



Narrative Report: 3rd Session of the D-Free Project Implementation

Gisagara, Rwanda
April, 2024

“Combating Diarrheal Disease in Rwanda”

MEDSAR

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Introduction

The Medical Students' Association of Rwanda (MEDSAR) held the third session of the D-Free Project on 5th April 2024, continuing its efforts to promote community health awareness and sanitation practices in combating diarrhea.

Objective of the session

The primary goal of the session was to educate and empower the community on various aspects of health promotion, particularly focusing on hygiene and sanitation practices to prevent diarrhea. In addition, we were to provide toilets re-innovation materials to the 15 most vulnerable families among 112 beneficiaries of the project.

Participants

The session involved the active participation of eight dedicated volunteers from MEDSAR, 5 Community Health Workers, Head of village alongside beneficiaries of the D-Free Project.

Activities and Events

The session commenced promptly at 2:00 pm with a comprehensive post-evaluation assessment of the beneficiaries to evaluate the effectiveness of previous educational interventions. Through this evaluation, we aimed to understand the extent to which the beneficiaries had internalized and applied the knowledge imparted to them during previous sessions.

Following the evaluation, at 3:30 pm, the head of the village delivered a heartfelt welcoming remark, expressing profound gratitude towards the D-Free Project for its transformative impact on the village. He appreciated the project's efforts in enhancing hygiene and sanitation practices, citing tangible improvements observed within the community. The village head emphasized the importance of the project in significantly reducing the prevalence of diarrhea by equipping community members with essential knowledge on its prevention and management.

Subsequently, MEDSAR President, Emmanuel BIZIMANA, took the stage to facilitate an interactive session with the beneficiaries. This session provided a platform for beneficiaries to share their testimonials and experiences regarding the impact of the project on their daily lives. Through open testimonials sharing, beneficiaries expressed heartfelt appreciation for the invaluable insights gained from the project. They highlighted the adoption of newfound practices such as the installation of handwashing stations, provision of clean drinking water, and adherence to hygienic practices during food preparation and before breast feeding. Moreover, beneficiaries underscored the positive impact of these interventions on reducing the risk of diarrheal diseases, particularly among children.

In addition to sharing their individual experiences, beneficiaries showcased a commendable commitment to disseminating the acquired knowledge and skills to their peers, thereby fostering a culture of collective responsibility towards improving community health outcomes.

Following the interactive session, MEDSAR proceeded with the distribution of materials for toilet renovation to 15 identified vulnerable families within the community. These families, characterized by socio-economic hardship and a higher vulnerability of diarrheal diseases, were selected as priority beneficiaries for the provision of essential sanitation infrastructure. The distributed materials, including doors and iron sheets, were intended to support the construction or renovation of standard toilet facilities within these households.

Key Highlights

- The overwhelming positive feedback received from beneficiaries, affirming the significant impact of the D-Free Project on improving hygiene and sanitation practices within the community.
- The proactive engagement and commitment demonstrated by beneficiaries towards implementing and cascading the acquired knowledge to wider community members.
- The targeted distribution of sanitation materials to vulnerable families, thereby addressing disparities in access to essential sanitation infrastructure.

Challenges Faced

- Limited resources and funding constraints posed challenges in scaling up project interventions to reach a broader segment of the community.
- Socio-economic disparities within the community presented barriers to equitable access to sanitation facilities and resources.
- Hindrance caused by heavy rainfall impeded MEDSAR volunteers from completing the post-evaluation assessment for all project beneficiaries.

Lessons Learned

- The critical importance of community engagement and empowerment in driving sustainable health behavior change initiatives.
- The need for strategic partnerships and resource mobilization efforts to overcome logistical and financial barriers in project implementation.

Recommendations

- Explore more collaborative opportunities with Youth Impact, local government authorities, non-governmental organizations, and private sector entities to leverage additional resources and expertise for scaling up project interventions.
- Prioritize targeted interventions aimed at addressing socio-economic disparities and ensuring equitable access to essential health services and infrastructure.
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the long-term impact of project interventions and inform evidence-based decision-making.

Conclusion

The third session of the D-Free Project marked another significant milestone in the journey towards promoting community health and sanitation in Gisagara district. Through collaborative efforts and community engagement, the project has successfully empowered beneficiaries with essential knowledge and resources to improve hygiene practices and mitigate the risk of diarrheal diseases. The unwavering commitment demonstrated by both volunteers and beneficiaries underscores the transformative potential of grassroots initiatives in driving sustainable health behavior change. Moving forward, MEDSAR remains dedicated to building on these achievements and expanding the reach and impact of the D-Free Project to foster healthier and more resilient communities.

Appendices

1. 3rd Session Gallery: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Xx6_n8d2K-CsYP-5HUIRYD3fJHxusbsL?usp=drive_link
2. Pre-evaluation form responses: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1crXrXtMwwf-WAyUApGb7LbuRbxNk8aAA/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=104987771503147434934&rtpof=true&sd=true
3. Post-evaluation form responses:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1MApL6EuRsVdjyMRBhD5yaDLGtXnul1sC/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=104987771503147434934&rtpof=true&sd=true

The Way Forward

Looking ahead, MEDSAR plans to conduct a follow-up visit to the village after the 30th commemoration of the Genocide against Tutsi in 1994, in Rwanda. During this visit, the project team will provide water filters to an additional 10 families and assess the progress of toilet construction among the beneficiaries who received sanitation materials. This follow-up initiative reflects our commitment to continuous engagement and support for sustained community development and well-being.

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