poverty on PLHIV livelihoods and their families?
- (iv) What is the role of the SWW and that of Social Work Professionals in empowering the PLHIV?
- (v) What are the appropriate social work approaches and/or models to support PLHIV for sustainable enhancement of their well-being?
- (vi) What Home Grown Solutions (HGS) are used to empower PLHIV to address their problems? What value do you attach to collective action approaches?
- (vii) What are the challenges you meet while working with PLHIV and what are the strategies to overcome them?
- (viii) How are PLHIV involved (or how should they be involved) in the problem-solving process to improve their living conditions?
- (ix) What are your recommendations for sustainable development in PLHIV associations and their families?
- (x) What value do you attach to collective action and how do you think the HGI are helpful in this domain? (Use where possible Rwandan proverbs!)
- (xi) What value do you attach to the research activities undertaken throughout the FGD?

- (xii) How do you appreciate the interventions of the ISWA in their respective associations?
- (xiii) Make a personal assessment of the PAR methodology.

3.5.4 Meetings and Participant Observations

To supplement the FGD sessions, the researcher organised frequent field visits (each association was visited at least twice) in the perspective of organising meetings with the associations' members. This aimed at ensuring whether and how the message was transmitted by the ISWA but also. In addition, and most importantly, another aim was to ensure that the association members were generally observed while at work. This gave an opportunity for the researcher to participate in their activities, to hear from them and get their impressions about the ongoing research. The researcher also exchanged views about their situation, learned about their expectations and, ultimately, observed various physical as well as psychosocial aspects.

To ensure objective observation of chosen families and association activities as well as the meetings held after these activities, the researcher listed some indicative criteria in advance. Among these were the state of the homestead, family assets, existence of small income-generating projects, clothing, physical health, members' attitudes towards their living conditions, their level of participation in the activities, types of relationships and communication among association members. This field work enabled SWW to attend some meetings. Above all, it helped to bring together the researcher and co-researchers in their respective settings to discuss specific issues and/or to readjust future research plans. As already mentioned, specific notes were taken and, to a certain extent, a comparison of notes between the

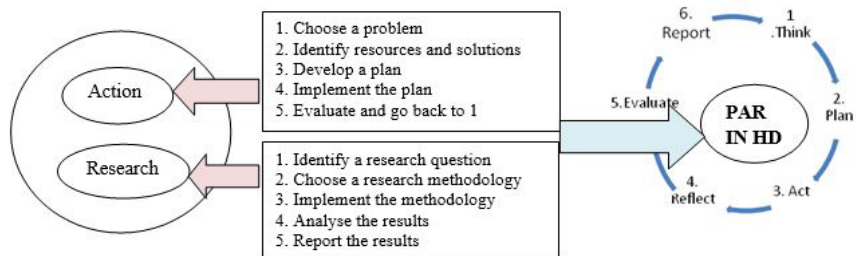
researcher and the research assistant was done to avoid bias.

3.5.5 Data Collection Procedures

The exploration of documents and exchange of views with key informants (RRP+, social work professionals, Health Centres Managers, local leaders), particularly through reconnaissance visits to PLHIV associations as the targeted units of study, helped to get a general picture of the associations and to decide on the methods to be used throughout the research. It was with this preliminary information that the decision to use PAR was taken and the sampling process decided.

Keeping in mind that PAR combines participation and action, a specific orientation in the implementation of my PhD project was strictly respected: “... to enhance research for action, action for research and creation of knowledge and theories while solving problems occurring...” (Morales, 2016, p. 156) The process of involvement of the PLHIV from poverty-stricken families was emphasised and their engagement in planning, carrying out, and applying progressively the results of the research was given great value.

For purposes of this study, a cyclic process that lasted three years was followed to attain the set research goals and to make social change in the lives of PLHIV through specific actions. Overall, the research was done with the targeted associations’ members represented in the core research team by their respective presidents (namely intermediary social work actors) and by drawing essentially on the cycle – Planning, action, reflection and evaluation – as shown by the figure below.

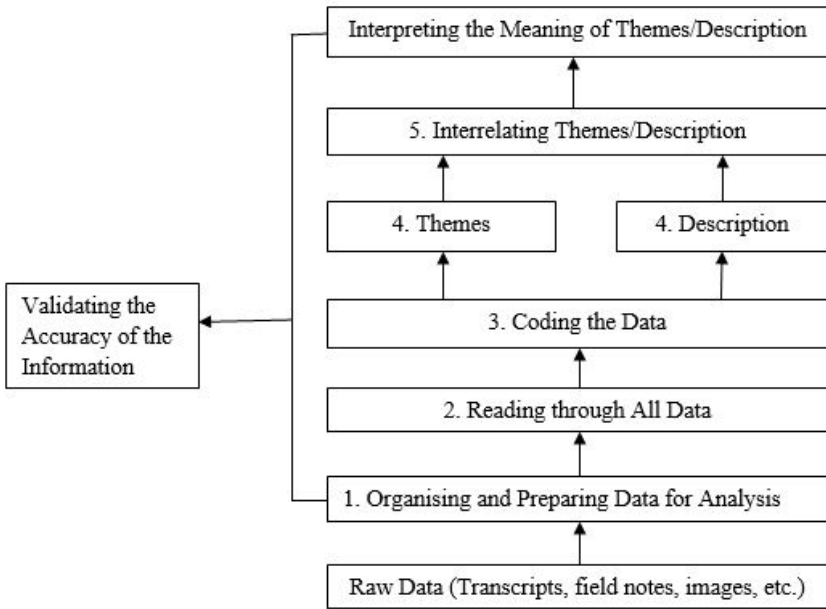


Source: From the research inspired by Burns, Cooke & Schweidler (2011, p. 5); Duesbery & Twyman (2019, p. 10)

Figure 5: PAR model and intervention process in the current PhD project

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is universally understood as a process of classifying large amounts of collected data in order to make sense out of them. It is a “process that requires sequential steps to be followed, from the specific to the general, [...] involving multiple levels of analysis” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 308). The data collected were analysed according to thematic analysis: specific steps were followed to extract underlying themes from the five research questions of this study. Overall, the data analysis process was started right from data collection stage up to the write-up of findings. To a certain extent, data were winnowed due to the fact that they were so dense to be used in their entirety. Thus, it was important to bear in mind some guiding insights while adopting this “process of focusing on some of the data and disregarding other parts of it” (Creswell, & Creswell, 2018, p. 307). The steps followed are well shown in the figure below:



Source: From the Researcher inspired by Creswell & Creswell (2018, p. 309)

Figure 6: Data Analysis Process

Overall, while analysing the data collected, thematic analysis principles were followed to manage, analyse and interpret the data. In the process of reading the transcripts collected, themes and sub-themes in the data-set were constantly identified, classified and compared. Illuminating verbatim quotations were retrieved and used frequently to illustrate the major findings. Whenever necessary, some illustrating cases were summarised in form of figures or were presented in the text to highlight specific situations.

3.7 Protection of Human Participants

To ensure a sense of objectivity and a high quality of results, it was absolutely necessary to respect the ethical rights of the participants while developing a relationship with them. As the information had to be recorded, consent of the respondents had to be sought beforehand. The participants in the study were informed in advance that their participation was completely voluntary. They were also told that they could choose to stop providing information at any time in case they so wished. In terms of confidentiality, it was specified that unless participants indicated their consent, their names or photos would not appear in any report or publication of the research except with their permission.

Under the obligation of respecting the rights, needs, values, and desires of the participants, the research objectives were well articulated in writing through the recommendation letter from the District Mayor. Equally, there was an agreement form signed between the researcher and RRP+ umbrella organisation (organisation gathering all PLHIV associations). In fact, even verbal explanations were also expressly verbally done. From the explanations given, the participants agreed to be part of the research team. To ensure that they collaborated freely and voluntarily, an informed consent was obtained while copies of the agreement and a recommendation letter were given to everyone. It was specified that if they had any question about their rights as participants in the study, they could contact the RRP+ Executive Secretary and the Research Directorate at UR. The intention of all these formalities and others was to enable the participants feel comfortable to provide honest, accurate and complete information.

3.8 Conclusion

This methodological chapter has provided guidelines for the realisation of this study. Most importantly, it has dealt with PAR, a typical research style built around changing things, and in this particular case, it was adopted to experiment the ways of improving the situation of PLHIV organised within associations in Huye district. A “multi-method triangulation, described as a way to increase the internal validity of qualitative studies” (Hussein, 2014, p. 287) was used to demonstrate its importance in exploring the impact of social work empowerment activities on the lives of the participants under study. The study also aimed at collecting the needed information in order to suggest an appropriate intervention model that would mitigate the impact of poverty among PLHIV.

In this chapter, the roles and responsibilities of co-researchers in the research process have been highlighted. It has also been demonstrated that their involvement in all the phases of the study was crucial in planning valuable social work interventions, during which time, relevant information was collected and simultaneously analysed. This process facilitated the generation of new intervention strategies. It is worth noting that this action-research’s cyclical processes enabled the ISWA and SWW to freely and voluntarily provide their research input and to progressively shape the implementation of the research findings. Overall, it is important to note that the findings of the current study, as presented in the following chapter, are of great benefit to different stakeholders, particularly in Rwanda where PAR has already imposed itself as a favoured evidence-informed

methodology and as a people-centred philosophy that is considered as the basis of sustainable development for socially marginalised groups, particularly the PLHIV.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Convinced that in order to help the PLHIV to develop a sense of responsibility and considering the belief that the latter can make a change not only for themselves but also for others in the process of fighting against poverty, I felt an interest to conduct a research in the perspective of uplifting the lives of PLHIV through social work empowerment. Thus, I decided to orient my PhD project in this domain and in the journey of working closely with the Intermediary Social Work Actors (ISWA) as well as the Social Welfare Workforce (SWW) over a period of 3 years, a broad range of PAR activities were performed as shown by a related synopsis in appendix A.

These activities led to the collection of raw data that were progressively analysed and this chapter presents the findings. The presentation is systematically done in reference to the different phases/cycles of the PAR by drawing on emerging themes that were converted into specific headings. The following table gives the general picture of the output of the data analysis as executed along the PAR process. From this, specific sections of the chapter were easily determined and six subdivisions were thus highlighted in accordance to the research questions and thus. The chapter ends with a special section on the lessons learned about the importance of the use of PAR in building empowerment.

Table 4: Overarching themes emerging from data analysis

PAR Cycles	Keywords and phrases in Kinyarwanda	Keywords and phrases in English	Overarching themes
Entry process	Researcher's discernment throughout reconnaissance visits & Presidents of Associations' revelations	Problematic situation of PLHIV in Huye district	
Cycle I	<i>Ubukene/Ubwigunge/Imibereho igoye/Ubufasha/Ibiraka/Icyizere/</i>	Poverty/Isolation/Difficult living conditions/Aid/Casual jobs/Hope	Understanding of poverty and its Impact
Cycle II	<i>Ukwigira/Igishoro/Ubufasha/ Ubumenyi/Imishinga iciriritse/ Ubufatanye/Gukomeza Umutsi</i>	Self-reliance/Investment means/Aid/ Knowledge/Small Income generating projects (SIGP)/Collective Effort, Resilience	Self-reliance, dignity and well-thought investment
Cycle III	<i>Kwivugurura/Imishinga/ Amahugurwa/ Kutwegera/Kugirwa inama/ Kureba kure/ Kwizerana / Ubufasha bw'Abasostiyali</i>	Renewal/Projects/Trainings/To approach us/ Advises/To think big/Trustworthiness/Help from Social Workers/	Social work empowering activities and the role of key actors in mitigating poverty
Cycle IV	<i>Kwigira/Ubumwe/Kwizerana/ Umuhate/Ubufatanye/Gukorana umurava/Urusobe rw'ibibazo/ Kwibumbira mu matsinda/ Ingamba zinyuranye/Imibereho Myiza</i>	Self-reliance/Unity/Trustworthiness/ Endurance/Collective work/Working enthusiastically/Complexity of problems/Self-help Groups/ Different strategies/Welbeing	Towards developmental social work: tireless collective work and betterment of PLHIV's lives and livelihoods
Cycle V	<i>Guhindura imikorere/Kwizigamira/ Imibereho nyiza/Kureba kure/ Amahugurwa/Agashya/ Imihigo/ Indangagaciro Nyarwanda/ Koperative zihamye</i>	Renewal/Saving/Well-being/ Think big/Trainings/ Innovation/ Performance contract/Rwandan Socio-cultural Values/Strong Cooperatives	Cooperative associations: good space for human flourishing and enhancement of the wellbeing of PLHIV

Source: Primary data, December 2018

4.2 Study Findings in the Context of PAR

After highlighting the data generated from the reconnaissance visits and from the preliminary sessions with ISWA and SWW, this section presents the key data findings arrived at. In practical terms, the research findings in this section are presented according to the research questions and according to the specific themes derived from data analysis as mentioned earlier.

4.2.1 Preliminary Contacts: Problematic Situation of PLHIV

The preliminary informal contacts and discussions held with different stakeholders as well as the observations conducted in PLHIV associations enabled the researcher to have an idea on the prevailing situation of PLHIV and their families in Huye district. The subsequent discussions that took place with the presidents of selected associations and the SWW helped to get some key clarifications. It was found that poverty is still a crucial problem that affects the livelihoods of PLHIV in Huye district. This scenario is well summarised below. Accordingly, the motivation to conduct a PAR study was perceived and ultimately, it became easy to understand the link between what was originally expected to be found (before PAR) and the actual results on the ground (after PAR).

Summary of the Situation of PLHIV associations in Huye

District prior to PAR

Since the establishment of RRP+ in 2003, there has been a proliferation of PLHIV associations across the country. By 2015, there were around 53 associations in Huye district. These associations have been working in different ways but overall, they have been benefiting from specific services provided by either public/private organisations or by civil society. Among these services was the provision of money to invest in small income-generating projects, different varieties of seeds, mills, cows or health insurance.

All along this time, all associations were progressively transformed into cooperatives in order to become self-reliant and able to strive for a sustainable well-being of their members and their families. Unfortunately, when the weaning period came, a good number of these associations demonstrated a sense of de-motivation and failed to function and to grow as expected; some of them were even dissolved. One of the common and crucial concerns these associations shared in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi was poverty.

Despite the advice and technical assistance from the RRP+ field officer and the social workers responsible for social affairs in their respective sectors or cells, the members of the associations seemed to be stagnant and, instead of moving forward, they were relying merely on subsistence means, mostly using the savings they had made. The owner-based management in the associations – even in those transformed already into cooperatives – was questionable and the situation was on a deteriorating trend.

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Source: Primary data, 2015

The narrative above demonstrates how members had become passive even if PLHIV had acknowledged the importance of working collectively. Members had lost the sense of ‘we-ness’ and ‘togetherness’ emphasised by the principles of cooperatives. In an attempt to find out whether the expressed passivity was a sign of incapacity, despair, or unwillingness/resistance, the researcher decided to conduct a PAR study in order to effectively know what the causes of this passivity were and to suggest strategies to improve the lives of PLHIV.

The Presidents of the Associations (PA) who were selected to participate in the study agreed to organise interventions under the guidance of the researcher in conjunction with the SWW within their respective associations. Throughout the preliminary discussions, the study participants provided inspiring and guiding information showing. This information revealed that, in Huye district, PLHIV were hitherto struggling to better their living conditions though, unfortunately, it appeared that they were neither materially stable nor psychologically happy. This is how some of the participants (ISWA/SWW) expressed their challenges and expectations:

Abanyamuryango ntibahwemye gukora ariko nta gihinduka gifatika (The members of the associations have been working tirelessly but their lives have not improved significantly); Iyo urebye usanga nta gashya mu mibereho yacu (Manifestly, there is no innovation in our way of living); Mu by’ukuri dukeneye kwivugurura tukirwanaho ariko dukeneye n’imfashanyo (Truly speaking, we have to be innovative in our method of working but

we need some assistance); Tugomba kumenya ko ak'imuhana kaza imvura ihise tukirwanaho kandi tugaharanira uburenganzira bwacu (There is need to be aware that we may struggle and respond to our problems before relying on external aid but we also have to fight for our rights). (ISWA from Ngoma, 2015).

The PLHIV in associations in Huye District are among the vulnerable groups that deserve particular attention because of their poverty situation. Not only are they closed to themselves but they need to be made aware of taking charge of their responsibility to exhibit their problems and we may help them change their situation. (SWW, October 2015) (Translation is mine)

In light of the above views from ISWA and SWW, it became necessary to deepen our understanding and knowledge on what had gone wrong and what should be done to change the situation for the better. It was thus decided to conduct an action-research whose main purpose was to examine how, through social work empowering mechanisms, PLHIV within associations could address the issue of poverty and uplift their living conditions sustainably?

The Association Presidents (PA) involved in this study were determined to participate voluntarily in this study. They intervened as Intermediary Social Work Actors (ISWA). It was agreed that they may be considered as assistant change agents who would help people in difficult conditions to become resilient and overcome the pains of poverty. Above all, they should actively take part in the problem-solving process with firm commitment of being at the forefront of the battle.

These preliminary contacts offered an opportunity for the researcher to brief the ISWA on the meaning of the concept of ‘social work’ which is translated in Kinyarwanda as ‘*Ivugururamibereho*’. In Kinyarwanda, this term simply means ‘a profession that strives to transform people’s livelihoods’. In addition, the members were given an opportunity to discuss the major problems confronting them, and to suggest what should be done to improve their conditions. The following table summarises the responses given to three key questions that guided a brainstorming session on problems faced by PLHIV in the district.

Table 5: Problems faced by PLHIV in Huye District and the potential solutions

<p>What are the crucial problems facing PLHIV organised within associations in Huye district and how should these problems be handled?</p>	<p>Poverty-stricken families; limited income generation; insufficient technical assistance; low adherence of men to associations; shunning attitudes by some community members; low skills in cooperative management. The main weapon in handling these problems is to develop cohesiveness and assist one another in different circumstances. However, people are not tenacious enough and members should be encouraged to join hands in this perspective.</p>
<p>What do you suggest to improve the livelihoods of the association members?</p>	<p>Revitalisation of existing associations; awareness of personal potentialities; capacity building and training in different domains such as associations/cooperatives, human rights and income-generating projects; reinforcing self-esteem and resilience; adaptability; self-reliance; collective action; inclusiveness; empowering activities at different levels.</p>

What is the role of PLHIV association members of in changing their situation and how should they collaborate with social work professionals and their allies?

Members of associations should participate in the problem-solving process by relying on what they already possess (building mostly on their strengths); they should evolve towards mind-set change and growth by working in partnership with social work professionals to promote change in both their lives and environment. In any case, they may own their concerns and in order to benefit from professionals'; they may work constantly in collaboration with them through well-trusted representatives.

Source: Preliminary data, 2015

In the subsequent discussions formally organised, the above data was analysed and a draft-working plan designed. Agreement was reached regarding the research process and the areas of intervention. Central themes (subject to readjustments according to the realities on the ground) were proposed. In the following subsections, the research findings are presented in accordance with the research questions.

4.2.2 Research Question 1:

What is the nature of poverty faced by PLHIV within associations in Huye and what is its impact on PLHIVs and their families?

4.2.2a Characteristics of poverty

A discussion on the concept of poverty was conducted with two categories of participants: ISWA and SWW respectively. The 13 ISWA consisted of the top leader, 11 females and 2 males aged between 31 and 60 years, the majority (7/13) being in the age range of 41-50. Only two of them had completed high school while others attended primary school or dropped out for different reasons. Among these, 9 were widows and 10 declared being breadwinners in their respective families. Each family was composed of 5 members on average.

Concerning the SWW, 5 out of 13 these were females while 8 were qualified social workers. In terms of education, there was one with a Master degree while the rest had a Bachelors degree either in social work, clinical psychology or administration. 2 of them had a working experience of three years or more.

Overall, it emerged from the FGD with the ISWA that poverty is associated with lack of material assets by associations' members. Examples of these assets included land, radio set, bicycle, etc. However, they referred also to specific psychosocial and emotional aspects of poverty, that render them incapable of participating fully in community life such as latent stigma, anxiety, stress and emotional support. Above all, they indicated their difficulty in generating income

as the most important factor that leads to their deprivation. Below is a list of material and psychosocial poverty indicators experienced by PLHIV in Huye district. It should be noted however that some of these have been overcome over time.

Table 6: Poverty indicators as revealed by the ISWA

Material indicators	Psychosocial indicators
Food insecurity	Powerlessness
Incapacity to cover health expenses	Isolation
Difficulty to provide school equipment to children	Discouragement
Lousy housing/shelter	Exclusion
Impossibility to get a remunerative job	Lack of trust in his/her potentialities
Low living wages	Low self-esteem
Difficulty to access all the required house wares	Indecent environment
	Dependence
	Suspicion
	Degradation

Source: Primary data, September 2015

The ISWA stressed that a poor person is one for whom it is impossible to generate a minimum revenue of 800 – 1000 RWF a day (24,000 – 3000 RWF a month). The category wage is extremely low by Rwandan standards. In the perspective of knowing whether the PLHIV organised within associations in Huye district were really poor and how they thought poverty should be addressed, their responses were mitigated. A summary in the table below illustrates the opinions by ISWA according to the specific responses generated (**YES – BUT – SO responses**). The responses are aligned to four sub-questions that guided the discussions.

Table 7: Opinions of the ISWA on poverty situation in PLHIV associations (September, 2015)

Responses Questions	YES	BUT	SO
With reference to the indicators you have revealed, do you really consider yourself to be poor?	It is quite difficult and next to impossible for most of our association members to meet all the fundamental needs	We do not feel overwhelmed	We are convinced that poverty is not an endless phenomenon.
Do you think you can fight and overcome poverty?	With firm commitment and relying on our strengths, nothing is impossible.	Individually, none can pretend to remove himself/herself easily out of poverty.	It is better to combine our efforts and work collectively to respond adequately to the demands of life.
Are you aware of your specific role in the process of fighting against poverty?	We may define our needs, recognise our potentialities and be at the forefront in meeting these needs.	An empowering intervention of professional stakeholders is of great importance in supporting our initiatives.	It is up to us to adapt to our environment and exploit the available resources, working in partnership with different stakeholders within the community.
Do you think the social work profession is useful in helping you to emerge from poverty?	Social workers are knowledgeable and skilful professionals who are/should be directly involved in the relief of our poverty.	Their intervention cannot succeed easily if they do not work in conjunction with other professionals and paraprofessionals who may be empowered progressively.	We shall rely upon collaboration to enable us to revitalise our associations, particularly through specific training we expect to benefit from you.

Source: Primary data, September 2015

In general, the ISWA stressed that the families of PLHIV members are poverty-stricken. However, they were convinced that they can address this situation. Two of them declared:

“All is possible, particularly considering the advice we have progressively received from you and from the SWW during this period of your research.”

“The most important thing to keep in mind is to trust in our capacities and to take ownership of our development within a decent community.”

The data above shows that the respondents made a resolve to revisit their ways of functioning and to mobilise their colleagues so that they could transform themselves towards understanding their potentialities and behave as active participants in suggesting solutions to their social problems, notably the poverty problem.

It should be noted that the ideas that emerged from the discussions held with the SWW were not far from those provided by the ISWA. In fact, the SWW indicated that poor people are those who are incapable of responding to immediate basic needs comprising food, water, shelter and clothing. However, they added that in an attempt to understand the poverty concept, one should take into consideration structural, political, psychosocial, environmental and organisational aspects.

In this perspective, one of the respondents declared:

Unsuitable environment engenders or worsens poverty; bad governance and community organisational difficulties put people in a desperate situation so that they are not likely to work to

combat poverty; self-devaluation leads to passivity and fatalism. PLHIV in Huye could suffer from any of these factors depending on their respective areas of residence, particularly those in rural areas. PLHIV need decidedly to be approached and made aware of the necessity to leave their cocoon so as to embrace the realities of everyday life and benefit from social protection opportunities as others do. We, as SWW, have a crucial role to play in this domain. (A Social worker, December 2015)

Accordingly, the ISWA and the SWW were of the same opinion that PLHIV in Huye district have been working in isolation ever since their associations were weaned off, especially when no more external aid was forthcoming. In fact, some associations collapsed. As a result, the members of the associations were unable to generate income to respond to their fundamental needs such as adequate diet, health care facilities, safe accommodation and acquisition of basic appliances. Fortunately, the co-researchers were confident that it was possible to revitalise the associations so as to address poverty afresh given that it was reported that most of the PLHIV manifested a sense of hope in the future.

4.2.2b PLHIV in Huye District and their client system

The following data from social work professionals show the nature of problems faced by the PLHIV in Huye before the intervention and the sense of hope expected in the future after the interventions:

I realise that we have been working in isolation. When I consider how participating in these discussions has helping me open up

horizons, I regret the past time we used to spend relying on external aid though needed to stimulate our activities. Indeed, it is important to be aware that as we forge ahead with life, this cannot be possible without having surviving mechanisms and these may result from our own work and the way we interact with our environment (An ISWA, March 2016).

Even though stigma and discrimination are not manifested publicly, they remain hidden in the minds of the community members. Stigma and discrimination are sometimes felt by the victims through latent negative attitudes. The revelations from the ISWA in this participatory research helped me to discover that we sometimes work superficially because we do not have time to listen carefully to our clients, particularly to PLHIV; we are not empathetic enough towards the latter and we have to fill in the gaps to advocate for them and to promote brokering activities (A social worker from SWW, March 2016).

The statements from ISWA and SWW above prove that the poverty situation experienced by PLHIV has been exacerbated by limited interactions with support networks, including the financial structures, local leaders, neighbourhoods and welfare intervening actors. The participants stated that the remedy for the poverty problem should draw on the involvement of PLHIV themselves and their support networks.

4.2.2c Summary

This section has dealt with the concept of poverty, its meaning and scope. Overall, poverty is understood as a multidimensional phenomenon that impacts negatively on the lives of the people. Besides, poverty puts its victims in a situation of inability while responding to their fundamental needs. In this section the exploration of the poverty situation among PLHIV organised within associations in Huye District revealed that poverty among these people encompasses a set of interrelated factors that range from economic, social, structural, environmental and organisational factors.

This section has also revealed that co-researchers recognised that they are part of the key intervening actors and their contribution should be reinforced. It has also been indicated that despite the complexity of the poverty problem, PLHIV operating in Huye District could tackle the problem of poverty and thrive in the future. For this to happen, there is a need for behavioural change and involvement of association members and support networks (families; local financial units; religious groups; neighbourhoods; etc.). In the following section, the strategies for success in the fight against poverty are described:

4.2.3 Research Question 2:

How can poverty be addressed and by who?

4.2.3a *Ak'imuhana kaza imvura ihise* : (It is better to be self-reliant because assistance from outside is unreliable and unpredictable)

The discussions conducted during the second wave between co-researchers drew on the experience acquired from the previous research and intervention activities. One of the emerging issues was a principle that originated from a Rwandese proverb: “*Ak'imuhana kaza imvura ihise*” translated in English as (It is better to be self-reliant because assistance from outside is unreliable and unpredictable). Indeed, it was specified that this saying came into use in different PLHIV associations and thereafter, it was adopted widely as a leitmotiv. This was well testified by two ISWA as follows:

Before embracing this research process, I used to act as a matter of formality just to comply with my responsibilities as a leader of my association without caring about the involvement of the members while solving their problems by relying first on their potentialities. I wish to testify that I have gained a lot from our discussions and I am myself convinced that I may work hard and strive for self-reliance. I tried to share the lessons learned with my colleagues and I decided to preach by example to influence them towards change. There is now a growing belief among the members that 'together they can overcome the problem of poverty and its ramifications. Members are now determined to intensify the kitchen gardens and reinforce the rotating savings and credit system. (ISWA from Dushyigikirane, Ruhashya, March 2016)

In my association too, I have come to realise that the new way of sensitising my colleagues is by openly showing my conviction that 'Ak'imuhana kaza imvura ihise' has stimulated them to influence each other to set up new strategies. Among the privileged strategies adopted are self-assistance and collective action within and beyond their respective localities on top of their common activities performed in the association. (ISWA, Maraba, 2016)

The major task for the ISWA was to correct what had gone wrong, particularly avoiding being passive. The ISWA sensitised the association members with whom they agreed to consolidate their strengths and be proud of their output generated from their own efforts, however small it was. Ultimately, they were convinced that the best way of addressing poverty was to combine their efforts and consolidate their solidarity and ensure that nobody regretted being exploited for the services offered.

The views given by SWW reinforced the thoughts of the ISWA that focused on the fact that tackling poverty is a process and not a one-day affair. According to them, the actions to respond to problems were not complicated as such. Instead, the PLHIV within associations were advised to engage in the process by using available resources. As expressed by one of the SWW, it was important to empower the PLHIV so that they could move progressively from a subsistence livelihood to self-reliance. He had this to say:

“Instead of giving a fish to someone, we may teach him/her how to catch it and in general we failed to do so in the past; it is now high time we work closely with PLHIV and I am gradually realising that the ISWA will help us fulfil this mission.” (A social worker, March 2016).

4.2.3b Endurance and Resilience towards Self-reliance

The ISWA approached the association members and visited their respective families to sensitise them about the necessity to be resilient and committed to own their lives. Fortunately, this led to a new and positive finding, namely that association members needed to reorganise themselves in order to cope with poverty at three levels: within the association, in their respective families and at individual level.

Given that the members were residing in rural and/or low-income urban areas, the main activities conducted in the 12 targeted associations consisted of agriculture, except two of them that were engaged in the businesses of fisheries and sewing respectively. Additionally, all the 12 associations managed to establish rotating savings and credit groups, commonly called '*Ibimina*'. The latter helped the members to respond directly to their family needs and/or initiate small income-generating projects. Overall, the association members preferred to promote informal practices but were reluctant to use local savings and credit funds or banks. This exposed them to very limited investment facilities to conduct adequate and sustainable businesses.

Besides, association members benefited from dividends distributed at the end of the year even if the amount received was very small. This was due to the low incomes generated in almost all the associations. They could get loans from their associations but again their capacities were restricted. In order to solve some of their urgent problems, they relied mostly on internal savings and on credit structures based

on regular contributions usually collected after weekly or monthly activities within their associations and/or from self-help groups initiated outside the associations. These informal structures were more privileged by the members for the simple reason that they were easily accessible but the period of reimbursement was also relatively friendly with a very low interest rate.

The members made a resolve not to be discouraged but to be resilient and withstand poverty-based problems. In this way, they very often, chose to engage in temporary activities such as daily casual jobs according to their capacities and opportunity offered (offering farm labour, laundry, working as porters on building sites, etc.) to supplement their financial means as a way of satisfying their fundamental needs in their respective families.

Overall, the inspiration that occurred from the collaboration between the co-researchers impacted on the associations' functioning. It should be noted that members developed a growing spirit in the associations which were viewed as channels to transform their living conditions as a result of the interventions by the ISWA and the wisdom of the SWW. The two categories of research participants revealed that in order to defeat poverty, it was necessary for associations' members to become aware of their role in the process. Besides, members were encouraged to have a purpose with a firm dedication to work in order to be self-reliant. The consensus of the team was that PLHIV should be committed to full participation in and contribution to the effective functioning of their associations. It was also crucial that a working framework with guiding principles be established. This was adopted

in all the associations. A proposal was also made to establish the principle of ‘performance contracts’ commonly known in Rwanda as *Imihigo*. This consisted of making a vow to work towards realising binding set targets willingly by the members themselves.

The contracts were conceived in form of memorisable short poems linked with the names of each association. This served to raise the level of consciousness among the members: the name being taken as the association’s ‘motto’ and the poem as the ‘membership pact’. The following two selected poems, from *Jyambere* association (the name *Jyambere* is literally translated as ‘move forward’) in Ngoma and *Duhaguruke* (translated as ‘Let us stand’) in Ruhashya can serve as examples to express the feelings and commitment of members under study towards combating poverty. *Jyambere*’s members emphasised the reconstruction of their association through reinforcing internal solidarity and the return of the members who had left. For *Duhaguruke*, they were preoccupied with the urge to become self-reliant.

Poem depicting the Performance contract of Jyambere members

GARUKA

Ngwino

Dukorane

Utubemo

Dufashanye

Tugirane inama

Ukomereze aho tugejeje

Uhorane natwe

Udukunde

Wubakire ku byo dufite

Ariko ku banyamuryango beza

Bakorana umurava igikorwa kikarangira vuba

Abantu nabo bakagira bati:

*“Abashyize hamwe bagakorana umurava bagera ku musaruro vuba
bagasezerera ubukene*

COME BACK

Come

Let us work together

Stay with us

Let us help each other

Let us advise each other

Join us and work from where we are

Stay with us

Love us

Build on what we have

For irreprouachable members

When they perform diligently their activities

The people all declare:

“People working collectively and enthusiastically achieve their objectives quickly and alleviate easily poverty.

Source: Jyambere Matyazo Association, December, 2015

Poem translating Duhaguruke’s members Imihigo

DUHAGURUKE

Twigire

Twubakire ku byo dufite

Twizamure tuzamurana

Twirinde gucika intege

Tujyane n'ibihe

LET US STAND

Let us be self-reliant

Let us build on what we have

Let us develop ourselves by helping one another

Let us avoid being discouraged

Let us adapt to current needs

Source: Duhaguruke Association, December 2015

The end of the second cycle was marked by the development of self-confidence and the determination to act as change agents in their associations, families and direct neighbourhoods. It was realised that the ISWA were impacting their colleagues positively and that with a gradual acquisition of specific skills, they should facilitate the transformation of the lives of their colleagues as stated by one of them in the following terms:

I feel really convinced that we are resourceful enough and together, we can move seriously towards sustainable development. We have always been waiting for unpredictable aid which was uncertain! Now let's stand and capitalise mostly on our strengths. It is important that we benefit from these learning activities and try to mobilise our colleagues to revitalise our associations. Investing in small income generating projects like kitchen gardens or rearing small domestic animals such as hens and/or rabbits is possible with our little means and inner potentialities". (ISWA, Duhaguruke, Ruhashya Sector, December 2015)

The emerging data from subsequent cycles, served as good prerequisite for in-depth discussions following the FGD and trainings organised on various issues. These included: project planning and management, conflict management, group facilitation, leadership and Rwanda socio-cultural values.

4.2.3c Summary

In this section, focus has been put on the work of co-researchers whose ideas, thoughts, field activities and expectations converged towards strategies of addressing poverty in the targeted PLHIV associations and the members' families. The main output was the change of behaviour on both sides. In effect, the ISWA and SWW indicated that there were some gaps identified in rendering services to the clients (PLHIV). They committed themselves to join hands through collaboration in order to bring about attitudinal change among the associations' members.

The actions taken by the two parties inspired the associations members who came to the realisation that effectively '*Ak'imuhana kaza imvura ihise*' (It is better to be self-reliant because assistance from outside is unreliable and unpredictable). As a result, they resolved to work cohesively and collectively in order to correct what had gone wrong. It was shown that the members of the associations benefited from the interventions. They decided to revitalise their associations and remain resilient with firm determination to shift from surviving to thriving and strive to achieve self-reliance. For this to happen, it emerged from the research team's activities that the bottom-up strategies and interventions from insiders are of greater importance in

deepening the understanding of the problem confronted by members and stimulating group dynamics by the people concerned.

4.2.4 Research Question 3:

What is the role of Social Welfare Workforce (SWW), the Intermediary Social Work Actors (ISWA) and particularly of the Associations' members in empowering PLHIV within their associations?

This section addresses the question of whether the respondents were aware of the role of SWW and ISWA in empowering PLHIV within their associations. The findings presented in this section emerged from the data collected over a period of one year through FGD, interventions by the ISWA as well as the meetings and participant observations during the visits and monitoring activities. In the latter case, the PLHIV expressed their feelings about the gains from their participation in this PAR.

4.2.4a Social Welfare Workforce in Rwanda

Globally, the Social Welfare Workforce, commonly synonymous with Social Service Workforce, refers to “a variety of workers – paid or unpaid, governmental or non-governmental – who staff the social service system and contribute to the care of vulnerable populations” (Better Care Network and Global Social Service Workforce Alliance, 2014, p. 50).

In the context of this study, it is important to note that despite the heterogeneity of its composition, the Social Welfare Workforce (SWW) connotes those ‘workers striving for empowerment, coping with problems and well-being of the people, particularly

the vulnerable; they fall under the framework of the international definition of social work. In this connection, the SWW in Rwanda are understood as a group of public or private servants who are commonly called '*Abasosiyali*'. They are responsible for social affairs in general. Other derivative terms are given to this category of workers such as Social and Economic Development Officers. This is a terminology used in local governance. They have a mission of helping people individually, within their families or local communities to improve their lives. In short, the needed care can be provided within the vicinity of the client.

In consideration of the above explanations, the arguments made in the following subdivisions and in this study as a whole are centred on the exploration of the role social work professionals even though some of the co-researchers may not be academically qualified in the domain.

4.2.4b Direct and Indirect Practice

Usually, social workers intervene in different settings and at different levels. In working with PLHIV, it was necessary to directly approach people individually or within their families and within their respective associations. This was done to provide counselling services, listening to them and discussing their desiderata, facilitating meetings, sensitising them and raising their conscience about the ways of revitalising the functioning of the associations. On the other hand, there were indirect activities that emphasised advocacy, brokering and research, particularly within the perspective of preventing the onset of poverty.

With reference to the explanations given about social work referred to in Kinyarwanda as '*Ivugururamibereho*' (translated in English as a profession aimed at transforming and improving the lives of the people), the ISWA shared their understanding of the profession by describing the role of social workers. They started by hailing the work done by social workers within associations and at the same time expressed their expectations for better performance.

Simply put, the ISWA defined social work as an activity striving to enhance people's lives, a job that is responsible for social affairs or a profession for those who care for the vulnerable people. Besides, they described social workers as people working in the domain of social affairs at different levels of governance (District, Sector, Cell). Others described social workers as those women and men commonly called '*Abavugururamibereho*' (in Kinyarwanda) who work and advocate for frightened individuals, families and communities; those who act as relievers, facilitators and educators who strive for the empowerment and betterment of all these categories of people with problems. In the data collected, their role and expectations of social work professionals are summarised in the following table:

Table 8: Role and expectations of social workers according to the ISWA

Role played by social workers so far	Expectations for better performance
Visiting our associations (4/13)	Approaching or visiting associations frequently (7/13)
Conducting some meetings in our associations (2/13)	Advising and training us in the domain of development, project management and bank transactions (8/13)
Counselling and providing advice in various domains (2/13)	Guiding us in the elaboration of small income generating projects (8/13)
Advocating for accessing and acquiring specific resources such as land (2/13)	Advocating for PLHIV's rights and facilitating their integration within the community. Influencing decision-makers in promoting inclusiveness and helping PLHIVs to benefit from diverse opportunities offered by the social welfare systems. They may advocate for building of a decent environment for PLHIVs and PINs on the whole (11/13).

Source: Primary Data, March 2016

When describing the role played by social workers in empowering associations' members, it appeared that ISWA expected more than they received from social work professionals. This showed that social work intervention towards PLHIV was limited and this minimised the chances of the latter to thrive while the risks of collapsing or remaining powerless increased.

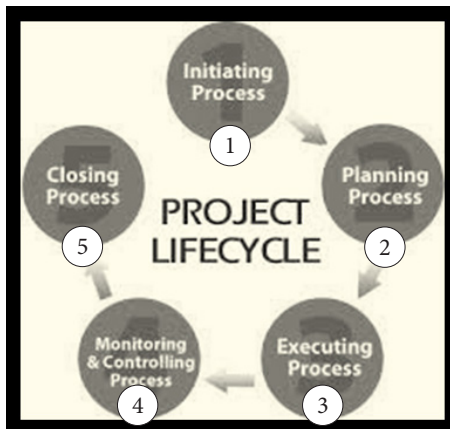
During FGD, SWW were solicited to double their effort

in making their contribution towards ‘facilitating, encouraging, stimulating, facilitating, mobilising and empowering’ PLHIV but also playing the same role for their clients in order to promote the attitude of inclusiveness. In this perspective, SWW acknowledged their unavailability and inability in responding appropriately to the demands of the PLHIV. Their reactions did not contradict the revelations from ISWA and they recognised the role of such intermediary people in helping their colleagues directly within the associations. On this point, two of the SWW declared:

There are many stakeholders involved in the field of social protection who seemingly do not care about improving the lives of PLHIV within associations in Huye district. It is common to consider that ‘a thorn in someone else’s flesh is not painful to extract (Agahwa kari ku wundi karahandurika) and thus, when we manifest very low empathetic attitudes towards PLHIV, we cannot adopt critical thinking and oppose structural, political, administrative or organisational discrepancies between our professional mission and the real work responsibilities” (A social worker, FGD with SWW, March 2016).

The work of ISWA is appreciable. Their influential role is undisputable; they know their colleagues very well and it is quite easy for them to calm them or to appease those in critical conditions. It is important not to continue imposing our expertise but instead, we should equip these intermediaries with fundamental skills that enable them to deter passivity among the associations’ members. (FGD with SWW, Marh 2016)

The third cycle lasted for a period of one year. It aimed to analyse the interim research results, particularly to assess the functioning of the associations as well as the initiation and maintenance of small income generating projects (SIGP), notably setting up kitchen gardens in the families. To facilitate the execution of the mentioned activities, some topics were explored and the respondents' responses were given. The topic on the project life cycle was developed and exposed. It focused on the both internal and external factors – that contribute to the success of an association or a cooperative. These include factors like participation, cohesion, information, capacity building and accountability. The following data was provided and technical support was also offered throughout the research and intervention processes.



Key:

1. Gutekereza umushinga
2. Gutegura umushinga
3. Gushyira umushinga mu bikorwa
4. Gusuzuma no gukurikirana imikorere y'umushinga
5. Gusoza umushinga

Source: Adapted from Orangescrum (n.d.)

Figure 7: Project life cycle (Ubuzima bw'Umushinga)

The ISWA were mainly equipped with specific skills in communication, listening, leadership, assessment and evaluation processes. They were given the mission of stimulating their colleagues to mobilise possible resources and initiate small income-generation projects (SIGP). It was recommended that they should work closely with association members and examine together the requirements for improving the functioning of the associations and the enhancement of their livelihoods as well as those of their families. From the specific discussions, there was an agreement on activities to be performed and on the modalities to execute the plans as shown in the following table:

Table 9: Activities and modalities for social work intervention in PLHIV associations

Main activities	Expected outcomes	Appreciation indicators	Basic skills	Approaches/ Methods to use
1. Awareness-raising and resilience strengthening	Dignity: development or reinforcement of values related to personal care, self-confidence and self-empowerment	Specific problems encountered and how they are dealt with personally; level of confidence in what the PLHIV do	Listening; Empathy; Effective communication.	Counselling; Family therapy; Meetings; FGD.
2. Mobilisation for collective action and poverty alleviation	Consolidation of sense of unity and full participation in the functioning of the association: values of 'Rwandeness'; conviviality; solidarity; tolerance; covenant 'Igihango' and cooperation	The way PLHIV help each other; mutual agreement to work for the association and collaboration with neighbours	Modelling interactions; Effective communication; leadership; Building trustworthy relationships.	Meetings; FGD; study tours; Family visits.

3. Information-Education-Communication (IEC) and training in various domains, particularly in the elaboration and management of SIGP	Awareness in the fundamental rights; social, economic and political empowerment; social integration and inclusion.	Benefits from social protection programmes; formation of and adherence to self-help groups; SIGP in place; access to resources; hope in the future; participation in community work activities.	Effective communication; Modelling interactions; Problem solving & solution building.	FGD; Meetings; Inter-associations visits.
4. Assessment; monitoring and evaluation	Adequate functioning of PLHIV associations; agreeable socio-economic conditions in PLHIV families	Attendance in planned activities/ meetings; level of productivity; assets in the family	Assess, evaluate the situation; identify resources.	Visits and participant observations; Meetings.
5. Advocacy and marketing	Justice towards PLHIV; openness of PLHIV.	Participation in heterogeneous socio-development programmes; visibility of associations' projects; celebration of achievements; sense of togetherness.	Link to needed resources.	Meetings; Visits to different stakeholders

Source: FGD with ISWA, March 2016

4.2.4c Efficacy and Outcomes of ISWA Interventions

During the one-year intervention, the ISWA conducted various activities, including home visits, participant observations, meetings, and training sessions in their respective associations. They managed to be in touch with the Health Centres Officers, the RRP+

field officer, Social Affairs Officers and local leaders at cell as well as sector levels. During home visits, focus was put on listening to the association members, assessing their relationships with relatives and neighbours, and observing the establishment of SIGP. Overall, the ISWA described the outcomes of their interventions as follows:

- (i) *There has been change of mind-set and the association members are convinced that they may work cohesively to advance their associations and address poverty progressively;*
- (ii) *Association members are convinced that joining local self-help groups is an added value;*
- (iii) *Association members are eager to effectively supplement what they gain from their associations by running small projects at family level so that they can respond more to their fundamental needs.*

The ISWA ensured that kitchen gardens were taken as models of SIGP in each family while all associations were recommended to help their members in responding to this demand. Throughout the *ad hoc* meetings and training sessions organised, the ISWA made the association members aware of their first responsibility of owning and revitalising their projects. The members were particularly stimulated to develop and strengthen internal relationships. They were also shown the importance of solving their conflicts amicably and always working collectively. Ultimately, the members were put in a situation where they could share their feelings and experiences openly and discuss their current conditions of life as well as their plans for the future. The ISWA ensured that there was a gradual change in behaviour among the associations' members as stated below by two of them:

Association's members are happy to have somebody who is committed to give advice and help them gain skills and knowledge so that they can work closely to improve their living conditions. Today, they made a resolve to meet regularly and to revitalise their associations; some members who had left have started coming back. More than ever before, they have agreed to work hand in hand for sustainable development. (ISWA, Abishyizehamwe, March 2017)

Association's members decided to meet once a week. They formed self-help groups through which they initiated savings and credit services. They also agreed to observe the values and principles of love, mutual visits, collective action and common understanding in all the activities undertaken. (ISWA, Twamagane ikibi, March 2017)

Overall, the services rendered during the one-year period following the intervention by ISWA produced a positive effect on the lives and livelihoods of PLHIV. This was well confirmed by the findings from the monitoring and evaluation activities conducted by the researcher and SWW. The field work findings revealed that there were tangible changes at individual, family and association levels. These included improvements in the areas of diet, acquisition of some house appliances and above all, the development of self-confidence and dignity.

4.2.4d PLHIV's Insights

In this study, the researcher decided to work with PLHIV as one of the categories of people faced with poverty. This was done in an attempt to put the efforts of PLHIV together to reshape their lives through a system of well-functioning associations. In the interest

of the client and in consideration of the principle that victims know their problems better than anyone else, special focus was put on the consciousness of the targeted associations' members to act as key actors in steering the fight against poverty by effectively controlling and owning their own destiny.

They contributed to the study as second participants and their input was shared either through the ISWA (Representatives of the associations' members as direct co-researchers) or during the monitoring field visits through meetings with the researcher to validate the information provided indirectly. About the role played by different stakes in their empowerment process, the compilation of the insights they shared is summarised as follows:

- (1) Social workers may be considered as key catalysts that should assist particularly PLHIV in Huye so that they can combat poverty and participate in the community with dignity. However, professional social workers – as well as their allies – are overwhelmed by different duties and do not approach the Associations' members on a regular time.
- (2) The ISWA (Intermediary Social Work Actors) are well placed to supplement the Social workers and to play the role of linkers and assistant enablers of People in Need (PIN). They may be considered as '*assistant enablers of people in difficult circumstances, encouraging them to exploit the resilient talents they have and to endure different hampering adversities with the firm engagement of being at the forefront of the battle*'.

(3) The strategy of using Intermediary social work actors helps to overcome the heavy burden of workload and administrative constraints inhibiting the SWW to respond appropriately to the clients' needs.

Overall, the associations' members appreciated the way they were working with the ISWA. Indeed it appeared that members in almost all the targeted associations considered the ISWA as key role players for their. They were described as apparently determined to intervene as volunteers for effective functioning of their associations and improvement of the members' living conditions within their neighbourhoods. They are definitely well placed to know the needs of the people within their respective environments and to mobilise easily these people for their full participation in the problem solving process. They are also supposed to be good connectors to various social development actors; in short they should be understood as collaborators of professional social workers who may work under the supervision of the latter by awakening, raising awareness and making the clients receptive of all kinds of empowering ingredients for effective participation in their own sustainable development. The only concern raised was to know if this will continue after this PhD project considering the way they had been working with their presidents before.

4.2.4e Summary

This section has dealt with the third research question on understanding the role of SWW and ISWA in empowering PLHIV in associations. The discussions and subsequent interventions conducted over a period of one year enabled the co-researchers to express their opinions and insights about the problem under investigation.

The SWW were presented as a group of intervening actors composed of people with different backgrounds but operating substantially in the framework of the social work profession. As for the ISWA, they participated in this study as intermediaries who acted as social work agents charged with influencing association members operating under the guidance of a joint-team composed of the researcher and SWW.

The data generated revealed that well-prepared ISWA are good social work messengers in their respective associations. The SWW acknowledged the existence of discrepancies between professionalism and the reality on the ground. They appreciated the role played by the ISWA after being equipped with fundamental skills like communication, listening, leadership and assessment skills. Positive effects resulting from the ISWA's actions were also recognised by the associations' members themselves. These consisted of initiating or strengthening SIGP, improving nutrition, acquiring some appliances and strengthening the savings and credit system.

Finally, it was found that approaching and working regularly with PLHIV in their respective settings was a good strategy that engaged them tirelessly in mitigating poverty. It was stressed that

apart from direct interventions, it was also important to broaden and intensify activities at macro-level in building a conducive environment. This point is developed in detail in the following section.

4.2.5 Research Question 4:

What social work approaches are suitable in mitigating poverty among PLHIV within associations in Huye District?

In generating answers to this research question, the co-researchers carefully discussed it in view of the lessons learned from the previous research cycles. The key lessons reiterated and emphasised the fact that poverty is a multidimensional and multi-sectoral phenomenon. Furthermore, the respondents were convinced that when people come together and are united, they are likely to cope positively with the adverse situations caused by poverty. With this in mind, the key concern was to know how to keep up the momentum and sustainably empower PLHIVs within associations in Huye district to help themselves and become self-reliant in the face of poverty.

4.2.5a Need for Comprehensive Solutions and a paradigm shift to Developmental Social Work

The fourth research cycle lasted three months and was started with two parallel FGD. The two parties centred their discussions on the most suitable ways of working with PLHIV in Huye and on a SWOT analysis to help enrich learning activities and plan for the last cycle. The co-researchers declared that this research created an opportunity for them to share their insights openly and to learn from each other. On

this particular occasion, they concurred with the opinion that the poverty problem among PLHIV in Huye required comprehensive solutions that take into account a paradigm shift from remedial to developmental social work.

The confrontation of the information gathered from both sides showed that ISWA and SWW recognised the importance of their respective contribution to individual, group and community empowerment as far as easing the pains poverty is concerned. Actually, it emerged from their revelations – as highlighted by their statements in the table below – that the problem of poverty among PLHIV within associations in Huye district should not be generalised. Instead, their solutions should be found in the broader context that calls for the inclusion of the concerned person (s) in the process.

Table 10 Requirements to succeed in Coping with Poverty according to ISWA and SWW

According to ISWA	According to SWW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be confident • Be in relationships with others • Be ready to work in group • Defend the common cause removing discrimination and stigma • Assist colleagues in danger • Be self-satisfied about becoming self-reliant • Rely on available resources • Have hope in the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage people to trust each other • Advocate and defend the rights of the PLHIV • Recognise the role of PLHIV in the problem-solving process • Influence community members and policy-makers on the potentialities of PLHIV • Link PLHIV with various systems in their environment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run small income-generating projects • Work collectively and strengthening solidarity • Know what happens to your neighbour and assist him/her when necessary • Promote self-help groups • Keep in touch with SWW to benefit from their guidance and inform them about association members needs • Benefit from good governance and not fear to expose our problems to concerned leaders • Be ambitious, realistic and innovative • Feel in the same boat with colleagues and endure before adversities • Keep always in mind that <i>‘Ak’imuhana kaza imvura ihise’</i> It is better to be self-reliant because assistance from outside is unreliable and unpredictable) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge the socio-political and structural oppressions where necessary • Approach PLHIV in their respective settings and advise them • Build on PLHIV’s willingness to take the lead in addressing poverty in their families • Manifest empathy towards them • Keep them informed about all opportunities, particularly the available resources and the social protection programmes • Make efforts to implement good welfare policies in place • Build a conducive environment for positive social functioning • Be adequately knowledgeable and skilful; particularly in intervening at micro, mezzo and macro levels • Strive for the advancement of the social work profession
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Source: Primary data, August 2018

On the basis of these statements above, but also with answers to probing questions asked and the data from the observations in the field, the researcher realised that the co-researchers were both eager to influence change in PLHIV families and associations. They were convinced that approaching and working closely with PLHIV was crucial to mobilise them to develop the spirit of togetherness and

collective action. It was therefore evident that the best advice towards overcoming the pains caused by poverty was through promoting a development culture and a development practice.

Beyond the indirect report from the ISWA and the SWW about the behavioural change of the associations' members, the latter expressed themselves their feelings about the importance of being physically approached and visited regularly. Indeed, during the monitoring visits in the field the PLHIV in associations showed to the researcher that they were really gaining a lot from interventions initiated during this PhD research. Some declarations are as follows:

- *It is amazing to see that there are people who think of us. The message you brought us since you started to work with us is comforting. Indeed we may understand that we have to work hard and to find solutions to our problems before waiting for external aid. (A member, Jyambere Association)*
- *We have been supported several times but I realise that we did not use the aid adequately. If we had been well skilled before, we should have exploited available resources and generated enough income. It is now up to us to unite efforts and to take advantage of opportunities that should be offered like such a technical assistance from you. There is no doubt that the message you bring us and the activities you propose us through our presidents will serve as a beacon in our daily life. (A member, Abishyizehamwe Association, Ngoma)*

What is important to note here is that the PLHIV in associations seem to have been

relying mostly on outside support without being assisted technically in a sense of how to run small income generating projects. The intervention from most of stakeholders including the SWW and leaders at different levels remain mostly limited on building protective environment through community-based approaches: community dialogue, behaviour change campaigns, public talks and advocacy but it is not often that they get consistent trainings and/or advices in their respective associations. In this perspective, different statements collected during the field are very revealing in terms of insights of the associations' members:

- *If we could meet the social workers very often in order to share with them our concerns.*
- *We need some material assistance like money for first investment.*
- *It is good that we are well helped these days to strengthen relationships and companionships among us but also to develop networking with local leaders, social work professionals and other stakeholders, particularly the RRP+ Huye but also RRP+ headquarters in Kigali.*
- *In our association, we decided to meet once a week. We formed self-help groups through which we initiated saving and credit service. We agreed to observe the values and principles of love, mutual visits, collective action and common understanding in all activities we undertake.*
- *Definitely, we may rely first on our potentialities and seek help on the basis of concrete realizations.*

Overall, it was realised that targeted PLHIV in HD are faced with psychosocial problems

such as low level of morale and lack of persistent resiliency that limit them to fulfil the requisite material needs. However, they recognised firmly that their associations are real amplifiers of individual potentialities. Findings show that there is need of promoting caring relationships and building on PLHIV's strengths.

4.2.5b Local and Cultural-Based Empowerment and Productive Collective Action

Throughout the research process, the ISWA intervened at micro, mezzo and macro levels under the guidance of the researcher and the SWW. These methods used usually overlapped in dealing adequately with different kinds of problems. They worked with associations' members individually, in families or in their associations though without ignoring a broader environment where they resided to embrace different aspects of life: educational, social, spiritual, economic and political aspects. The ISWA revealed that they very often resorted to Rwanda's cultural values that helped members to work peacefully and overcome challenges in daily life. Thus, the principles of solidarity, mutual assistance and self-help were kept while at the same time modern systems were also discussed and suggested to the members. Along with their interventions, local practices were concurrently used with modern approaches to mobilise the associations' members for collective action. For example, the members were encouraged to deposit at UMURENGE SACCO (Local Savings and Credit Cooperative at Sector level) a

portion of their money collected on weekly basis while the other part was directly given to those who requested for a loan against a little interest rate (2%).

The ISWA emphasised that, throughout the training sessions, they started an initiative of consolidating traditional values that draw on internal cohesiveness in undertaking any collective activity. Thus, the idea of adopting a common and typical Rwandan behaviour was disseminated to all targeted associations. It was expressed by observing six key Kinyarwanda traditional values that start with the root ‘Kwi’: (i) **Kwiyizera** (Self-confidence); (ii) **Kwizerana** (Trustworthiness); (iii) **Kwibonanamo** (Mutual intimacy); (iv) **Kwihanganirana** (Tolerance); (v) **Kwigomwa** (Unselfishness); and (vi) **Kwitanga** (Bravery). These core values were abbreviated thereafter referred to as ‘**6Ks**’ taken as the associations’ leitmotiv whose frequent use would enable the members to understand why and how to live and work with others. The ISWA testified that behaviour change was noticed among the associations’ members during the intervention processes that were conducted with confidence and dedication to work together in unity, openness and dignity. In practical terms, the ISWA reported some words of praise from associations’ members relating to the benefits of collective action as follows:

Benefits of Collective Action by PLHIV as reported by ISWA

- Together we can overcome various problems.
- Alone you can cultivate land for a week but if you are two, three or five for example, this can take only one day. Uniting efforts and working with others is really crucial.

- We have always been told that collective action is really rewarding as it brings people together in order to help one other through performing concrete material activities but also through psychosocial and spiritual support. It has been a very good opportunity because we have benefited from these training sessions offered to our representatives who are manifestly inspiring and making us aware of our responsibility towards our own projects; really the future is in our hands. Let us build on our collaboration and wherever we are (in our associations, our families or in the community on the whole), let us join our efforts as recommended by the government and let us strengthen our ties so that we can accomplish much more than we did in the past: “*Dufatane urunana kuko inkingi imwe ntigera inzu*” (Let us strive for everlasting solidarity as one pillar cannot make a house)”).

Source: Primary data, May 2018

Overall, the above feelings on collective action show that the idea of working in organised groups or associations of people who share the same interests and the value of self-reliance is very important. Furthermore, awareness-raising at grassroots should also be strengthened as recommended that locally-based self-help groups and home-grown solutions (*Girinka, Ubudehe, etc.*) should be promoted.

4.2.5c Summary

At the end of the fourth research cycle, the findings showed that coping properly with poverty among PLHIV in Huye presupposes that PLHIV should approach poverty from different angles of attack, within the framework of comprehensive and integrated approaches that stress cultural-based values. The study also revealed that ISWA and SWW are key contributors who through close collaboration can lead to tangible results. As key contributors, they declared that in order to succeed, the most important thing to keep in mind is to raise the members' awareness about lifting themselves and their families out of poverty.

In this perspective, the members were enabled to draw on their strengths, take collective action, keep resilient and strive for self-reliance. For this to happen and in order to sustainably improve the livelihoods of PIN, there is a need for a paradigm shift from remedial to developmental social work practice. In order to implement this shift, Rwandan local values should be embedded within the social welfare policies in place.

4.2.6 Research Question 5: What was Done and What Should be Done to Achieve Sustainable Social Transformation?

In answering this question, reference was made to the activities of the last research cycle that lasted one year. Its main orientation was to meditate on the plan to be executed taking into consideration the best practices derived from the previous activities. Focus was put on the nature of the social functioning and revitalisation of the associations, keeping in mind that member participation and responsibility constituted a *sine qua non* condition for success in all activities.

The intervention activities were conducted concurrently with assessment and regular monitoring in order to determine the factors responsible for the success or failure of PLHIV. Below are the findings obtained which are highlighted under two key themes that emerged from the data collected. They are supplemented by the information generated during the exit FGD in May 2018 and 29 August 2018, respectively.

4.2.6a Revitalising Cooperative Associations

The activities of the fifth and last research cycle were planned collaboratively. They focused on enhancing the capacities of the association members as well as enhancing their resilience so that they could act in solidarity to undertake business with the ultimate objective of achieving self-reliance sustainably. Throughout the process, the ISWA made a resolve to intervene with a firm ambition to intensify empowerment activities and revitalise cooperative associations to lead to progress for better livelihoods of the PLHIV. At the same time, the SWW also participated in the supervision exercise and provided support in terms of advice that was generated from the research.

The findings obtained indicated that a positive change occurred as a result of the activities performed as testified by the following revelations from the ISWA:

- *Abanyamuryango bishimiye imikorere ivuguruye turimo kubashishikariza. Barumva ko ari ngombwa kwigira. Tugomba rero gukomeza iyi nzira amashyirahamwe yacu agakora uko bikwiye: Association members appreciate the introduced*

On the whole, the ISWA declared that the association members regretted the time they had previously spent behaving as passive beneficiaries and relying mostly on external aid leaving many of their potentialities untapped. Hence, they agreed to work hard and increase production while thinking of strategies to overcome all adversities faced and how to improve their lives sustainably.

Relating to poverty, the ISWA revealed that there was a long way to go in combating it but gradually it would be possible to win the war. The findings also revealed that it is important to be equipped with the right tools. Among the tools mentioned were: the possession of specific skills in designing income generating projects, assessing and managing resources, linking both formal and informal education, monitoring the progress and planning the future. In their exact words, two of the ISWA declared:

- *Kurwanya ubukene si igikorwa cy'umunsi umwe; ni urugendo rurerure rusaba umuhate n'ingamba ziboneye. Dufite uruhare runini mu kubyumvisha abanyamuryango bityo rero kubigeraho bisaba ko duhugurwa bihagije: Combating poverty is not a one-day activity; it is a long process that requires endurance and specific strategies. We have a big role to play in making the association members aware of this and thus, we should be continuously well prepared. (ISWA, Dushyigikirane, 2018)*
- *Abanyamuryango turaziranye bihagije, biroroshye kumenya intege nke za buri wese. Gusa birasaba imbaraga nyinshi mu guhindura imyumvire yabo ko ntacyo barenza ku igeno ry'Imana. Tugomba gukora ibishoboka tukavugurura imibereho yacu*

dushingiye ku bumenyi n'ubushobozi tuvoma muri iyi gahunda, cyane cyane twibanda ku mahugurwa duhabwa: Association members know each other, it is easy to discover everybody's weaknesses. However, it is very demanding to change their fatalistic attitudes that nothing can be done against God's plans. We may do our best and contribute to the improvement of our living conditions, drawing on the knowledge and capacities we have gained, particularly from the training by ToTs. (ISWA, Abatiheba, 2018)

In view of the above, the ISWA noted that throughout the interventions they conducted, the most persistent request from associations' members was the need for more material and psychosocial support. Specifically, they stressed that the management of and access to material resources (e.g. benefiting from VUP, Girinka or Ubudehe Programme) was still problematic while their personal relationships with community members seemed to be questionable. It was also revealed that the involvement of PLHIV in the development process was a critical issue because in the past, they were very often despised or ignored, arguing that they lacked the capacity to run some specific projects, especially in agriculture.

The findings from ISWA revealed that association members complained of receiving limited interactions from government and SWW. This implies that their recognition in participating in the development process was questionable. However, ISWA were delighted about their success in helping their colleagues in a number of areas such as consciousness raising, developing relationships and

companionships but also through networking with local leaders, social work professionals and other stakeholders, particularly RRP+ in Huye and RRP+ in Kigali.

The study revealed that the interventions were of invaluable importance because they renewed their associations and prepared them towards sustainable development. By consensus, this is what the ISWA proudly said:

“We are respected and considered as advisers, our colleagues in associations consult us about different problems and we are now consulted to intervene as advocates, brokers and enablers.”
We have resolved to empower our colleagues and to mitigate poverty”. (ISWA, 2018)

The information gathered during the exit FGD with the stakeholders involved in this study confirmed the revelations made by ISWA on their achievements throughout the intervention process. The participants in FGD said that the intervention led to improvement in the socio-economic, nutritional and health domains, and in strengthening savings and credit schemes as well as promoting kitchen gardens. However, it was realised that professional social work practitioners, their allies, and local leaders were not always at their disposal in case they were needed for urgent problems. Very interestingly, the empowered ISWA intensified their interactions with SWW through telephone calls and this served as a good strategy for regular communication with professionals. This provided quick and timely advice for support thereby removing the ivory tower mentality previously held.

4.2.6b Evidence-based Practice: In Favour of PAR

The relevance of PAR in this study has been shown in the previous sections. However, it is important to underscore the importance of this methodology in helping to have an in-depth understanding of the situation prevailing among PLHIV associations in Huye district. For all practical purposes, the participants in this study privileged a bottom-up collaboration that permitted to obtain original information. One team of researchers composed of ISWA was embedded directly in the targeted settings while the other team was in regular touch with PLHIV making regular follow-up and monitoring.

The findings of this study showed that ISWA did a great job by providing space to association members to speak, and express their concerns and views. The ISWA also deepened their understanding about the prevailing situation in associations and in turn, discovered their own potentialities in helping their colleagues to share objective information with the researcher and the SWW. The more they progressively attended these research activities, the more they changed their mind-set, behaviour and strategies for the future. In short, they resolved to change their methods of work by influencing their colleagues to unite for a common cause of alleviating poverty and improving their living conditions. One of the ISWA expressed this change in behaviour in the following terms:

Before these activities we undertook with you, we were dominated by fatalistic attitudes towards our situation; we were living on a daily basis thinking that at one time or another, life

will come to an end. Thus for most of us, nobody had courage to invest in different businesses and we lacked enthusiasm in our associations. Today, we are convinced that we are able to strengthen and exploit our associations to initiate some small projects on our own, particularly, on family basis and this could help us get some supplementary products for survival; it is in this sense that we are now promoting kitchen gardens in our respective families (ISWA, Dushyigikirane Association, Rusatira, 2018).

The above statements show that after intervention by social work professionals, it was no longer business as usual while working with PLHIV. The approach of the PLHIV and social work professionals changed in terms of regular contacts and effective participation in the problem-solving process. This was strategically made possible through the specific social work empowerment activities that helped to sensitise PLHIV. These activities included training, family visits and group counselling.

During field visits, it was noticed that nothing extraordinary was done to achieve attitudinal transformation apart from regular consultations that sensitised the ISWA and associations' members to become aware of their strengths. Another factor was the existence of potential resources within their environments (family, neighbours, networks, community, culture, information and knowledge, material resources, etc.). In other words, success drew particularly on the involvement of the ISWA and PLHIV in the research-action process. This prompted the ordinary associations' members to change their

mind-set and to adapt to their surroundings. Participants in the study including the associations' members themselves expressed their appreciation as follows:

- *Every time you came to visit us, our neighbours were curious to know what was happening; this provided an opportunity for us to tell them that we were doing with a university partner who was dedicated to provide us with regularly training through our President in running small businesses. In addition, your visits encouraged us to open up and overcome fear and be able to present our concerns to local authorities. (An ordinary association's member, Abatiheba Association, Maraba, 2018)*
- *By working with you, we are optimistic and we became convinced that we can work and transform our lives. We can shift from powerlessness to powerfulness, what is important is to know us that we may combat fear and act always through our associations to claim our rights. (An Association member, Tubeho, Karama, 2018)*
- *It was not usual for members to sit down and discuss their problems in detail. After I challenged them about our silence on the question of depriving us of our land arbitrarily, we wrote an official letter to the Executive Secretary and our problem will be discussed in the Sector Council very soon. We are convinced that we are going to defend our rights. (An ISWA, Abakundimana Association, Huye, 2018)*
- *Collaborating particularly with PLHIV association's members through the ISWA has helped me understand their real concerns;*

in fact, they have many things in common with other vulnerable groups but still, they should be listened to in their uniqueness so that they could give their ideas and suggest the projects befitting their needs. I do recognise that sometimes, we tend to be neutral before problems of particular groups due to the general orientation policy to consider different people under the same category of 'vulnerable people' and, among them, to serve those considered to be suffering most. Truly speaking, you did great thing to enrol us in this research process. As a result of your intervention as our mentor, I personally have managed to make a self-evaluation and found that social workers and SWW need to rethink our way of working by combining theory and practice. (A social work officer in local administration, 2018)

From the above testimonies, it is possible to draw some lessons related to the contribution of PAR in facilitating social work interventions, the invaluable role of ISWA in assisting social work professionals and the necessity to promote a reality-based social work practice. It should be noted that the work performed during this one-year period coupled with the work done during the three-year empirical PAR study that coined a five-word leitmotiv of - 'think-reflect, react-act, reflect' - provided an opportunity to explore the real contribution of the young social work profession in Rwanda in uplifting the lives of the people from being poor to thriving.

4.2.6c Revelations from the Associations' Members and Suggestions for better Future

Throughout the PAR process, it was very important to know how the message given was transmitted to the associations' members and what the level of attendance during the training or the meetings sessions was. For this, a regular supervision of the ISWA and monitoring activities were organised. This served as a good mechanism to capture information from the associations' members (by taking notes or recording some information from discussions on various themes, participatory observations). Overall, the revelations from the associations' members are summarised as follows:

- People stood up and engaged themselves to avoid isolation;
- People were determined to attend regularly common activities and related initiatives;
- Selection and determination of the gathering's place by the members themselves;
- Extension of working hours in the association to get time for trainings and exchange of views instead of separating abruptly;
- Return of members who had left for diverse reasons;
- People in a same neighbourhood resolved to assist each other in any difficult circumstance (sickness; sudden food crisis; etc.);
- Auto-assistance in gathering transport fee to the nearest Health Centre (HC) for collection of ARV medicines;
- Mutual support in case of incapacity to respond to the associations' obligations: possibility of delegation (representation by the

partner or any other relative for the accomplishment of common activities) and tolerance in the face of absences for reasonable motives, particularly in case of sickness;

- Systematic initiation and reinforcement of kitchen garden projects;
- Adoption of the savings and credit system and opening of accounts in local banks (BPR or Umurenge SACCO);

It is important to note that these achievements were possible because of:

- Behaviour change among the trainers (ISWA) themselves;
- Dedication of the ISWA who, with the trust invested in them, acted as real ‘opinion leaders’;
- Regular information about the status of the associations’ members;
- Inclusive activities organised regularly in the community, very often in conjunction with the researcher, for relationships building;
- Advocacy at different levels for the promotion of PLHIV rights;
- Spiritual convictions.

In terms of revitalisation and better functioning of their associations, the members highlighted the following prerequisites:

- To reinforce the spirit of unity and diversity.
- To engage fully in the problem-solving process.
- To respect the rules governing the functioning of the association with specific sanctions in case of deviance.
- To recognise personal strengths and the associations’ potentialities.

- To adhere to the fundamental social values with specific attention to solidarity, integrity and work.
- To commit to continuously build togetherness and defend the association interests.

4.2.6d Summary

Guided by Research question 5 of this study on what should be done to enhance the wellbeing of PLHIV organised within cooperative associations in Huye district, the research team sought to intensify their intervention activities and suggest ways of enabling PLHIV to cope with poverty. Much attention and focus were put on how PLHIV function socially and how they should be empowered to consolidate their associations. It was also essential to explore the role of the concerned stakeholders with the aim of linking them up with the associations' members.

The findings of this study revealed that cooperative associations offer a conducive environment for social work practice. The co-researchers attested that through associations, it was easy to mobilise people and transmit information to them using various methods. In this framework, the ISWA and SWW collaborated smoothly for effective empowerment and development of talents by the associations' members. It appeared, however, that there were many missing links as declared by the ISWA and SWW professionals. This was expressed by one social worker as follows:

It is really useful to have intermediaries who should intervene from within because it is evident that we, as professionals, are not

capable of being nearer our clients as often as needed. Working with ISWA seems to be very fruitful; they are well positioned to know what is happening in the lives of their colleagues and so, they can report objectively to us for any needed expertise. However, they seem not to be well equipped with fundamental sophisticated knowledge and skills; on our side we need to confront what we learned in classroom with reality on the ground. Thus we should be flexible and adopt this strategy after this work with the university researcher. (A social worker, 2018)

Finally, it emerged from the findings of this study that the poor PLHIV have to be at the forefront in changing their destiny by uplifting their lives. However, they cannot succeed alone because they need assistance from the surrounding support systems. It is in this perspective that co-researchers adopt the ‘Me-We-Them’ analytical orientation that should promote the level of involvement of the individual person living with HIV (Me), his/her association (We) and other stakeholders/support systems in the environment (THEM: family, health centre, neighbours, community, etc.) in the problem solving process.

4.2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the presentation of the data collected using the PAR methodology over three years in 12 PLHIV cooperative associations in Huye district. At the beginning of the research, the associations’ members were found in a pathetic situation, having been prone to the aid-dependency syndrome. Although in the literature associations have been praised as institutions that could tap the potentialities of its members, too much passivity in Rwanda’s

PLHIV associations was noted and needed to be corrected.

While undertaking this research, the researcher aimed to work closely with the targeted associations and strive to reinvigorate them through empowerment of its members. Thus, the researcher envisaged examining the effects of social work empowering activities on PLHIV and their families by responding to the following general question: **“What is the role of social work in empowering PLHIVs and their families to emerge from poverty in Huye district”?**

By drawing on iterative approaches nurtured by specific cyclical activities, the researcher set out with the aim of exploring and understanding the complex phenomenon of poverty among PLHIV organised within associations under the auspices of the Rwanda Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (RRP+) in Huye district. The study aimed to discover the factors that hindered the improvement of living conditions among PLHIV and to suggest coping strategies in the fight against poverty.

Overall, the findings of this study revealed that the PLHIV associations' members under investigation earned an average daily wage that varied between 800 and 1000 Rwandan Francs a day, putting their families in a situation of abject poverty and therefore experiencing survival problems. Besides, most of the family members were deprived of basic appliances used in homes. Nonetheless, with their involvement in the PAR process, they benefited from various activities that raised their awareness and pushed them in a reverse direction. As a result of regular trainings, visits and monitoring by intermediary social work actors (ISWA), PLHIV were encouraged

to work closely in their associations to run complementary small projects like kitchen gardens in their respective families or in the neighbourhood in conjunction with other community members, relying on a system of rotational savings and credit scheme based on self-help projects.

It was found that PLHIV members had previously lacked advice and this was associated with lack of regular interventions from social work professionals that is to say, a group of social work practitioners who, more often than not, are overloaded with work and/or are stuck in bureaucratic processes which greatly impact on their ability to address the needs of PLHIV. In the face of this challenge, the findings of this experiential PAR study revealed that by working with social work intermediaries (ISWA), it was possible for the social work practitioners to fulfil their mandate, namely enhancing people's lives and livelihoods as well as creating a positive social change.

In this context, it was found that ISWA, gradually prepared and transmitted social work messages to their respective associations; they played a great role in empowering their colleagues and managed to bring about change through changing people's attitudes. Ultimately, the PLHIV associations' members got convinced that '*Ak'imuhana kaza imvura ihise*' (It is better to be self-reliant because assistance from outside is unreliable and unpredictable) and that addressing poverty adequately presupposes that people should rely on their strengths and strive for self-reliance instead of yearning for external aid.

Although it was quite impossible for this study to handle all PLHIV concerns in this PAR study, it has been proved, with evidence

from the data collected, that cooperative associations offer a conducive environment for social work practice in the quest to improve poor people's livelihoods for sustainability. The co-researchers stressed that through associations, it was possible to address poverty adequately among PLHIV though in order to achieve real success, members should be made aware of their roles and responsibilities in owning their problems. However, this does not mean that PLHIV should exclusively participate in the resolution of their problems. Instead, a joint support and a contribution of support systems is also crucial (family, health centres, community, local funding units, etc.). At the end of this research, there was hope that continuous change in the targeted associations should be adopted by the members. At the same time, SWW should be determined to work closely with ISWA to embrace developmental approaches using the PAR methodology.

4.3 Lessons learned about the Use of PAR

4.3.1 Importance and Outcome of PAR

For all intents and purposes, PAR stimulated the involvement of all parties in the process of identifying concerns, analysing research achievements and taking action on the findings of the research. All this, in the interest of bettering the lives of marginalised people [or the PLHIV or PIN in general] (Florczak, 2016, p. 13). The study provided a good opportunity to learn from each other and adapt to the circumstances more than ever before. It is important to note that listening to and hearing from the ISWA helped to understand the limitations of PLHIV in decision making or initiating business. Ultimately, it was possible to show and discuss with them the ways

of handling or removing such obstructions. In turn, they realised progressively that by enduring the pain of poverty, association members can go a long way in changing their situation through collective action. They became convinced with pride that putting the considerations of self-respect and dignity, first and foremost, was the key towards success. With the use of PAR, they achieved a certain degree of personal and collective empowerment that resulted from various iterative activities.

In concrete terms, the ISWA expressed similar feelings like those manifested by the poor people elsewhere in the literature. For instance, in a study conducted in South Africa, rural women got empowered as a result of being involved with open participation and collaboration. They reported “being more confident, able to participate actively in group discussions and being able to interact with strangers and people in authority” (Green & Nieman, 2003, p. 162). In the current study, PLHIV also benefited a lot from the open collaboration with the SWW throughout the PAR process.

As a matter of fact, they got enough guidance and became aware that they could influence change and help their colleagues revitalise weak associations. Thus, they became good messengers in their respective associations. The members revived and reinforced the sense of mutual support and initiated multiple small income generating projects (SIGP) from rotating savings and credit structures. Beyond association activities, members initiated ‘kitchen gardens’ (*akarima k’igikoni*) and small-animal rearing projects (rabbits, poultry, etc.) within their families. In fact, through the development of social

networks, many adhered progressively to the existing self-help groups in their respective neighbourhoods.

One thing is certain. PAR permitted ISWA to build capacity and contribute to innovation in social work practice through associations. In effect, they did their best to continuously empower association members, by relying every time on the researcher's guidelines in collaboration with the SWW on the ground. It was amazing to see how association members attended the convened meetings voluntarily and enthusiastically. Many of these members participated actively in weekly or monthly activities of the associations. The ISWA told the researcher that they were also surprised to see how members responded to invitations on regular basis and were deeply interested in benefiting from the messages conveyed by the researcher. Actually, they did all this without thinking of any particular material benefit/aid as done previously. Very interestingly, they adopted the principle of 'saving for safe life'. According to this principle, what mattered was not the amount saved, but the spirit in which the savings were done. They realised that it was possible to initiate or revitalise small income-generating projects on their own. During the field visits, one of them had this to say:

Gukorana nawe byatumye duha agaciro kuzigama no kugurizanya. Ubu dufite uturima tw'igikoni ndetse buri wese ashobora korora itungo rigufi nta ngorane. Twasobanukiwe ko koko ak'imuhana kaza imvura ihise." [Working with you has helped us understand the importance of the savings and credit system. Most of us now have kitchen gardens and everybody can

easily rear small domestic animals. We are really convinced that external aid comes after rain showers] (ISWA, Maraba, 2018).
(Translation is mine)

It emerged from the interactions with SWW that the latter were not frequently available to adequately attend to the needs of the PLHIV. As for social workers in particular, this was very often, as it is found in other different countries, due to “high caseloads and unacceptable levels of bureaucracy” (Hardwick, Smith & Worlsey, 2016, p. 345). AS a result of PAR, it was easy to discover some hidden causes of the absence of practitioners from the ground, particularly in offering direct intervention services. In the literature, these interventions serve and shape professionals “at the intersection of classroom learning, field training and professional socialisation”. (Larkin, 2018, p. 3)

In terms of professional socialisation, it was also apparent that social workers were faced with many social, economic or political limitations or oppression. In which case therefore, they decided to act sometimes timidly or chose to remain neutral by complying only with the rules in place. Very appreciably, the participants in this study showed that they had learned a lot in the intervention process using PAR, especially through collaboration with the ISWA. The latter provided ample information about the real needs and perceptions of PLHIV regarding the social protection system in place. They expressed the need to receive continuous training and to cooperate with other stakeholders working in the social welfare domain. It was also found that there were some aspects usually neglected or ignored

because of lack of specific knowledge and skills (knowledge of different aspects of poverty, capacity to manage public participation, principle of policy analysis, smart political and cultural engagement, etc.). The participants recognised the big importance of involving the specialised people or those people in need (PIN) in the problem-solving process. It is in this sense that they appreciated the role of ISWA in conveying social work messages to their colleagues in associations. This was coupled with the regular feedback tabled for discussion for professional judgement, monitoring and improvement.

It should be noted here that the ISWA did not replace the social worker. On the contrary, what they did was to ‘sow the seed’ provided by the social worker, to nurture the ‘plant’ using ‘manure’ provided once again by the social worker while the latter was expected to control the ‘growth’ process and the final ‘outcome’. This means therefore that the social worker (SWW) and the researcher progressively empowered the association members by enabling ISWA to guide or train their colleagues in turn.

It was the duty of the researcher together with the SWW to make a continuous follow-up and to know what was happening and the outcome of the intervention. This made it possible to measure the level of empowerment attained and to determine the way forward. Overall, and as declared by one of the social workers at the end of the research, the benefits of collaborative research were stated in clear and palpable terms as follows:

This collaborative research revealed that social work practice implies a continuous learning and mostly learning from the

clients. Frankly speaking, there is an ongoing work to accomplish to respond effectively to our professional mission: uplifting the lives of the deprived people like the PLHIV and this will be possible with the full participation of the latter. (Social worker from a Health Centre, 2018)

In this context, there is ample evidence to show that PAR is a useful methodology in social work practice because it helped to get a better understanding of the research questions and verify the initial assumptions. As the research privileged iterative process approaches, it was indeed possible to readjust the questions by incorporating ideas from the participants at any given stage. The responses obtained from the research confirmed the idea that social workers are endowed with the potential to empower PLHIV. However, to achieve sustainable results, they need to find new intervention strategies and shift effectively to real evidence-based practice. In this endeavour, although the use of PAR can play a great role, its achievements may not be as automatic as expected. Even if PAR enjoys a significant degree of indisputable strengths, at the same time, it presents different challenges to deal with as shown in the following subsection.

4.3.2 Challenges of PAR

It has been demonstrated from the literature and the findings of the current study that PAR plays a big role in empowering PLHIV through collaboration with researchers and social work practitioners. From the same sources, it also appeared that participatory researchers should be careful because there are different challenges to take into consideration while using the PAR methodology. The most reflected

challenges reported in the literature relate to the following: the nomenclature around PAR, the egalitarian stance and the issue of power as well as the scientific legitimacy or recognition by other researchers. In the first instance, MacDonald (2012) states that:

Although PAR has a number of strengths, it also presents a number of challenges for the researcher and participants. The first challenge relates to the diversity in meanings of PAR, and the interchangeable use of terms such as 'action research', 'PAR', and 'participatory research'. This may be confusing for novice researchers and others first learning this type of research approach. (p. 40)

It is therefore imperative for PAR users to act meticulously and ensure that there is full engagement of people concerned regarding the problem under study. It should be noted that PAR is not a mere down-up methodology or even a project initiated by outsiders or a data gathering method guided by a pre-conceived framework under which informants are considered as objects and not as full participants.

In the literature, the criticism of power imbalance levelled against PAR has been raised, arguing that it is quite difficult, even impossible, to respect the PAR principle of equality that puts the researcher and the participant at the same level in terms of generating knowledge, promoting learning and bringing about effecting change (MacDonald, *ibid.*). Logical demonstrations have tended to show that it is not certain whether participants in difficult circumstances like the poor can dedicate all the needed time to non-paying activities or

whether they can participate in and contribute efficiently to all the research stages (MacDonald, 2012; Healy, 2006).

In consideration of these and many other reasons, PAR researchers should be aware about the need for flexibility and acknowledge the participants' input regarding the right understanding of the problem under investigation. PAR researchers should also be cognisant of the fact that they initiate research in order to hear from either the community or specific group members. PAR researchers should accept to subscribe to the principle of humility in order to avoid a sense of superiority complex. Promoting people participation does not mean that their power has been usurped. On the contrary, they are urged to act carefully because despite the important consideration of "working under the guidance of people" (Mathrani, 1993, p. 351), it is totally wrong to ignore the organising and coordinating power vested in PAR researchers throughout the process. This conforms to what (Healy, 2006) states: "PAR does call upon research workers to exercise power in a variety of ways, albeit differently from that associated with the use of power connected to traditional forms of research" (p. 96).

In terms of legitimacy, some researchers have criticised PAR for not being a rigorous scientific methodology (Young,2006). Accordingly, that latter argues that "from a scientific perspective, one of the most often cited criticisms of PAR relates to the perception that PAR is a 'soft' method [...] [and non-familiar researchers argue that it] focuses on voice and everyday experiences" (p. 501) instead of relying on rigorous data. Here, it is once again up to the PAR researchers to be

perspicacious while triangulating the data generation process so as to avoid the limitations of using a singular method (MacDonald, 2012, p. 41) and overcome the criticisms levelled against conventional researchers.

In accordance with this discussion made and in conformity with the experience acquired during my research initiatives in Huye district, one may conclude that PAR is an advantageous methodology that is very demanding. As far as using PAR in this study is concerned, the researcher mobilised PLHIV already organised in associations and relied on his own experience with some of them during his social work students' practicum. It was therefore a simple task to use PAR because this methodology was ideally conceived for their betterment. In addition, the researcher also worked with SWW with whom he was already familiar because he had taught of them at university – The social rapport he enjoyed with the latter simplified the process of helping the PLHIV associations to recover quickly.

Surprisingly, the reality on the ground contradicted the expectations envisaged by the researcher, to a certain extent. This was caused by the specific challenges that PAR researchers should be aware of in order to see how to prevent or to address them. First, the researcher's preconceived research framework resonated with the traditional way of passively involving participants without consulting them. Normally, this proved "inadequate and ultimately have no effect at all" (Claeys, 2001, p. 127). The researcher realised that he started as a PAR novice because PAR is not a process whereby research participants are asked to provide information on

a framed problem and give ideas on pre-determined solutions in the perspective of initiating or proposing ways of mitigating their problem. Instead, the researcher should not impose his reasoning to the research collaborators. The former is urged to negotiate and to build relationships with them, thereby creating a sense of trust and agreement with them on the type of research and concurrent actions.

PAR is therefore both time and energy consuming and as such, it is important for the researcher to be patient and express readiness to learn from the wisdom of people and provide technical skills. After making two reconnaissance visits, and after conducting two pre-research sessions with the representatives of the targeted associations and the SWW, the researcher noticed that the task and activities proposed were progressively and smoothly executed. Equally important to note was that necessary updates, refinement or adjustments were made whenever necessary. With the above collaboration, there was positive change and the PLHIV in targeted associations were empowered by acquiring new knowledge and by owning their own poverty concerns through the ISWA. Unfortunately, however, the researcher's ambition of stimulating associations to run sound projects before the end of the research project was not effectively realised. This was because the associations did not have enough savings to base on. Such savings would be used to borrow a significant amount of credit. But above all, most of the PLHIV were not willing to take risks in initiating new business.

Another challenge was related to illnesses that inhibited the management of the initiated projects. In this context, some members

were irregular at work because of sickness. In addressing this problem, it was necessary to multiply interventions on awareness raising and resilience building. This helped to overcome the “reluctance of the poor to participate in dialogue with other partners [and to undertake development activities], which is due to the personal experience of exclusion, isolation and shame” (Claeys, 2001, p. 135). Thus, an opportunity was created to organise training sessions on relationship building, solidarity-based values. This resulted in the conviction that it was important to promote collective action before celebrating individual success. Very interestingly, all the participants committed themselves to helping one another and to run additional small projects in their respective families. The lesson learned was that participatory action researchers should be flexible to adapt to surprising circumstances throughout the process.

As stipulated earlier, the researcher decided to work closely with the SWW with a particular objective of scrutinising the specific role of social workers in dealing with PLHIV’s problems. Very often, the SWW’s input to the research was given indirectly and the researcher was in regular touch with them through telephone. He got used to collecting their ideas which were shared with the ISWA thereafter. They sometimes attended and, for a couple of times, the meetings held by the researcher during his visits to the PLHIV associations (each association was visited 3 times) took place most of the time either at the Health Centre or at the Cell administrative office.

It appeared that the SWW were overwhelmed in their daily duties and were required to deal in-exhaustively with all aspects of socio-economic problems brought by different categories of people. In this context, the qualified social workers usually had very little time to dedicate to specific cases. It was therefore impossible for them to honour their commitments in terms of responding to all planned appointments. This constituted a big gap in providing professional services and perpetuated the mythical habit that ‘anybody can render social services’. Thus, people with diverse backgrounds can improvise interventions in the social affairs domain or can expressly get a mandate to play the role of social worker in different settings by relying on the principle of “doing right thing” without caring about “doing the thing right” (Gray & Webb, 2009, p. 4).

The literature reviewed points to other underlying challenges that complicate the professional mission of social workers. These challenges are linked with compliance with ethical standards in social work, particularly the mastery of the social work methods. The social work methods referred to by Chukwu, Chukwu & Nwadike (2017, p. 45) highlight primary methods (social case work; social group work and community organisation that directly intervene with clients) and secondary methods (social action; social welfare administration and social work research that support the first three by dealing with the client’s problems). In view of the above demonstration, it is apparently clear that social workers should be equipped with adequate knowledge and skills to enable them intervene and work competently with PLHIV and PIN in general in different settings by using the above-

mentioned methods. They are supposed to have a strong personality, be reflective, creative and should apply critical thinking. They should also be able to strategically challenge oppressive structures and defend their profession by institutionalising the evidence-based social work practice. They should not draw on common sense adopted by different stakeholders who sometimes intervene wrongly as social workers. All in all, it appears that social work professionals should be exposed to a dual training in educational institutions as well as in practice settings in order to correct what has been wrong so as to increase the credibility of their profession. Only then will practice-based challenges be solved by using PAR as a sound methodology to nurture empowerment and effect change.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

With reference to the objectives set at the beginning of this study, particularly those related to the research questions, this chapter highlights, analyses and discusses the key findings emerging from this study. The discussion deals specifically with the connections between the results and the preconceived theoretical approaches in various researches in the domain under investigation, keeping in mind that there are meaningful interpretations made between these connections. It is important to mention that it became sometimes necessary to resort to the deductive-inductive reasoning to arrive at logical interpretations or explanations to complement or even supplant the existing ones (Beighton, 2019, p. 8). In other words, it was possible to show the link between the current PAR study results and the findings in the already existing literature.

The key findings are summarised and discussed under the following four key themes: (i) Nature of poverty and aggravating factors among PLHIV (ii) Empowering PLHIV to strive for self-Reliance: From surviving to thriving (iii) The SWW's commitment to strengthening resilience and empowerment of PLHIV (iv) Practising social work through PAR in PLHIV associations: Towards Developmental Social Work and Indigenisation.

The subsequent sections to the discussion and interpretation of the findings focus on the research implications, recommendations and conclusions. These complementary sections discuss the importance

of these findings in improving the situation of PLHIV in cooperative associations in Huye district and the strategies of promoting the social work profession in Rwanda. The section also proposes the orientation that should be taken by social work education and practice as well as for future research; and finally the key outcomes of the PAR study.

5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 Nature of Poverty and Aggravating Factors among the PLHIVs in Huye district

Three quotations from different sources in the data collected have been picked to explain the meaning and nature of the term poverty:

You ask me what poverty is; look at me and explore where I live You can judge for yourself and tell me how you qualify the situation. That is poverty (a woman from Abakundimana Association, Huye, 2018)

Poverty is the most widespread of the global problems, and the most complex because of the interaction with such a wide range of other occurrences. (Cox & Pawar, 2006, p. 188)

People living in poverty are often ignored or excluded, while the phenomenon of “othering” (Saying or thinking that “we’re not like those people”) is commonplace. Sometimes the behaviour is conscious and intentional, other times it is not. Sometimes it results from a lack of understanding of poverty ... Social maltreatment is more acute for people who are additionally subject to prejudice on other grounds such as disability, gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity [and HIV/AIDS sufferer]. (Bray, De Laat, Godinot, Ugarte & Walker, 2019, p. 21)

The above three quotations, including one from a woman experiencing poverty in PLHIV associations in Huye district show the complexity of the poverty problem. Be that as it may, it is quite difficult to have a consensus on who is poor or what causes poverty (is it attributable to structural or to individual factors?) or

even who is immune to poverty? However, it is important to note that although it is difficult to define poverty there is no difficulty in knowing it, especially when you meet someone suffering from it.

One of the key findings of this study is that PLHIV in the investigated associations, together with their families were living in a poverty-stricken situation with specific characteristics of the ‘usually so called poor people’ who might change if something is done. The usually so called poor “are generally in poverty [over a long period of time] with the exception of an unanticipated windfall. This could be in the form of good rain after a dry spell, or someone finding employment that pulls their family above the poverty line” (Concern Worldwide, 2020). Globally, the PLHIV under investigation were likely to experience ups and downs in terms of income generation according to different circumstances that were frequently occurring (climate change, health state line being sick, rare occasional work).

The ideas from the participants in this study converged on a general understanding of poverty as a situation in which people lack the necessary resources for a normal life or for social inclusion. The main intractable pains manifesting poverty were due to economic/material problems but also those who experienced psychosocial occurrences that unavoidably aggravated their situation.

The consequence of this was that the members in PLHIV associations, who were mostly family heads or breadwinners of their families, were not generating enough income. Thus, a small number of households were able to live a decent life. Such perilous circumstances may be undoubtedly linked with different factors,

including the inability to perform in the labour market and the predominance of agricultural activities in associations while very few people had enough land for cultivation. It is also important to note that agricultural activities require persistent energy and regularity at work during the farming period; this was not always the case for all the members investigated because of sickness that occurred regularly to some of them. Another aspect of the limitations related to the opportunities of generating income was the fear of taking loans because not only did the PLHIV have any significant savings in local banks but they also seemed to have no collateral facility. In fact, they were not sure of the weather; therefore, investing in agriculture was to them highly risky. With such beliefs and without being encouraged to change their mind-set, it was obviously impossible or quite difficult to have an extra income to make any valuable savings. Consequently, they were likely to remain in a vicious circle of poverty. This explains why they were struggling for survival on daily basis, running the risk of remaining endlessly in subsistence-based living conditions, more so after being weaned off some external aid they were used to receive.

Overall, the fact that PLHIV within associations in Huye district were threatened by absolute poverty and highly deprived in terms of household appliances put them in a situation of despondency and self-devaluation. Their deprivation consisted of things like income, material and disempowerment. Other dimensions of this deprivation were covert and hidden and these also undoubtedly exacerbated the situation. These include the relational dynamics

that are composed of institutional maltreatment (failure of national or international institutions to tackle poverty), social maltreatment (bad perception and treatment of the poor by other individuals and informal groups) and unrecognised contributions (underestimation of knowledge and skills of people living in poverty). (Bray, De Laat, Godinot, Ugarte & Walker, 2019, p. 12)

In this context, one can guess that the public feeling manifested by community members towards PLHIVs in Huye district did not necessarily reflect their exact attitudes. Instead, they were characterised by total indifference towards the associations' members. Overall, these members did not receive the required social care to make someone feel comfortable in defending or exercising their rights and to be guaranteed a decent residence in an inclusive environment. Consequently, they were left alone to suffer from the neo-liberalism philosophy according to which everyone can compete to benefit from the available resources. The fact that PLHIVs were ignored by the general public created in them a sense of frustration, isolation, self-devaluation, powerlessness and despair. As a result, the principles of social welfare and human rights for the protection of the vulnerable people were flouted.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the poverty situation of PLHIV within associations in Huye district seems to be complex as elsewhere. Thus, for purpose of this study that seeks to empower people to address the problem of poverty, it was useful to widen the understanding of the concept of poverty. This was done by considering it as a multidimensional and multilevel phenomenon whose magnitude

varies according to different factors. These factors include location (urban, suburb or low income areas and rural settings), timing and duration (situations experienced throughout the time), gender; level of education, environment (e.g. climate change) and cultural beliefs (e.g. causes of poverty emphasising individual failure). Overall, one can say that PLHIV suffer from constant poverty because of the shocks that result from the factors mentioned above. Therefore, there is a need to adopt strategies that raise their awareness in terms of their potentialities to increase their income and invest in productive projects that are mostly adapted to the rural-based settings. The above finding conforms to Rwanda's National Strategy for Transformation (NST 1) which states:

- *To increase the resilience of the poor against shocks including seasonal and climate-related shocks, economic shocks in terms of loss of employment, long-term illness, etc. NST1 will promote social security, access to savings, financial inclusion. Literacy and enabling investment in productive activities. A key focus will be to strengthen community-based savings and credit mechanisms as a stepping stone to accessing formal financial services.*
- *To foster mind-set change and the culture of self-reliance among beneficiaries of social protection programmes. Awareness campaigns will be undertaken to promote saving culture, community-based financial services (e.g. village saving and loans associations) and to increase awareness of economic opportunities. (RR, 2017, p. 50)*

5.2.2 Empowering PLHIV to Strive for Self-Reliance: From Surviving to Thriving

Overall, the findings of this study indicated that PLHIV in Huye have been earning their living through subsistence means and this has led them to a vicious circle of poverty. Therefore, there is a need for behaviour change to address this problem. As shown in the previous sections, PLHIV rarely make surplus harvest to bring to the market. Besides, even when obliged to sell some of their produce, this is mostly done as a sacrifice to respond to urgent extreme needs. A case in point is that of selling eggs (that would have enriched their diet) in order to buy salt, sugar or soap. Except for a few PLHIV members with simple contractual jobs, many of the PLHIV depend on a hand-to-mouth existence for survival. In addition to small dividends from their respective associations, most of them struggle individually to work as casual labourers on building sites and other peoples' gardens.

Regarding the in-depth analyses made about the situation of PLHIV operating within Huye associations, it was found that in the past, the latter used to get external assistance in form of handouts from government or NGO. However, these handouts did not help them to move out of their vicious cycle of poverty. This was caused by a dysfunctional PLHIV association system that led to their inability to generate surplus produce for the market. This was coupled with insufficient prices offered on the market that did not allow the poor farmers to even afford buying fertilisers and improved seeds (government provides these in form of subsidy or aid only given in the first phase).

If we view this situation from a gender perspective, we find that Rwandan women are the most hit. Compared to men, women have lesser access to available resources, particularly in rural areas where their participation in generating income seems to be restricted to agriculture. In the literature, this is testified by Pamela (2014):

Although the women farmers thought that their life had improved over the last five years, they felt trapped in poverty; they knew that in order to improve crop yields they needed to use improved seeds and chemical fertilisers but they could not afford to purchase them. This seems not to be because of the initial cost of investment until there is an increased yield, but because the return that women farmers get on their crops is inadequate to meet the needs of their families and also purchase seeds and chemical fertilizers (p. 5).

Such a scenario leads women to form self-help groups to complement the usual association activities. These have helped members to solve their various basic needs and to initiate small income-generating projects such as small vegetable kitchen gardens. For example, informal group savings schemes (usually named ‘*Ibimina* or *Amatsinda*’) similar to those commonly used in other African countries have been formed. In South Africa, *stokvels* are associations where “group members voluntarily agree to contribute a fixed amount of money to a common pool on a regular basis” (Matuku & Kaseke, 2014, p. 504). In South-Western Uganda, Rotational Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCA) or Accumulating Savings and Credit Associations (ASCRA) have also been formed.

The accumulated savings are either given to members, one at a time on rotational basis or are kept until a specified date

when they get shared among members. Experience has shown that the underlying advantages of this self-help model have managed to respond to urgent problems through ramified groups within or outside the associations. They also help members to take charge of their some but not most of their problems. Most association members use their savings to respond to communal projects such as weddings, burial ceremonies, children's education fees, health, reciprocal and shared labour groups. In fact, members assist one another to organise weddings of their children or "arrange decent burials for their loved ones" (Twikirize, Luwangula, & Twesigye, 2019, p. 66). In the same way, PLHIV members in Huye also consolidate their relationships and strengthen their resilience with the hope that they can combat their socioeconomic challenges. As a result, they have managed to raise school fees for their children, pay health insurance on time, accomplish quickly and reciprocally their urgent works such as communal cultivation or harvesting of crops.

It should be argued that this method of informal collective tasks reveals that members are "unfamiliar with formal institutions and consider the latter as intimidating" (Matuku & Kaseke, 2014, p. 504). All the same, these methods can be considered as a good means of stimulating modest investments in various income-generating projects for PLHIV. Therefore, the latter should be trained deeply and encouraged to use formal financial systems such as local banks or local Microfinance Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCO) to enable them obtain sufficient loans to initiate projects that generate enough income. Arguably, as long as the informal system continues to

be privileged by Rwanda's PLHIV, they will permanently be condemned to a subsistence-based economy. As a result, they will not succeed in accessing fund opportunities that are often offered exclusively to organisations that have a legal status. Kantengwa, Interayamahanga and Mahoro (2019) share the same view on the advantages of informal associations for the poor:

Despite this promising dynamic in harnessing poverty reduction, social cohesion, and citizen participation, ibimina/amatsinda, like many other CBOs, face the challenge of lacking a regulatory framework. Some consequences of this include the incapacity to take legal action (e.g. in cases of embezzlement) or apply for bank loans (p. 13).

The changes introduced as a result of this PAR study are a good indicator that PLHIV have a potential to cope with poverty on condition that they are enabled to understand their problems and on condition that they are helped to engage confidently in collective work. This confirms the statement made by one of the PLHIV when he said that “we are poor but we think we should be the first ones to bail ourselves out of this problem of poverty”. However, another one added: “we need to be mentored so that we can thrive”.

It is therefore important to argue that although the clients may be at the forefront of solving their own problems, they should not be left to go it alone. In other words, nobody else (their family, the groups they belong to or any other person in the social system) should be considered as scapegoat for their ills nor should any particular party be expected to serve as a saviour. On the contrary, the comprehensive ‘Me-We-Them’ principle should prevail. That is to say, all of these actors together should be concerned with the situation given that

poverty is not individually-created. As such, its mitigation requires the participation of different stakeholders. Included among these are well-positioned professionals who should play an empowering role and motivate the people in need to take action. They should perform tasks that lead to improving the livelihoods of PLHIV.

In this study, this was demonstrated by the contribution of SWW via ISWA. The latter influenced PLHIV within associations and accompanied them towards finding sustainable solutions to mitigate poverty. In this context, another important stakeholder is government. The latter should provide a conducive environment that promotes and accelerates citizen participation and “strengthen partnerships and coordination between government, non-governmental organizations (NGO), Faith-Based Organizations (FBO), as well as the private sector in implementing poverty eradication programmes” (RR, 2017, p. 11). The last sets of stakeholders to be suggested are social workers. The latter have an influential role to play, especially in the field of collaborating with other allied professionals. Overall, success will be achieved by avoiding the ‘common sense approach’ that focuses on only “doing the right thing”. Instead, it is the ‘interpretive approach’ that should be adopted which concentrates on “doing things right” in order to make sense of human reality and strive for the self-determination of the People in Need (Gray & Webb, 2009, p. 4).

5.2.3 Commitment of SWW to Strengthening Resilience and Empowerment of PLHIV

In this PAR study, co-researchers were composed of academic staff from the social work department from the University of Rwanda, people experiencing poverty as well as social work practitioners from SWWs operating in the sectors hosting the targeted PLHIV associations. The co-researchers explored the role of social work in empowering PLHIV for poverty alleviation. Particularly, they examined the contribution of SWW under the ISWA during the study period. The key emerging findings from various research and intervention activities showed that, despite the poverty living conditions of PLHIV within their associations, the latter were capable of changing their lives by relying on their own strengths. They were convinced that it was possible for them to respond to their immediate problems. For example, even by investing some little money, they managed to establish small vegetable kitchen gardens with a minimum space of 25 m². They managed to obtain seeds from the association or from potential self-help groups. At times, they borrowed seeds from their neighbours. The driving force behind their inspiration was the proverbial conviction: *Ak'imuhana kaza imvura ihise* translated as 'It is better to be self-reliant because assistance from outside is unreliable and unpredictable'. In addition, they were also convinced that *Inkingi imwe ntigera inzu* (One pillar cannot make a house). The ISWA revealed that before the intervention, they had adopted an attitude of passivity and resignation towards life and this prevented them from exploiting their potentialities fully. As testified

by SWW who participated in this study, many members became reluctant to maintain their associations when their aid was stopped. Another problem experienced was that social work practitioners has also stopped monitoring and coaching the members.

It therefore became apparent that SWW needed to make a new commitment to fulfil their duties by arousing the members' awareness in reinvigorating the associations. In empowering the PLHIVs, they ensured that the training curriculum had to embed thematic areas like mobilisation for collective action, resilience and sustainability, brokering and advocacy, training, collaboration by the co-researchers.

The above findings on interdependence between stakeholders, PLHIV resilience and empowerment to facilitate and regulate social interactions with the environment are equally supported by Cattaneo in the reviewed literature:

... resilience can be seen as the foundation upon which empowerment is build. Resilience can provide the skills and abilities to locate and utilise resources – the individual power to cope, adapt, and maintain oneself and one's community. Empowerment builds on resilience to provide the bridge that connects individual power to social power, changing the world around the individual and local community. Those external changes have profound psychological impact, building resources that may in turn shore up resilience, in the case of future adversity. (Cattaneo, 2013, p. 344)

In other words, the activities performed by co-researchers yielded positive results in conformity with the conceptual framework of resilience and empowerment. These findings also single out other

qualities like: increased awareness, self-esteem, dignity, recognition of inner talents, and consolidation of relationships among associations' members as crucial factors in empowering PLHIV. The current experiential PAR study impacted on co-researchers who learned from one another about the underlying factors that contribute to or inhibit the empowerment of people facing adversities. The acknowledgement by SWW of the existence of missing gaps in social work practice in Huye, such as the lack of joint action and collaboration with the concerned stakeholders on the ground proved that something should be done regarding the engagement of the victims in the problem solving process. Undoubtedly, the bottom-up collaboration with ISWA played a big role in showing that PLHIV can rediscover themselves to join hands again and regain their resilience.

While analysing the data under investigation, some new concepts emerged. These included terminologies that recurred like: '*ukwigira*' (self-reliance), '*agaciro*' (dignity), '*icyizere*' (hope), '*gukotana/gushikama*' (tenacious). It should be argued that these concepts connote the spirit endurance, resilience and hard work for a better future. These terms are directly linked with the sentiments expressed by ISWA and PLHIV during the FGD who expressed regret and lamentation and enthusiasm. They said that in order to build a bright future, they expressed a wish of correcting their past mistakes.

Under the guidance and facilitation of the researcher and motivated by the ambition to mitigate the pains of poverty among PLHIV, SWW provided their input and enabled ISWA to execute their work. Though the latter were overloaded, they managed to provide

some input that led to designing the training curriculum for ISWAs; they gave occasional talks during the meetings with PLHIV association members during the researcher's field visits; they also conducted monitoring activities and handed summarised views about the themes discussed. As a matter of fact, they played an advocacy role on behalf of PLHIV associations. This direct or indirect intervention by SWW stimulated ISWA a lot. In turn, as trainers from within, SWW played an influential role in facilitating the association members to cope with persistent poverty and empowered them by using the skills acquired from the training sessions by the researcher.

The above demonstration shows that through stakeholder collaboration it was possible to mitigate poverty. This is corroborated by Nelson Mandela (quoted by McConville, 2020) who argues that "like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the action of human beings."

As a result of the stakeholder's interactions, PLHIV got space to express themselves; they also learnt many things from ISWA throughout the process and they were enabled to respond to their own problems. Elsewhere in the literature, Freire (1970) and Selener, (1997, p. 14) argue in support of the above finding on participatory research and its advantages. They contend that it is the people involved in the problem solving process themselves, more than anybody else, who should identify and analyse their own problems in order to solve them. Therefore, the PAR methodology "should be understood as a praxis that could be used to mobilise social transformations [...]" (Zhu, 2019, p. 71). As far as this study is concerned, it used PAR as a strategic process to empower PLHIV to own and voice their problems.

5.2.4 Practicing Social Work using PAR in PLHIV Associations: Towards Indigenisation and Developmental Social Work

Very often, many professionals tend to consider themselves as experts who are highly knowledgeable while taking the users of their services as recipients, beneficiaries or mere consumers. This mentality is also confirmed by Schenck (2002) who paraphrases Freire in the following terms:

“Professionals often tend to talk about people, but they do not trust them. According to Freire, trusting people is the indispensable precondition for change. Freire believed that humanists can be identified by their trust in people and their ability to facilitate dialogue, reflection and communication [in the perspective of involving PIN in the problem-solving process].” (p. 71)

Since its inception, social work has been striving to improve the situation of the disenfranchised people and to eradicate poverty. However, this mission has not been achieved as expected. In developing countries, especially in Africa, this failure has been associated with inadequate responses that draw on inappropriate approaches. Hence, many individual and remedial approaches that have dominated social work practice have been found inadequate and inadapted in handling socio-cultural realities, notably the problem of poverty. In other words, it appears that no relevant poverty-awareness social work practice has been developed. This is stated by Krumer-Nove & Monnickendam (2009) who argue that:

“Despite the profound commitment of social work towards people living in poverty, the social work profession has failed to develop practice based on awareness of poverty”. (p. 225)

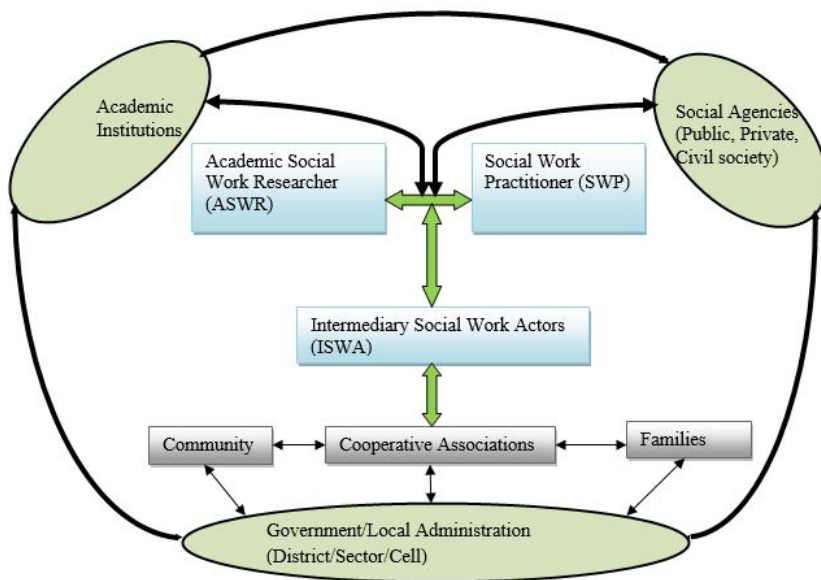
Different scholars and researchers have ceaselessly continued to suggest a shift to developmental social work emphasising a social development paradigm that promotes the indigenisation of the profession (Chitereka, 2009); Gray, Agllias, Mupedziswa and Mugumbate, 2017); Spitzer, 2017); Twikirize and Spitzer, 2019; Twikirize, Luwangula and Twesigye, 2019). The above scholars converge on the idea that there is a need to decolonise social work in Africa. They are of the view that this can be made possible by positioning the profession to produce new knowledge that can be used locally, regionally and globally. In addition, it is crucial that the curricula for effective teaching and practice of developmental social work be put in place.

The findings from this study are supported by previous studies which indicate some gaps to be filled. In these studies, it was found that in order to effectively address the poverty problem in all its dimensions, there is a need for comprehensive approaches that make reference to evidence social work practice that is development-oriented. In other words, there is a need to conceive the concept of poverty in a more comprehensive perspective by referring to an integrative or multidimensional strategy that addresses poverty. It is also important to examine the people's situation from a broader perspective (Yanagihara, 2001, p.10; Cox & Pawar, 2006, pp. 25-48; Klijnsma, 2016, p. 3; Kalinganire & Rutikanga, 2014, p. 235). It was found by this study that for social work to provide sustainable responses to the challenges of persistent poverty among the PLHIV in Huye district, it is essential for social work professionals "to

understand and acknowledge the impact of poverty, [...] advocate for and support those mostly in need” (McCartan, 2018, p.1). This requires training in both educational institutions and practical settings where a direct connection between the classroom and field practice is absolutely needed. In other words, it is very crucial to have a close collaboration between educational institutions, social agencies, social systems as well as the community as a whole (Larkin, 2018, p. 3).

This study has found that of all the interventions made, the integration of Intermediary Social Work Actors (ISWA) was both crucial in bringing about valuable change and social improvement of the PLHIV. This is summarised in a model derived from the current PAR study. The model seeks to promote renewed social work research and practice built on collaboration between social work academic researchers, practitioners and the people affected by the problem of poverty. It also consists of evidence-based practice that relies on the use of the data collected through a meticulous methodology - PAR.

Throughout the research and intervention processes, the Intermediary Social Work Actors (ISWAs) who acted as participants representing the PLHIV were empowered to perform their task which they did competently. The activities performed by these Participatory Action Researchers were directed towards empowering PLHIV within the targeted associations. In addition, an inclusive environment for all actors was provided to enable them exercise their rights with a firm determination to improve their well-being.



Source: Primary data, 2018

Figure 8: Intervention Model derived from the PAR Study on PLHIV in Huye district

The model can be clearly summarised in the following process:

- (1) The social work academic researcher and social work practitioner came together to assess the problem to be investigated through documentation and reconnaissance visits.
- (2) The social work academic researcher and the social work practitioner met the selected representatives of affected people grouped in cooperative associations and had an in-depth discussion of the problem to be investigated.
- (3) Through participatory action, the trio designed together the research procedures and planned potential iterative activities to be performed.

- (4) In conjunction with the social work academic researcher the social work practitioners organised regular learning activities and training sessions provided to ISWA who in turn concurrently implemented the planned activities.
- (5) The ISWA implemented the planned informative, formative and transformative activities in their respective associations. The aim of these activities was to empower associations' members to become aware of their problems and to commit them to be at the helm of finding sustainable solutions to those problems. These activities drew on local cultural realities that were synthesised with universal values for more innovative and yielding interventions.
- (6) Evaluation and elaboration of the research was done and a practice report was produced.

Accordingly, the ISWA were particularly coached or mentored by Professional Social Workers (PSW). The latter acted as facilitators to achieve effective participation of the members in the quest to fight against poverty. This was done by reinforcing collective work and consolidating a sense of belonging to the association, initiating specific small income-generating projects at family level and interacting with the community members by adhering to different self-help groups in order to add value to their living conditions.

Beyond the coaching/mentorship role, the social work practitioner in conjunction with the social work academic researcher played supervisory and monitoring roles that influenced their respective employers to work closely and constantly with the local

government as key support systems. These key support systems formed a strong joint-action forum to create or recreate a decent environment from which PINs benefited fairly using the available resources to get opportunities to demonstrate their potential.

Overall, it should be noted that the above integrative model gives priority to the micro-mezzo-macro interconnectedness. This helps to promote ‘individual-collective’ action by putting social work professionals at the centre of practice. The current PAR study has shown that social work professionals are well-positioned in promoting ‘developmental social work’ and improving the wellbeing of the poor PLHIV within cooperative associations in Huye. This has been achieved as a result of developing a “practice based on awareness of poverty” (Krumer-Novo & Monnickendam, 2009, p. 225) as well as using cultural-based practices or Home Grown Initiatives (HGIs) to facilitate the provision of services that are compatible with the development of a given society (Spitzer & Twikirize, 2014 in Manyama, 2018, p. 44).

However, social workers should ensure that they “have the skills and capability to not only address safety for today but to translate fear, grief and loss into empowerment and social transformation” (Truell, 2020). It is in this perspective that social workers can, as stipulated by Krumer-Novo and Monnickendam (Ibid), comply with the profession’s commitment of dealing with the problem of poverty since its inception at the end of the nineteenth century.

5.3 Research Implications

This section deals with the implications of the current PAR study. These implications refer to the consequences or impacts derived from the study that help to explain how the findings of this study are relevant to the advancement of the social work profession, particularly in Rwanda. In addition, it shows how the study implications are relevant to policy making and implementation, and social work education and practice. Lastly, this section ends with future recommendations.

By referring to the study objectives or in view of the research questions of this study, specific key findings are highlighted. These are summarised as follows:

- (1) Concerning the nature of poverty and its impact, it was found that PLHIV in Huye district were from poverty-stricken families. They manifested characteristics akin to the ‘usually poor people’. Hence, it became necessary to work hard and with endurance to empower them to increase their income so as to satisfy their fundamental needs. Other problems with which the PLHIVs were confronted included: low access to employment, a feeling of powerlessness, stress and anxiety, uncertain life, social prejudices, negative thoughts and emotions all of which very often led them to being despondent.
- (2) Addressing the vicious circle of poverty among the PLHIV should be built on the concept of behavioural change and a sense of determination to work collectively and tirelessly in order to shift from a subsistence economy to self-reliance. As a result of the

awareness-raising activities, the PLHIV associations' members were convinced that '*Ak'imuhana kaza imvura ihise*' (It is better to be self-reliant because assistance from outside is unreliable and unpredictable).

- (3) As for interveners and the role played by the SWW, it was found that since the associations are at the helm of the fight against poverty, it was necessary for them to develop resilience mechanisms and to be constantly empowered. For success to be achieved in the poverty mitigation process, internal interventions by ISWA would provide better and regular services to PLIV than SWW because the former would easily reach members in remote areas.
- (4) The promotion of developmental social work that advocates for PAR was found to be suitable in revitalising PLHIV associations and enhancing the living conditions of the members and their families. Thus, it was established that PAR helps stimulate social and economic development and engage communities in the process of change and transformation.

In addressing poverty, Social Work Practitioners (SWP) are advised to draw on researched interventions that emanate from a collaborative effort between a social work academic researcher, PLHIV and ISWA. The proposed interventions should be adapted to suit local and cultural imperatives.

The key findings of the current study have several contributions and implications the most relevant of which lies in establishing a theoretical framework that underpins these findings. This framework is provided in the following section.

5.3.1 Theoretical Implications

The most significant contribution of this study is that of stimulating the quest towards deepening our understanding of the concept poverty and the analysis of poverty-related theories as well as the need to challenge the status quo. It has been revealed by the current study that there are expectations that transcend the universal consideration of poverty as “a complex phenomenon influenced by a number of factors and which can be studied from many different perspectives” (INE, n.d., p. 2). This study goes a step further to show that it is possible to rethink and challenge the existing understanding and ways of addressing poverty at different levels within different contexts.

Another important contribution of this study deals with promoting awareness-consciousness-raising of both PIN and support systems on the role and advantages of self-esteem and building an inclusive society. Existing beliefs on the causes and types of poverty, some of which blame the affected people while others associate poverty with structural factors are clearly questionable, to say the least. Actually, the idea that poverty is natural and fatalistic as opposed to being something which can be influenced by people has been given prominence in this study. Hence, the “ME-WE-THEM” consideration helps to formulate the theorisation of poverty in different contexts. This theorisation argues that poverty is neither attributable to the affected person alone or to his/her belonging group (family, association, neighbourhood, or community) nor is poverty attributed to others. Instead, anyone can influence the situation of poverty either materially or psychosocially. Above all, everyone is

likely to play a certain role in mitigating poverty even if PIN are the most concerned party in this struggle.

Lastly, there is a likelihood of having intense debates among transformationalists whose views, from diverse sides and at various levels, may nurture the process of indigenisation leading to the possibility of synthesising local practices and international standards.

5.3.2 Implication for Policy making and Implementation

The importance of conducting this study using PAR is well understood when one considers the concerns raised in this quotation:

The resources are there to end extreme poverty but do we have the political will and the courage to make the tough decisions? Political will is not just some abstract commitment; it will demand national sacrifice for greater global good and fundamental shifts in policy to change the course of our future. The fundamental principle of the SDGs is “Leaving no one Behind”, and the spirit of the Goals compels nations to try to reach the furthest behind first. (McConville, 2020)

Accordingly, the study findings revealed that people affected by poverty should be given an opportunity to thrive. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that the existing structures within which PLHIV function are embedded in a tenable social-ecological context. In other words, it is imperative to create or maintain an agreeable or decent environment that enables people to progressively improve their social integration. Very often, this depends on the political will of government and its prescribed policies as well as the development programmes in place. In this perspective, leaders and policy makers should be urged to act in favour of PLHIV from poverty-stricken families by harmonising political and socio-economic factors.

On the basis of the results obtained, the current study appreciated, in relative terms, the current political will by government to put its citizens at the centre of the development process. But most importantly, government particularly refers to Home Grown Initiatives (HGI) as a tool for promoting collective engagement in the process of responding to mass problems such as poverty. However, this does not mean that the study results did not scrutinise hidden factors that very often hinder the possibility of benefiting from opportunities provided by government policies. In order to overcome such potential barriers, the study findings alert social work practitioners to be careful about the problems of social maltreatment, disempowerment and indifference towards PLHIV. In fact, social workers are expected to collaborate with professionals from complementary backgrounds and other development actors to influence various support systems to help PIN escape from the adversities of poverty. As an inspiration from this study, social workers are called upon to probably “engage politically with people to transform local community conditions for the better [...]” (Pawar, 2014, p. 9) and to awaken new attitudes within different officials as well as the concerned development actors to enable them pay particular attention to PLHIV operating under associations and encourage them to evolve into strong cooperatives.

5.3.3 Implications for Social Work Education and Practice

The results of this PAR study focused on the quality and the role of social work practitioners in facilitating the interactions between PIN and their environment in the fight against poverty. The study makes its contribution to the body of knowledge by understanding

the type of social work professionals needed and their prerequisites for fruitful interventions. The study also makes several suggestions that inspire different actors in the fields of poverty alleviation and sustainable development with a view of providing orientations to advance the social work profession.

In particular, the study findings reinforce the ideas from recent studies that state that social workers should effectively apply the values and principles of the profession. In this connection, Pawar (2014, p. 1) declares that “[...] social workers need to focus on the profession’s fundamental values and principles and actively engage with local politics and power structures so as to improve the living conditions of the people and local communities in developing countries.” As stated by Ruffolo, Perron and Harbeck Voshel (2016), social workers should also be able to adapt to various circumstances and to seek “to understand not only the individual but also the different environments that influence the reality of the world experienced by the individual or group of individuals” (p. 17).

This study also found that educational institutions should shape social workers in a manner that empowers them to practice in different settings. This can be achieved by helping them to develop a sense of cultural humility that is worthy of an African professional. The above statement is corroborated by the recommendations made by different scholars who argue in favour of rethinking the current system of social work education and practice focusing on the Euro-America individual-centred theories by drawing fully on group-community-centred approaches that favour the new paradigm of

‘developmental social work’ (Twikirize & Spitzer, 2019); Manyama, 2018; Mbazima Mathebane, 2017; Gray, Agllias, Mupedziswa and Mugumbate, 2017; Ngwanamont, 2014). These social work scholars also stress the need to promote the indigenisation process.

Overall, the current study is endowed with the potential of influencing social work education and practice. As such, it is through collaboration between social work actors and by implementing bottom-up approaches that PLHIV in Huye district can achieve their goal. The actors alluded to include: social work professionals in higher education institutions, public administration and civil society as well as the communities where social work professionals thrive. In this connection, the best way of effecting change and of empowering PLHIV associations is by putting training and transformational education of the affected people at the epi-centre of the process. In other words, this study has made a modest contribution in the field of curriculum refinement in universities and in designing social welfare policies that seek to raise awareness during social work interventions.

5.4 Recommendations

This section highlights the recommendations derived from the current study findings. These recommendations are made to social work practitioners and future researchers. They aim at strengthening social work education and practice as well as empowering PLHIV. The recommendations of this study are summarised in the following subsection.

5.4.1 General Recommendations derived from the current PAR Study

At the end of this PhD project, a paradigm shift from passivity to active engagement by PLHIVs was noted among the PLHIV in the fight against poverty. This description below, reported from the primary data, shows the factors that hinder PLHIV from participating in the problem-solving process and giving possible responses to their concerns. This description (below) demonstrates ample evidence and specific recommendations for change:

From passivity to self-reliance: The contribution of social work to empowering PLHIV

When vulnerable people feel powerless or when they are – openly or latently – blamed by neighbours, they are likely to remain isolated thereby ending up being rarely engaged to work effectively and to fight for their survival. However, when they are encouraged to join hands, to discover their strengths and to be involved in the problem solving process by coping with different kinds of inequality, accessing resources, feeling confident and able to participate in decision-making, they end up by understanding that they are the ones who should play a greater role in overcoming their specific problems. This was demonstrated over a three-year longitudinal study that used a PAR methodology to investigate poverty-stricken families of the People Living with HIV (PLHIV) operating within associations in Huye district.

The findings indicated that it is possible to overcome the challenges met by the PLHIV even if this requires being proactive without waiting for fate to take its toll. Indeed, it emerged that the

involvement of the PLHIV in the problem-solving process, through empowerment and evidence-based interventions by dedicated practitioners is a fundamental means to relieve the plight of people living in poverty. This study identified social workers as professionals who play or should play a big role in the process of empowering the People in Need (PIN) by helping them adapt to local circumstances before resorting to external aid.

Overall, the pathways for empowering and improving the livelihoods of PLHIV operating under associations in Huye were traced and some suggestions made. It was noted however that there is still a long way to go in creating a new vision: to think big and to hasten the needed paradigm shift towards ‘developmental social work’ that is recommended as a suitable strategy towards uplifting the living conditions of the vulnerable people. Many of the participants in the research were proud to collaborate with the researcher and they showed great interest in owning their problems and working collectively, even though regular follow-up was required. On the other hand, social workers were excited to get more understanding of the situation of PLHIV and they were resolved to act as agents of change in the future.

Source: Primary data, 2018

The above description on the prevailing situation in PLHIV associations after the experiential social work research and intervention reveals that the poverty problem among PLHIVs originates from lack of socio-economic means to build capacity for resilience and sustainability. The findings revealed the underlying factors that prevent PLHIV from exercising their rights thereby keeping them passive and despondent. These factors include inequalities in income distribution

and occupation, difficulties in accessing finance, dependency on subsistence agriculture as well as the indifference by community members towards life that leads to isolation. The findings also showed that these inhibiting factors can be avoided through awareness-raising. This is based on the premise that if people are empowered to discover their potentialities and if they come together for collective action, they overcome their limitations and progressively improve their livelihoods. This finding is corroborated by Bosc (2018, p. 7) who argues that “for the poor or marginalised groups, getting successfully involved in collective action increases confidence and self-esteem while improving living conditions”.

Therefore, the emerging recommendation is that PLHIV should be empowered economically, socially and politically to emerge from poverty so that they can actively participate in their own development. In this connection, it is crucial for poor people to come together in strong socio-economic associations which can defend their interests.

Another revelation from these findings is that social work is a profession that links people with the environment. This linkage helps them to exploit the available resources adequately. Accordingly, social work practitioners are advised “to help people and to improve society, and to give special attention to the interactions between people and between people and their surroundings” (Segal, Gerdes & Steiner, 2013, p. 3). They are also urged to influence allied professionals and other actors to play a coordinating role in improving society.

As a result of using PAR, it was found that keeping in touch with PIN (PLHIV in this case) - who were approached and considered

as “ residents rather than as clients or recipients of charity” (Gutierrez & Gant, 2018, p. 623) - this helped in identifying their exact needs and deciding on the right way forward. PINs are residents who are expected to be in permanent relationships with their neighbours. They participate in activities of common interest such as *Umuganda* (Community work), local community meetings to discuss development issues and *Gacaca* (Rwanda’s traditional justice system in which specific cases are decided by people of integrity elected by community members) to solve different issues or conflicts between individuals or families. All these activities are usually done at the lowest community structure (referred to as *Isibo*). This administrative level is composed of 10-15 families and deals with all sorts of problems by allowing inclusive decision making to take place.

In the above circumstances, PIN are particularly empowered to be “able to exercise assertiveness in collective decision making” (Sureshkumar et al., 2015, p. 75). In other words, the above finding calls upon social work practitioners to strengthen their interventions at the grassroots. In fact, the government of Rwanda advocates for the bottom-up approach – where the concerned people are approached and integrated with others in self-help groups. Social work practitioners are also called upon to promote close collaboration with PLHIV living in poverty and consider them as the ‘best knowers’ of their own problems. Social work practitioners are also advised to adopt a flexible stance while working with intermediary people who represent the affected poor. These intermediaries can join their colleagues easily in their respective settings and convey messages from the professional in

a culturally accepted manner. What is required for practitioners and the key concerned parties is to lay strategies and devise interventions that can help PIN to thrive. To ensure that social workers are adequately equipped to address poverty, they should be able to respond to a set of required things. These include: being able to combine personal and social skills, being conversant with ‘developmental social work’, being able to use both intellectual and intuitive skills, being well trained in the classroom; being grounded with solid field training on social agencies and lastly, being continuously socialised on the ground throughout the entire professional practice process.

One other finding revealed by this study is the problem of absenteeism by social workers. Given that social workers who work with PLHIV associations or cooperatives are often overwhelmed by multiple duties, they tend not regularly attend to their duties. This study showed that this problem can be solved through delegating other trained people to serve the purpose. Saloner (2002) refers to those who should be delegated as ‘volunteer trainees’ whose role is to “ensure that the training responds to the indigenous character of each unique community” (p, 159). In this study, ISWA were identified to play a key role in linking PLHIV and the professional social workers (SWW). In this perspective, social workers can transform their practice based on evidence (Cusack, 2018, p. 1551) by adopting a “[...] developmental approach [that] implies a shift from remedial-based approaches to strengths-based and empowerment approaches” (Ngwanamont, 2014, p. 100). Within the development context, developmental social work suggests that in their interventions, social workers should emphasise

the spirit of togetherness by “trying to up-hold the African ways of helping each other in their communities and that the state will provide support when people are in groups”. (Manyama, 2018, p. 45)

Such an innovative way of practice helps to promote the spirit of stakeholders’ involvement, especially those faced with problems. The application of PAR in social and development research proved to be suitable for Rwanda’s culture of ‘collaboration and collective action which is privileged while accomplishing daily activities and improving performance. In this perspective, social workers at the grassroots should draw on the organisational model that emerged from this study to acknowledge the role of ISWA in empowering PLHIV in Huye. ISWA should be involved in the problem solving process with a key mandate of implementing well defined activities and providing regular reports on agreed work plans.

As demonstrated in the literature and corroborated by the study findings, social workers are among the key social change agents in the lives of people. As such, they have a big role to play towards the advancement of the people. They should work to defend their rights. However, in the same literature, it has been shown that they have been accused of not managing to play their role as expected. This is mainly because of the mismatch between what they do and what their professional mandate requires them to do (Dlamini & Sewpaul, 2015, p. 471). At times, like in the case of Huye in this study, they are obliged to combine various responsibilities and find themselves responding to “... high caseloads and unacceptable levels of bureaucracy” (Hardwick, Smith & Worlsey, 2016, p. 345). Consequently, this limits

their contribution in promoting “social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people” (IFSW & ISSW, 2014) all of which constitute core social work mandates. Overall, it has been shown in the findings of this study that social workers in Rwanda are often overloaded and therefore unable to reach the targets. Elsewhere, they are sometimes obliged to work under pressure from those above them or to abide strictly by the rules in place, which sometimes conflicts with the precepts of the social work profession.

Compared with the prestigious position enjoyed by the social work profession elsewhere, it has been noted that in the African context, this may not always be the case. In Africa, social work ‘unconscious’ practice is usurped by different actors (leaders, allied professionals or any development actors) who tend to obstruct the logic way of dispensing professional interventions. It is therefore high time for social workers to play their role effectively, particularly by fulfilling their traditional mandate of helping the poor to improve their situation. To achieve this end, they should be cognisant of their pivotal role of “alleviating suffering and empowering individuals, groups and communities to be able to make the most of their talents and resources” (Mukantabana, 2018) for the betterment of all the involved parties. In other words, they should act as the real beacons of change.

5.4.2 Supplementary recommendations

5.4.2a Towards Strengthening Cooperative Associations and Achieving Effective Empowerment of PLHIV

One of the ways through which cooperatives can be empowered is by adopting the business model. This is stressed by the UN DESADSPD:

In the cooperative movement, we believe that through the support of the dignity of the individual and the support of the group as a whole, much more can be achieved in poverty reduction... Cooperatives are the ultimate form of “empowerment” through the use of a values based business model. (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development, 2012, p. 10)

From the above quotation, it is important to keep in mind that in order to contribute to poverty reduction effectively, cooperatives should function as a “business model that puts people’s dignity first” in pursuance of “social and economic goals indissociably from one another” (Ntirenganya, 2019). Usually, a cooperative is an organisation regulated by specific laws established by an official body and working as an enterprise with the aim of obtaining benefits that should be shared between members and whose key objective is mutual assistance and service.

Cooperatives are considered as an efficient avenue that amplifies the potentialities of the members with the intention of exploiting the opportunities provided, particularly by accessing income-generating activities. Referring to the position of the Rwanda Cooperative Agency (RCA), Harvey (2019) testifies:

The government of Rwanda views cooperatives as a potential vehicle through which the cooperative members can create employment and expand access to income-generating activities, develop their business potential through education and training; increase savings and investment, and improve social well-being with special emphasis on gender equality, housing, education, health care and community development.

In the Rwandan context, cooperatives are forms of associations operating at an advanced level with a specific focus on income-generating activities to improve people's wellbeing. As declared by Nicola Bellomo, the EU Ambassador to Rwanda in the Global Conference of the International Cooperative Alliance in Kigali (14-17 October 2019), "cooperatives empower people and local communities to take charge of their own development, putting people first before profit" (Ntirenganya, 2019) and they "are an essential tool to reduce poverty" as stated by Soraya Hakuziyaremye, the Rwanda's Minister of Trade and Industry, while closing the conference (Voinea & Harvey, 2019).

On the contrary, associations are organisations governed by internal regulations. They do not have a legal personality and are *ipso facto* prone to fragility. As shown in the case of PLHIV associations in Huye, association members do not have easy access to finance and they hesitate very often to engage in valuable business. In associations, members rely mostly on trust, solidarity, integrity and self-help activities for collective responses to physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social and economic adversities and satisfaction of urgent or fundamental needs. However, they are limited in terms of sustainable existence and long-term productive investment. From

this short demonstration, it is recommended that PLHIV associations in Huye should transform into cooperatives if they wish to achieve prosperity.

For this to happen, nothing should be done hurriedly and thus, members need to be well shaped by social workers in collaboration with other concerned actors, notably local leaders and community members. Social workers are particularly advised to:

- (i) Train association members with the view of evolving into cooperatives, by focusing on “governance of the cooperative, including the meaning of cooperatives’ values: honesty, transparency, efficacy, accountability, participation, efficacy, capacity building, etc.” (RRP+, 2018, p. 48).
- (ii) Work closely with local leaders towards “strengthening the creation of cooperatives as a way of reducing and promoting the culture of saving and credit” (RRP+, 2018, p. 50)
- (iii) Influence all the concerned stakeholders to avoid the attitude of indifference towards PLHIVs and to adopt empathy which according to Grant (2004) is summarised in the following quotation:

If you are to stand inside another person and look out with their eyes, you would need to know something about their culture, something about their experiences, something about the things that bring them joy, and the things that give them pain. You will begin to understand their thoughts, their feelings, and their actions (Grant, 2014 in Gasker, 2019, p. 116).

In this context, the use of PAR can help in facilitating the collaboration between different parties and enhance the PLHIV empowerment process. It is therefore important that people be well sensitised so that they can function in cooperatives with a firm commitment to respect the universal prescribed values and principles instead of simply acting obediently in fear of the law.

5.4.2b Achieving Social Work Education and Practice

It is common knowledge that social workers strive for the betterment of PIN by viewing them through a lens of human rights and social justice. It has been argued so far, that in almost all countries, social workers have been using ‘case work’ as their principal method. However, this method has not necessarily been suitable to all contexts. This reveals that direct social work practice dominates their interventions with exceptional and discontinuous reference to social group work and community practice, particularly since the second half of the twentieth century.

Recognising that: “there is broad consensus that among African scholars that Western social work theories and approaches, informed by the remedial welfare model embedded during colonial times, which followed a residual, service-oriented approach, have proved inappropriate and not relevant to social work in Africa” (Gray, Agllias, Mupedziswa & Mugumbate, 2017, p. 2), there is a need to a shift to developmental approaches that help to find comprehensive solutions related to problems of individuals, families, groups and communities. This calls for well-equipped, knowledgeable and skilful professionals who are ready to work tirelessly and competently with PIN, considering the environmental contexts in which they operate.

Qualified social workers may be theoretically knowledgeable and “acquainted with evidence-based as well as innovative practice with people living in poverty, the values they hold, and the specific strategies and methods that they use” (Krumer-Nove & Monnickendam, 2009, p. 230). However, it is also important to equip future social-work professionals with adequate knowledge and skills and to ensure that there is no mismatch between what they received from the training institutions and the realities on the ground. Thus, the much coveted social work professionals are those who should demonstrate the following abilities:

- (i) They should exhibit expertise but act with humility and flexibility. In this sense, they should acknowledge the capacities of PIN as the first fighters against the adversities in their own contexts of residence.
- (ii) They should play the roles of counsellors, educators, trainers, enablers/empowerers, advocates, mobilisers, community organisers and builders of decent environments for effective fulfilment of the people’s major goal of achieving their wellbeing and that of their families and the community as a whole.
- (iii) Without being divorced from their clinical and therapeutic practice methods, social workers should go beyond remedial solutions to link individuals, families and groups with the larger community and be aware of the necessity to work in conjunction with other stakeholders for the sake of complete and sustainable remedies. Working separately with social groups, each within its uniqueness should be a good strategy; however, this is not

stressed today while making an in-depth assessment of the needs of different vulnerable groups. Noteworthy, it is unfair to put all groups in a single cluster even though some commonalities should be considered for the provision of specific services of general interest such as free health insurance to all poor people.

- (iv) They should act according to the circumstances of the communities in which they intervene.
- (v) They should be innovators capable of integrating international standards and indigenous practices (i.e. respect of social work's general principles and values and adapt these to local culture).

To evolve into social work professionals of such a calibre requires a specific shaping process that considers “two social work education prongs – classroom instruction and field work practice” (Gray, Agllias, Mupedziswa, and Mugumbate, 2017, p. 3). This calls for innovation in teaching and field instruction by integrating indigenous practices with Western theories and pedagogical approaches. Thus, a certain degree of refinement of social work curricula needs to be undertaken to fit the Rwandan (and African) contexts at large with the ultimate objective of developing the people's potential to cope with depriving problems and to prevent social system dysfunction. In this case, some components should be emphasised in the social work curriculum:

- (i) Poverty issues
- (ii) Green social work
- (iii) Assessing local resources with focus on people's engagement in problem identification

- (iv) Evidence-based practice through research and evaluation with the use PAR
- (v) Cultural blending

Relating to a three year Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Work (BSW) field education programme in the University of Rwanda, the following suggestion tabulated below should be given great attention.

Table 11: Orientation for field placement (3 Year-Programme for BASW students at UR)

Study level	Intervention domain / Settings	Objective	Intervention level and methods	Linked activities
I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Psychosocial disorder - Child and family welfare - Juvenile delinquency - Gerontology - Criminality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To develop skills to work particularly with individuals - To understand the social world - To understand the functioning of social systems - To be able to differentiate direct and indirect social work practice 	<p>Focus: MICRO (Case work & case management)</p> <p>Supplementary methods: MEZZO & MACRO (Group & Community work)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Class exercises and home assignments: listing vulnerable groups (locally, nationally, regionally, continentally and globally) - Listing social agencies - Person-in-environment understanding - Exploring social policies & local practices - Field visits in different settings
II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Orphanages - Youth development - Vulnerable groups - Associations/ Cooperatives - School social work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be able to work with groups - To empower/ enable group members - To assess clients' needs and resources - To design social development projects - To use new technologies - To evaluate projects 	<p>Focus: MEZZO (Family & Group)</p> <p>Supplementary methods: MICRO & MACRO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information-Education-Communication (IEC) activities - Training of Trainers - Visits in families, clubs, associations and schools - Organising workshops - Meetings with different stakeholders - Administrative activities - Evidence-based practice - Elaboration of projects

- Poverty	- To promote development	Focus: MACRO (Group and Community)	- Organising communities
- Youth and old age development issues	- To mobilise people		- Social planning
- Gender issues	- To design projects		- Mobilisation for collective action
- Community development	- To advocate for vulnerable groups	Supplementary methods: MICRO & MEZZO	- Participation in local administration
- Social conflicts	- To raise funds		- Policy analysis and implementation
- Peace and reconciliation	- To evaluate projects		- Advocacy
- Social administration	- To manage social programmes		- Social protection programmes
- Health care			- Research to inform policy
- Environmental issues			
- Human rights and social justice issues			
- Globalisation and international cooperation			

III

Source: Adapted from Primary data, 2018

Field education prepares future social work practitioners to cope with their career “by emphasising doing, mentorship with a field instructor, professional development of the self, critical thinking and the conscious and deliberate integration of field training and classroom learning” (Larkin, 2018, p. 4). As a result, once on job, the students will not be surprised but will simply need a continuous update. Thus social work practitioners should:

- (i) Be provided with refresher trainings so that they become adequately skilled in developmental social work.
- (ii) Be enabled to work collaboratively with different stakeholders and to influence them, particularly in protecting the rights of the people affected by poverty.
- (iii) Receive supervision and be helped to use ‘Trainer of Trainers’ approaches so that the trainees (ISWAs) can transfer easily the acquired knowledge and skills to empower ordinary associations’ members.
- (iv) Influence employing agencies or organisations as well as academic institutions in designing a contextual/cultural-based training document for ISWA. In accordance with the prescriptions from the Rwanda Allied Health Professions Council (RAHPC, 2018), social work professionals should be able:
 - (v) To uphold the integrity of the profession in all aspects of social work practice.
 - (vi) To engage in policy practice to advance people’s social and economic wellbeing and to deliver effective social work services.
 - (vii) To contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of a multi-

disciplinary team.

- (viii) To use ICT effectively for professional communication, data storage and retrieval as well as information searching.

5.4.2c Suggestions for Future Researchers

The current study was conducted in only one district in Rwanda and the sample used was selected from limited associations; thus the findings of this study may not be generalised to the entire country. However, they are inspiring because they provide guidance for a wider investigation in the domain of mitigating poverty through social work interventions in cooperatives, particularly with regard to PAR as a support to social workers in empowering vulnerable people within associations to mitigate poverty in different settings.

Although this PAR study drew on ideas that are supportive of a shift from remedial to developmental approaches, the engagement of PIN as practitioners in action research helped to explore the effectiveness of developmental social work and indigenisation in enhancing people's lives. The social work discipline is quite new in Rwanda and needs to be developed in such a manner that it contributes effectively to theory, policy and practice. It is therefore expected that this study will stimulate young professionals under training to intensify and deepen their research initiatives for the advancement of the profession.

5.5 Conclusion

This study lasted three years and sought to assess the role of social work in empowering PLHIVs in Huye district to mitigate poverty. The study design used privileged a qualitative approach that adopted a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology. This methodology ensured that there was a synergy between the researcher and participants in understanding the poverty phenomenon among PLHIV with a view of adapting behaviour change for better livelihoods. The researcher worked closely with the Social Work Practitioners (SWP) and poverty-stricken PLHIV from 12 sampled associations in Huye.

The research team generated data through triangulating the views of different stakeholders using a variety of techniques that included Focus Group Discussions (FGD), interviews, meetings, training sessions and observations. As a final remark for this study, it is worthwhile drawing some conclusions based on the study findings presented earlier in this chapter. The pivotal features of these findings are reflected in the description below on the perceptions towards poverty as summarised by one respondent.

Perceptions towards Poverty according to an association's member

“You ask us what poverty is! Oh look at me how I look like; how is my clothing; see my house, you can even go inside and appreciate, there is no concrete floor; what kind of assets can you find, maybe a jerry can of water, an old mattress and three mats for my children and some insignificant cooking tools.

You know, within these circumstances, I do not feel comfortable to go out and meet other people such as at the market; to attend various events or some gatherings except when I find a temporary job to be paid between 800 and 1000 RWF. I can tell you that I am at ease only when I am with people with whom I share the same social category or with these colleagues here present. Nobody else among the other community members cares particularly for the poor and on some occasions, for example in monthly community work ‘*Umuganda*’, local leaders and social workers advocate for vulnerable people but so far, what have we got? In general, nothing and as it is said in Kinyarwanda ‘*Ak’imuhana kaza imvura ihise*’ (It is better to be self-reliant because assistance from outside is unreliable and unpredictable). You can never know when external aid will be made available. That is the situation of poverty we are living in!

Thank you for having helped us rebuild our associations; I am confident that with the little amount of money I receive on rotation basis from my self-help group’s contributions, I will get some equipment like a hoe and a source pan as well as some clothes for my children, and I will rear some rabbits for progressive income generation; of course I will put something on my SACCO account. While responding to my economic problems, I feel more and more comfortable and I am convinced that my situation will change. Together we can! with my colleagues through our association.

Source: Primary data, 2018

The current study aimed to examine the effects of social work empowering activities on PLHIV and their families. It sought to provide answers to the following general research question: **“What is the role of social work in empowering PLHIV and their families to mitigate poverty in Huye District”?** Other related specific questions dealt with understanding the nature of poverty and its impacts; the key intervening actors in the fight against poverty among PLHIV and the suitable approaches towards mitigating poverty and enhancing the people’s wellbeing.

In accordance with conceiving an in-depth understanding of the concept of poverty, the results of this study showed that poverty is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon and, as highlighted in the description above, poverty should not only be understood from the point of view of an individual situation because it is influenced by other surrounding circumstances. Thus, the impacts of poverty are not only economic; they are equally social, educational and political. Poverty impacts on people’s lives, and eventually puts them in material and social deprivation; this entails “lack of access to [...] goods and services necessary to live a decent life, participating fully in society” (Bray et al., 2019, p. 27).

The results of this study revealed that mitigating poverty requires combining efforts and using a series of integrated approaches by synthesising local practices with global theories. In this study, it was found that the theories of ecosystems, resilience and empowerment were particularly the most suitable in underpinning evidence-based social work practice aiming to enhance the living conditions of PLHIV in Huye district.

With regard to the key intervening actors and their role in improving the livelihoods of PLHIV, it was found that, besides the family and community that constitute ‘the organic systems of care’, three categories of stakeholders (i.e. government, civil society and the private sector), linked by social work practice via diverse agencies - play a major role (directly or indirectly) in addressing the challenges faced by PLHIV within associations in Huye district. The results also revealed that social workers have the potential of coordinating PLHIV activities, and provide them with productive services in order to discover their talents, develop resilience and fight poverty collectively. The study clearly demonstrated that empowerment-based practice - through awareness-raising, sensitisation, information-giving, education and training, practical project presentations, association group meetings, team conversations and the like) - is a fundamental factor in initiating economic businesses, increasing self-esteem, promoting social integration and stimulating change.

The results of this study confirmed the assumption that regular contact with the people who experience problems within their own environment can enhance the propensity for change and adopt innovative as well as developmental behaviour. Due to the problems of overload by SWWs, it was found that the Intermediary Social Work Actors (ISWA) could produce commendable results as actors serving *in lieu* of SWW. As a result of the findings of this study, it emerged that the contribution made by the researcher in conjunction with the social work practitioners, empowered ISWA to successfully implement many planned activities. These included: home visits,

educational group work, arranging meetings for exchange of ideas, counselling and family therapy, occasional talks, facilitating short training sessions on income generating projects and entrepreneurship, and so on.

To sum up, it is important to note that the findings of this PAR study revealed that it is possible to improve the livelihoods of PLHIV. The factors responsible for this success were basically fourfold: self-reliance and social inclusion; a proactive character of social work intervening actors; provision of a decent environment and the use of transformative approaches. Although it proved difficult to look at these factors separately, it emerged from the findings of this study that the influential role played by social workers seemed to be quite indispensable. It also appeared that the latter were endowed with the potential of serving as adequate guides towards sustainable development. However, their constant interventions and collaboration with PLHIV tended to be absent. Faced with such a scenario, the option of working with ISWA during the experiential phase of PAR proved to be fruitful. It is therefore advisable that SWW should use this approach in order to fill the gap of lack of regular interaction with PLHIV. SWW should lessen their burden by dedicating some activities to other collaborators without necessarily endangering the profession.

As far as proposing suitable approaches towards mitigating poverty is concerned, the study found that PAR should be used as a suitable approach in understanding the situation of the poor through collaborative investigation that involves social work practitioners,

researchers and PLHIV. This resonates well with Rwanda's government policy that advocates for "citizen's participation, engagement and partnerships in development" (RR, 2017, p. 19).

The overall results of this study showed that social workers are well-placed actors in playing a coordinating role in influencing the entire system of actors involved in supporting PINs. Social workers should act as "coordinators and liaisons who enhance communication and coordination among social and human services to improve service delivery, and who link an agency or program to other agencies and organisations" (Cox, Tice & Long, 2015, p. 6).

Consequently, it can be argued that if social workers contribute to mitigating poverty among PLHIV, they should be committed to fully enhance their profession. In achieving this objective successfully, they should depend on the collaboration between the stakeholders involved, with particular emphasis put on PIN. Social workers should also focus on bringing about change by integrating indigenous practices (HGS) with the global environment "in which we are all present" (GUNI, 2017, p. 47).

Social workers should also act as 'pivots' and 'enlighteners', who should inspire, persuade, incite, enlighten or influence other professionals (as well as other stakeholders). This would enable them to "work to co-construct understandings with their clients and work towards the persons' self-determination" (IFSW, 2016). Social workers should also work to ensure that those in power share the same view of the situation. In this connection, they should bring together all parties involved in the process and consider the problems of PIN's

not from an individual perspective but in the context of the family, association and other community structures at large (IFSW, 2016; Kristine & Florczak, 2016, p. 2). This means that social workers should use their knowledge, experience and skills (technical, cultural-based and initiative skills) to promote the ‘individual-collective’ as well as ‘relationships-building’ approaches.

In a country like Rwanda, social work interventions should be implemented through adopting a sense of commitment by all social work professionals with a view of understanding the connectedness between the levels involved (the micro, mezzo and macro levels). Besides, social work professionals should adopt ‘developmental social work’ approaches that subscribe to the ‘social development paradigm’ aiming at innovation and creating new knowledge in the social work profession both in Rwanda and in the broader African context. In achieving this goal, the professionals in the field of social work are not asked “to do extraordinary things but to do ordinary things extraordinarily well” (Kalinganire, 2002, p. 144) using the suggested communitarian model presented below:

Table 12: Communitarian Model for empowerment and betterment of PLHIV/PIN

Criteria	Philosophy of Change	PAR-based Planned change
NEEDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lacking skills - Empowerment needs - Collaboration in changing conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-reflection - Reconnaissance visits - Preliminary contacts-
CLIENTS/PIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Citizens; Residents; Participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment and planning of action
CHANGE STRATEGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involvement in felt needs, problem-solving - Partners in process of change - Task group, discussion, communication - Aims at consensus, self-help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action-Research - Reflection-Lessons learned-Action - Evaluation - Termination-end of research
GOALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow up-Control
ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher; enabler; skills in group worker; influencer; innovator; implementer 	
OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Empowerment; capacity building; self-reliance; well being 	

Source: Adapted from primary data, 2018

Accordingly, the Participatory Action Research for Development’ Model (EIPPARD) presupposes that change can be pursued through people participation. The targeted people - and for purses of this study - the PIN, should function in the community through specific groups or associations like PLHIV. In the current

case study, PLHIV are not just a target group for intervention. On the contrary, they are also considered as partners who should be involved in the problem-solving process. By collaborating with outsiders who are coordinated by professional social workers, PLHIV ended up becoming progressively empowered and enabled to take control of and change their lives.

The EIPPARD model is based on the principle that people know best what is good for them and that their participation and expertise are also useful in finding solutions to their problems. However, expertise from outside can be claimed after as a resource to the people rather than being looked at as a solution of final resort. Furthermore, the principles of democracy, voluntary involvement, self-help and self-reliance are particularly privileged in this model.

Considering the study findings, it is fair to conclude that social workers are well positioned to apply the EIPPARD model within the perspective of helping the poor to thrive. Effectively, social workers enjoy the privilege of being classified among the key agents of social change; they are particularly competent in terms of linking vulnerable people with their environment for purposes of exploiting available resources. To keep up the momentum of enabling PLHIV operating within associations in Huye district, social workers should be well knowledgeable and skillful. On the whole, they are expected to maintain the required professional qualities that draw on the promotion of human rights and social justice and this can only be possible if they engage praxis progressively, thereby customising the profession to the socio-cultural context. Ultimately, it is imperative

that for valuable change to take place, social workers should challenge the status quo and adopt the transformative-developmental approach that puts much focus on the use of PAR. This involves working closely with the people experiencing problem(s) through well-chosen intermediaries (ISWA) and bridging different support systems throughout the problem-solving process as a suitable mechanism for success.

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APPENDICES: PAR Activities, Huye District Map; Abstracts and Summaries of related Research Publications

Appendix A: Summary of Iterative Research and Intervention Activities

Table 13: Synopsis of PAR Process and Iterative Activities

PAR CYCLE	Date	Phases	Research team's work design	Research and Intervention iterative activities
CYCLE I: "Poverty and its impact"	28/9/2015 – 21/12/2015	1. Think	1. Literature review 2. Reflection on different concepts 3. Design of PAR framework	Subsequent to the reconnaissance visits and preliminary talks with the ISWA and SWW, the researcher exchanged views with co-researchers. They discussed key concepts and agreed on the research orientation and key activities to perform.
		2. Plan	1. Brainstorming with research collaborators 2. Formation of partnership and research teams 4. Identification and prioritisation of key issues 5. Selection and understanding of methods	An exposé on PAR in the framework of the PhD research project and a formal negotiation for collaboration with the Presidents of associations (PA) were made. The PA agreed to participate in the research with ISWA under the supervision of the researcher working in conjunction with SWW. After a series of in-depth discussions, there was consensus to revitalise PLHIV associations by empowering members along their journey towards combating poverty and uplifting their lives. Working conditions and interventions-research foci were suggested with the possibility of changing throughout the process.

		3. Act	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meetings and dialogue with PLHIV association members 2. Family visits 3. Execution of usual association activities 4. Needs Assessment 	<p>The ISWA approached the association members in their families and associations respectively. They focused on awareness raising and strengthening relationships. In parallel, they conducted a needs assessment considering what went wrong in the past and asked members about their expectations to address poverty and forge ahead for a bright future.</p>
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**CYCLE II:
“Self-
Reliance and
Dignity”**

21/12/2015 – 21/3/2016	1. Reflect	<p>Feedback from ISWA about their intervention in Cycle I 2. Presentation of needs assessment research findings 3. Exchange of views and lessons learned</p>	<p>The ISWA shared their first experiences. This illuminated them and opened discussions that facilitated the preparation of the following field work. There was conviction that PLHIV are the best knowers of their problems. Participants indicated that poverty is concurrently a material, mental and political phenomenon.</p>
2. Review / Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In-depth discussion of problems raised 2. Refinement of learning activities and preparation of the forthcoming intervention 3. Provision of a short training on ‘project planning and management’ with focus on the importance of running small income generating projects to for self-reliance 	<p>It emerged from the discussions that in order to overcome poverty, there is a need to be empowered economically and psychosocially. Thus, there was a request to be trained in various domains including project planning and management. A plan for collecting information on the strengths and weaknesses of forming associations and thinking about initiating small projects.</p>	

3. Act

1. Social work intervention in the respective associations 2. SWOT analysis

Keeping in mind the simple principle that ‘one pillar cannot make a house’, the ISWA helped their colleagues to feel really united to work together, starting with very simple projects. In simple terms, they conveyed the message on the project cycle and with the guidance from the researcher, they gathered information on the associations’ strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats so that there should be a new impetus.

CYCLE III: 21/3/2016 – 24/3/2017

“Social Work Empowering Activities; The role of ISWA and SWW”

1. Feedback from interventions in Cycle II 2. Presentation of research findings 3. Exchange of views and lessons learned 4. Brainstorming on poverty and HGSs on mitigating poverty

The ISWA intervened as ‘wise but not professionally-equipped agents’ but they played a great influential role in behaviour change among PLHIV. Building and strengthening the PLHIV’s capacities was thus found very important. Working and communicating openly with the SWW and local leaders was stimulating and from regular advice, the association members became enthusiastic and took various development initiatives. Consequently, the limitations were disclosed; they and opportunities to thrive discussed. The ISWA were convinced that: “Poverty is not a vice” while the SWWs stated that bottom-up intervention approaches are recommended to empower PLHIV.

2. Evaluate

1. Impression and perceptions on the work accomplished 2. Expectations for the future

The ISWA appreciated their contribution to the revitalisation of their associations. Observations during the field visits confirmed this; indeed, the association members showed interest to work cohesively and their ambition to succeed in the future: they were convinced that “*Ak’i muhana kaza imvura ihise*” (It is better to be self-reliant because assistance from outside is unreliable and unpredictable”).

3. Re-view/
Plan
1. FGD on the nature of poverty and its effects
 2. Training on social cohesion and social work approaches to combat poverty
 3. Assignment: "Let us work hard and think big, the future is full of good surprises"
4. Act
1. Social work empowering activities
 2. Monitoring & Evaluation activities
 3. Sharing of ideas and interim findings
- In order to prepare the one-year intervention process, the ISWA were equipped with basic skills to enable them work with associations and families without harm. The qualities of listening, communication, counselling, facilitation of group activities and assessment skills were emphasised. Here, intense collaboration between the researcher and his co-researchers as a fundamental characteristic of PAR was recommended for success. Outcomes from previous interventions helped to orient the work.
- Regular organisation of short training sessions in project management, gender issues, conflict management and cooperative promotion were essential to build capacities of the association members. Field visits and talks with SWW and ordinary association members were frequently conducted. During this period, there was a systematic data collection exercise using different methods (field notes, observations, group interviews and these were very often supplemented by telephone calls).

CYCLE IV:
“Developmental Social Work: Tireless Collective Work vs. External Aid”

24/3/2017 –
 30/6/2017

1. Reflect

1. Feedback from the intervention in Cycle III
 2. Presentation of research findings
 3. Exchange of views and lessons learned

It was noted that poverty is the inability to get means for daily survival but also poverty refers to a situation created by one’s neighbours because the former lacks the minimum living conditions. To fight poverty is a continuous struggle and success in this endeavour necessitates collective effort.

2. Review/Plan

1. Retrospective: prerequisites for poverty alleviation
 2. Training on developmental social work and mitigation of poverty

Poverty may be viewed using a developmental lens and to tackle it, there is need to refer to comprehensive solutions.

3. Act

1. Education and training on solidarity, social cohesion and Rwandan social values
 2. Exploration of possibilities for people to control sustainably their own lives
 3. Thinking of performance contracts

Promoting indigenous practices and consideration of informal networks strengthens social capital and helps people to come together for best results internally; Advocacy and community mobilisation activities; meetings and FGD on core helping values; information gathering on available resources and specific needs. Intensive monitoring was organised and advice was provided essentially through telephone.

CYCLE V: “Reinvigorating our Associations: Towards Sustainable Development”	30/6/2017 – 30/8/2018	1. Reflect	1. Feedback from the intervention in Cycle IV 2. Exchange of views and lessons learned	<p>The PLHIV stabilised psychosocially and recovered slightly economically. The ISWA were committed to continue providing their contribution for continuous improvement of the livelihoods of association members’. However, they needed continuous and frequent support from the SWW.</p>
		2. Think	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meditation on acquired experience 2. Key challenges 3. What should be done to keep the momentum 	<p>General evaluation of activities. Overall, there was need to adopt the PAR methodology in the SWW working organisations.</p>
		3. Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. FGD and training on the functioning of cooperatives in Rwanda and conditions for success and sustainable development 3. Activity plans for the future. 	<p>Consultative meetings between ISWA and SWW. Revision of the working conditions and the calendar. Meetings with the Association members and elaboration of performance contracts.</p>

			4. Act	1. Interventions and implementation of agreed plans 2. Information gathering; field visits and monitoring	Regular meetings with PLHIV association members. Advocacy and networking; inter-association visits; monitoring and evaluation.
		5. Reflect/ Evaluate	1. Exit FGD with the ISWA 2. Exit FGD with the SWW	1. Exit FGD with the ISWA 2. Exit FGD with the SWW	Needs assessment; SWOT analysis; discussions on the way forward. Celebration of achievements.
		6. Report	3. Confrontation of ideas from the respective research groups 1. Data analysis and thesis writing 2. Dissemination of the results	3. Confrontation of ideas from the respective research groups 1. Data analysis and thesis writing 2. Dissemination of the results	Coding data, description and interpretation of the findings; sharing of experience; informal communication afterwards.

Source: Primary data, December 2018

Appendix C: Girinka and Empowerment

Abstract

This article discusses an indigenous approach labeled “Girinka Programme” designed for reducing poverty and fighting against child malnutrition. The approach consists of providing a milk cow to poor households in order to ensure milk supply to children. The issued milk cows are not only for milk consumption but also for enabling beneficiaries to get out of poverty through selling surplus milk and using manure to increase land fertility for agricultural production.

The objective of this article is to understand how Girinka Programme works, highlighting its success in empowering poor households and examining the challenges and obstructions it faces, and eventually put emphasis on the role of social work in coping with them. In addition to the 21 individual interviews with practitioners in Huye district, 18 more interviews with Girinka Programme beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries were conducted in both Huye and Gisagara districts, and during June-July 2016 annual workshop on social work in Rwanda held in Huye, a group discussion with 7 advisory committee members was also conducted.

Though this programme was designed to decrease poverty and fight against malnutrition, challenges and obstructions such as unaffordable preconditions, insufficient training in animal husbandry and cooperative management, misappropriation of milk cows, cases of bribery, and poor follow up were observed. The article recommends the use of not only veterinary and agricultural technicians but also social work practitioners in addressing these challenges and obstructions to the success of Girinka Programme. The role of social

work practitioners along with local public staff in charge of social services would for instance be that of using “strengths perspective” to facilitate beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of the programme on the waiting list to find alternative solutions to their problems and build up their self-sufficiency through empowerment approach.

Keywords: Indigenous Empowerment, Girinka Programme, Poor Household, Huye, Gisagara, Rwanda. (Hahirwa Gumira and Karinganire, 2017)

Reference: Hahirwa Gumira, J. and Karinganire, C. (2017). Exploring the Success and Challenges of the Girinka Programme and the need for Social work Involvement: Southern Province, Rwanda. *Rwanda Journal, Series B: Social Sciences*, 4 (1), pp. 121 – 155.

Appendix D: Social work practice and indigenisation

Abstract

Rwanda demonstrated a strong commitment to building social cohesion through national policy and program development as post-genocide humanitarian assistance gave way to sustainable development. Over the past two decades, international development partners, working alongside local and national nongovernment organisations (NGOs), have played a key role in rebuilding the country. Social work emerged as part of this humanitarian relief program in the mid-1990s. Since then, it has positioned itself within the developing social welfare institutions addressing social problems, including child welfare, poverty, gender issues, and the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Key to social work’s development has been the partnerships between North American universities in the United

States and Canada and three major higher education institutions in Rwanda offering social work education, including the University of Rwanda (formerly the National University of Rwanda (NUR)), Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR), and Byumba Polytechnic Institute. (Kalinganire, Gilkey and Haas, 2017)

Reference:

Kalinganire, C., Gilkey, S. and Haas, L. (2017). Social work practice in Rwanda: The challenges of adapting Western models to fit local contexts. In M. Gray (Ed.), *Handbook of Social Work and Social development in Africa* (pp. 315–327). London: Routledge.

Appendix E: Summary of the book “The role of Social Work in Poverty Reduction and the Realisation of Millennium Development Goals in Rwanda

It is universally known that the overall role of the social work profession is to ‘help people help themselves’, i.e. to change people’s conditions at the micro, mezzo and macro levels by referring to the key principles of participation, self-reliance, sustainability and empowerment. In Rwanda, social work emerged particularly in response to problems associated with the unprecedented consequences of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. The newly trained professionals committed to playing a significant role in reconstructing the social fabric and enhancing the welfare of the people encountering particular problems including trauma, isolation, destitution and extreme poverty.

The Role of Social Work in Poverty Reduction and the Realisation of Millennium Development Goals in Rwanda is a result of evidence-based research conducted in Rwanda as part of the Promotion of Professional social work towards Social Development and Poverty Reduction in East Africa (PROSOWO) project. It reflects the role of social workers in handling the consequences of the genocide and combating the trickiest social problems with a focus on poverty. It contributes a useful tool for a wide audience interested in understanding human development and in thinking developmentally, particularly educators, students, practitioners and policy-makers. (Kalinganire and Rutikanga, 2015)

Reference: Kalinganire, C. and Rutikanga, C. (2015). *The Role of Social Work in Poverty Reduction and the Realisation of Millennium Development Goals in Rwanda*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers. ISBN 978-9970-25-368-5

Appendix F: Compliance with anti-plagiarism system: Turnitin checking results

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SOCIAL WORK AND EMPOWERMENT OF PEOPLE
LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION:
Evidence from Cooperative Associations in Huye District

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