

JeffHEALTH Medical Student Exchange in Rwanda

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Teaching Community Health Workers

In rural Rwandan villages, the communities are linked to healthcare through Community Health Workers (CHW). CHW are appointed based on village election and the requirement that they can read and write. The Rwandan Ministry of Health provides general health training to the CHW so that they can educate and advise the village on health related matters. CHW administer educational sessions at village meetings about prevalent health issues, and advise members of the village when they should go to the Health Center. JeffHEALTH's teaching aims to supplement the Ministry of Health training. Topics are chosen and approved by the Project Director Andre Munyantange, village leadership, and head of the local Health Center. The topics are in accordance with the Rwandan government development program Vision 2020.

Education Topics Include:

Family Planning, Teenage Sexual Health, HIV/AIDS Prevention, Dental Hygiene, Breast and Cervical Cancer, Prevention and Detection, Nutrition, Prenatal Care, Soil Helminths, Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention

Overseeing Community Development Projects

JeffHEALTH oversees community development projects in Akarambi, a village of 165 households with approximately 800 individuals, located in the Rulindo District. Family sizes are large, estimated to be between 7-9 individuals. Many village members are survivors of the 1994 genocide. The primary employment is the nearby mine and subsistence farming. JeffHEALTH has been active in the village since 2009. JeffHEALTH works very closely with the village leadership committees to design and implement initiatives that will best address the needs of the community. This communication is facilitated by partners at the Rwanda Village Concept Project (RVCP), who monitor projects throughout the year and provide ongoing feedback regarding the status of the village.

The programs' success relies on members of the RVCP teaching a curriculum about each project before implementation. In addition, members of the RVCP go to the village each month to oversee the projects.

Current community development projects:

- Bee keeping project for community members with HIV/AIDS
- Energy saving wood stoves
- Rabbit project for youth who rear the rabbits
- Pig project to breed and sell pigs for money
- Microfinance project of moto taxi business

JeffHEALTH Overview

Mission

JeffHEALTH (Helping East Africa Link to Health) is a student-run organization at Thomas Jefferson University that aims to help Africa link to improved health resources one village at a time. JeffHEALTH is striving to build a university-wide community of health professional students and faculty dedicated to improving health outcomes in African communities. Membership has included students from every Jefferson program, including the schools of medicine, nursing, pharmacy, public health, physical therapy, and occupational therapy. Every summer, a multi-disciplinary team of Jefferson students travels to Rwanda to start new health initiatives and continue ongoing projects. Locally, JeffHEALTH also seeks to raise awareness of health issues in Africa and of the history of the Rwandan genocide among the greater Thomas Jefferson University community and Philadelphia area.

Core Values

- Use the Village Concept Project model when working with African communities.
- Focus on personal and professional development as medical and health professionals through teaching efforts and experiences.
- Collaborate with villagers to design and implement community development efforts.
- Stress the importance of culturally appropriate project design based on needs-based assessments.

Vision

To bring meaningful, culturally sensitive, sustainable change to the people of Rwanda.



JeffHEALTH In Rwanda

An interdisciplinary group of Jefferson students has the opportunity to travel to Rwanda each summer. JeffHEALTH provides the opportunity for students to create and teach a health and hygiene curriculum, as well as work closely with individuals from different cultures with different life perspectives. Students also learn about the Rwandan healthcare system through shadowing and visits to local health centers.

Spending the duration of the program in one city allows the students to become familiar with the area and experience cultural immersion. The cultural experience is enhanced by the Rwandan students taking the JeffHEALTH students to popular restaurants and activities, as well as teaching some Kinyarwanda vocabulary.

JeffHEALTH students are immersed in the Rwandan culture, especially with the RVCP students as their hosts. This allows Jefferson students to learn about Rwandan cuisine, dress, dance, history, and other cultural issues.

RVCP at Jefferson

The Rwanda Village Concept Project is a student run initiative at the University of Rwanda that works to provide medical services and education to rural villages throughout Rwanda. Each year students from RVCP apply to come to Jefferson for a 6-week Family and Community Medicine rotation.

What learning experiences will you take back to Rwanda?

- Incorporating primary care into the health system, especially in regards to chronic disease management.
- Focusing more on building the doctor patient relationship.
- Incorporating evidence based medicine.
- Using students run free clinics to work in underserved communities.