



The Rwanda Story

The Zvandiri Model was recommended to Dream Village by their donor—the Leonard Bachman Foundation. Following a learning visit to Zvandiri in Zimbabwe, Dream Village and the Rwandan MoH were “convinced this was the model for us because it offered the best holistic outcomes. It aimed to address our challenges and we liked that the CATS are always in the health centre. When you go to Dream Village health centres today, you can see a difference.” As well as implementing the standard Zvandiri Model, Dream Village has added economic empowerment through start-up support for business—for example, young people have started a catering business and are preparing food for support groups.

Implementing Partners:

- Dream Village
- Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC)

Website: dreamvillagerw.org

Started implementing Zvandiri: 2019

No of CAYALHIV living in Rwanda:

- **13,518** (23% of general population)

As of June 2022: **20** trained and mentored CATS are collaborating with health care workers in **10** health facilities to support **3,005** children, adolescents and young adults living with HIV.

Viral suppression:

- **100%** of CATS are virally suppressed.

Factors for success:

- Start small and focus on quality, not quantity
- Spend time selecting the right young people as CATS
- Sensitise health facility staff in working with CATS.

Hopes for the future:

- Scale up to 40 health centres in Kigali and later across the country
- A multi-country CATS and implementing partner symposium for learning and sharing.

Key highlights of the Zvandiri technical assistance plan

- Benefiting from years of Zvandiri experience and expertise at no cost
- Continuous training and mentorship
- Shared documents and resources and dedicated support to adapt them
- Ongoing discussions about how we can maintain quality and improve.

Positive change

- “Zvandiri talks to the Rwandan National Strategic Plan in terms of holistic support for young people living with HIV, support groups, home-based care, enhanced and standard care, and is supporting the social and economic lives of young people. It holistically addresses the milestones in the National Strategic Plan.”
- “There are adolescent-only days and allocated spaces for support groups and CATS in all 10 facilities.”

- “Caregivers support groups are tackling stigma and impacting viral suppression.”
- “Support Groups for young mothers are growing and linking them to care and treatment, nutrition support, income generation and health insurance.”
- “Young people representing Dream Village sit on a quarterly committee, feeding their challenges and needs into national planning processes.”

Our proudest moment:

Jocelyne grew up in a small village about 200km from Kigali. As a child, she was unaware of her HIV status. She was continuously falling ill and finally, at the age of 15, was the only child in her family to test positive for HIV. She had many struggles — self-stigma, stigma from her family and peers, and she didn't go to school. She felt hopeless and depressed and that she no longer had anything to live for—leading to two suicide attempts aged 20. She survived, but was left blind.

Jocelyne was referred to RBC and Dream Village who connected her to the Blind Association and took her to several other doctors. In March 2020, Jocelyne had an operation and miraculously regained vision in both eyes!

Through Dream Village, Jocelyne was linked with a CATS who listened and provided peer counselling to help her accept her status and to learn to live a healthy, happy and fulfilled life. Her family became more involved and began to support her, accompanying her to clinic visits. She now attends support groups and is sharing her story with her peers. She openly talks about the dangers of stigma and suicide attempts and tells other young people, “*When you have a challenge, dying is not the only solution.*”

Jocelyne, now 23, has full vision in both eyes, a suppressed viral load, and is filled with hope and a world of new possibilities.

Would you recommend Zvandiri?

“I would 100% recommend the CATS Model to any country that wants to see outcome-based solutions for CAYALHIV. It is one of the few models that works closely with the health system—it is not in isolation. The health centre becomes the basis for interventions and also solutions and the community is involved in what is happening there. For any country that wants to really adapt to support young people—I would recommend.”

Manzi Norman, Director, Dream Village