

High access to services, low access to decision-making

Programme theme: **Uptake SRHR Services**

Country: **Uganda**

Tags: **Uptake SRHR Services; YPLHIV; PHDP; Disclosure of status; Uganda Young Positives**

‘Positive Health, Dignity and Prevention’ (PHDP) is a new global policy framework that highlights the importance of placing the person living with HIV at the centre of managing their health and wellbeing. Uganda Young Positives, a key network of young people living with HIV, conducted a PHDP baseline study. The study showed that access to SRH services was high among HIV positive youth, but participation in decision-making was very low.

Young people living with HIV generally have good access to services and counselling, and show a high uptake of antiretroviral treatment. Also, they show high levels of awareness of SRHR issues that relate to living with HIV, such as how to prevent transmission. However, having access and awareness does not necessarily lead to behavioural change.

The problem of non-disclosure

One third of the respondents said they did not use a condom the last time they had sex, and at least one third did not inform their partner about their HIV status.

Non-disclosure of HIV status may be caused by social desirability bias as well as by fear of discrimination and stigma. The results show that one third of those interviewed had experienced discrimination in the previous year and ninety per cent does not know of any laws protecting people living with HIV from discrimination. Disclosure of status could be the starting point for designing effective SRHR interventions, determining the actual extent of discrimination and stigma, and also for understanding how these can be effectively addressed.

More engagement needed

Young people living with HIV understand the importance of organisations or groups that provide support to YPLHIV, however only half of them knew such a group, and only one third was part of one. A tiny percentage said they knew about departmental or national HIV and AIDS committees or councils. This highlights the low level of access that this population has to decision-making and reinforces the urgent need for youth engagement at this level.

Recommendations

- Emphasise the importance of disclosing HIV status for HIV prevention and care as well as for addressing bias, discrimination and stigma.
- Make PLHIV networks and support groups more accessible for young people.

Facts - ASK programme in Uganda

Where?

Gulu and Inganga districts

By whom?

- Uganda Young Positives

For whom?

Young people living with HIV (15-30 years old)

Scope of the research

275 young people living with HIV/AIDS participated in the baseline survey.

- Promote participation of YPLHIV in policy and programme development at SRHR organisations and departmental or national HIV/AIDS committees.
- Raise awareness of the importance of condom use, not only in relation to HIV, but also pregnancy and STIs.

