



We talked with our fellow young people about HIV treatment and COVID-19 and this is what we got to know

“I was given expired drugs for a really long time after which I became detectable and lost hope.” – Young participant who’s living with HIV

WHAT DID WE WANT TO DO?

Alarming stories came to our ear about fellow young people living with HIV who were given expired HIV treatment (ARVs). This means the ARVs were produced too long ago and may therefore not be working fully anymore. With our study/conversations we wanted to find out if this happens a lot. And where in Kenya this happens. Then COVID-19 came to our country and we included this in the conversations we had with young people living with HIV, to find out whether young people know enough about COVID and especially in relation to HIV?

HOW WE TALKED TO FELLOW YOUNG PEOPLE

We worked with Upinion’s tech tools for research to reach more than 1,000 young people from all over Kenya. Through Upinion we could use messaging apps like Facebook Messenger and Upinion Messenger to not only ask questions but also give information. So we gave information about how to get an HIV test and what people living with HIV need to know about COVID. The system of Upinion respects confidentiality: it automatically anonymised all data so that even we could not see who answered the questions. This level of security and respect for privacy is very important to us.

SO, WHOM DID WE TALK WITH?

Huge thanks to the more than 1,000 fellow young people from all over Kenya who talked to us! Most of you were between 20-24 years old (40%) closely followed by the 25-30 years old

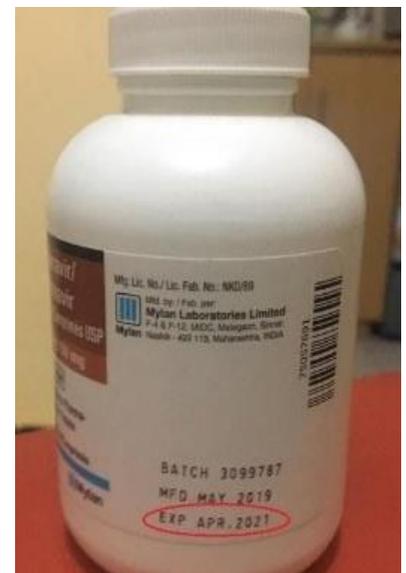
(37%) while over 7% of the respondents were between 15 and 19 years old. A bit more than half of you were male, 37% female and 12% did identify themselves as other.

What did young people share?

More than 84% knew their HIV status. Those who did not know were referred to contact the 1190 toll free ONE2ONE hotline to get information on how to get tested. Over 25% who participated in our study are living with HIV. Over 17% of them 25 didn’t take HIV treatment (ARVs). We shared the options to contact the ONE2ONE hotline or us from Y+ Kenya for receiving support to start treatment.

HOW ABOUT THE EXPIRY DATE?

Over 17% didn’t know how to check the expiry date so we showed them a picture of an ARV bottle, see here on the right.



The date in the red circle is the expiry date. After this date the ARVs might not work properly anymore. The data you see above is when the ARVs were manufactured.

At least 10% indicated they had been given expired ARVs in the past while 12% didn't know and over 7% indicated that their current ARVs passed the expiry date.

WHAT DID WE DO WITH THESE FINDINGS? WE TOOK ACTION!

Y+ Kenya participates in conversations on what Global Fund money is going to be spent on in Kenya. We ask for more funds to be allocated towards programmes for adolescent and young people and towards issues like treatment knowledge/literacy. The information you gave us really helped us to make clear how important this is! We hope more funds will be allocated and we will continue to lobby for this.

THE CORONAVIRUS

We also asked some questions about COVID-19. 50% of the surveyed young people answered that they feel they **don't know enough about COVID-19** and almost 90% wanted to know more about COVID-19 in relation to HIV.

We provided links to reliable information. For example, on COVID-19 and HIV treatment our partner Aidsfonds collected useful information on their [website](#).

What was worrying under the current restrictions is that 68% of the respondents had less than a month's supply of ARVs. As many of us collect their ARVs at a different location than where we live, we raise awareness on the importance of continued access to ARVs under COVID-19 conditions. With the help of the Ministry of Health young people are now able to access two weeks of treatment with your collection card at any health facility nearest to you.

WHAT'S UP NEXT?

We need to know more, to further improve our support to young people living with HIV! Therefore, we are having more conversations like this with fellow young people. During the next round we will talk about HIV treatment: How is Covid-19 affecting young people's access to treatment? Are young people being offered enough support? And do they know why a liver and kidney function test are important? We are going to find out and inform young people!

Partners

