

Assessing Discrimination Against People Living with HIV/AIDS in Somalia

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Introduction

- ▶ World Health Organization (2020) highlights that an estimated 38 million people living with HIV globally. We are not off, but, Somalia has among the lowest prevalence rate of people living with HIV/AIDS compared to in East Africa countries. According to the Ministry of Health (2020) People living with HIV in Somalia are estimated below 1% of the population.

Methodology

- ▶ The researcher targeted 346 respondents but those accepted to participate were 187 PLHIV including 102 females and 85 males live in different regional states in Somalia. During data collection the researcher either met face to face with the respondent or communicated by telephone. Close-ended questionnaires were used to collect data from the targeted respondents.
- ▶ The assessment conducted 1st Dec. 2020 – 10th Jan. 2021.

Respondent Profile

- ▶ females 102 and Males 85
- ▶ 40% of the respondents aged between 20-30 years,
- ▶ while one-third (33%) aged between 31-40.
- ▶ The age of 41-50 is 16%.
- ▶ Only 11% of the respondents are above 50 years.
- ▶ Don't have formal education (74%), while 22% have primary, only 4% have secondary
- ▶ Married were about five-in-ten (53%) while either divorced or widowed were 47%.

Addiction

- ▶ Drug abuse and addiction have been linked to HIV/AIDS. Respondents were asked if they addict to one of these; Cigarettes, Khad, or Tobacco. About one-third (28%) of the people living with HIV stated that they only smoke. 23% state that they smoke and consume Khat. One-in-ten (10%) highlight that they used to have drug addiction but stopped before a while. Meanwhile, 39% confirmed that they don't have an addiction at all.

Years of living with HIV

- ▶ Respondents were asked how long since when formally informed of HIV status? About five-in-ten (53%) stated that they are living with HIV 1-5 years while those living for 6-10 years are 29%, respondents indicated that they lived with HIV 11-15 years are about one-in-ten (11%), those emphasized that they lived with the longest period more than 15 years are 7%.

Residence (Housing)

- ▶ Respondents were asked whether they live in rent, IDP camps, or their own house.

The majority about six-in-ten (64%) of the respondents stated that they live in a rented house, while 17% stated that they live in IDP camps, other 19% stated that they live in their family-owned house, mainly “heritage house”.

- ▶ We asked a follow-up question which is; whether all family members or owners are aware of their HIV status. The majority said, neither family members nor owners aware of our status.

Hiding the Family HIV Status

- ▶ People who live with HIV hide their status from others, including family members. 62% stated that they hide family their HIV status. 28% indicated they only informed one person in the family mainly their spouse. Only 10% argued that all family members aware of their status. The study found that people who live with HIV are more willing to share their status with family members but, family members are most likely to discriminate.

Neighbor

- ▶ Neighboring discrimination cited as the top problem by the PLHIV about seven-in-ten (74%) underscored that they experience stigma and discrimination from their neighbors. 14% stated that they hide their status from the neighbor to avoid discrimination. However, all neighbors are not bad about one-in-ten (12%) detailed that they are dealt good and don't experience discrimination from their neighborhood.

Mobility of PLHIV

- ▶ Most of the people who live with HIV live in rental houses, however about ten-in-seven (73%) of the respondents stated that once the villagers know that they are HIV positive they evacuate the village due to stigma and discrimination and this is one of the main cause of mobility of PLHIV. Other 27% highlighted that it is not easy for them to shift from the village rather they choose to ignore stigma and discrimination from the villagers.

Children Discrimination

- ▶ Children make up a relatively small percentage of the people living with HIV, however, 83% of the parents indicated that their children are highly discriminated against in the community even if they are HIV negative. There are cases whereby children forced to drop out of school.
- ▶ 17% of the parents argued that they hide the status of their children due to fear of stigma and discrimination

Worship Places (Masjid)

- ▶ Men respondents have indicated that they maintain to have good relation with religious men (Imams) about eight-in-ten (78%) stated that they do not get discrimination in Masjids.
- ▶ 22% stated they feel discriminated against in Masjids.
- ▶ One said, “people who used to pray nearby, once they heard my HIV status has changed praying position and shifted to other corners.

Medication

- ▶ According to the AIDS commission, there are ART centers around the country, for instance, south and central there are seven (7) centers. In Puntland, there are four (4) while Somaliland has six (6). According to MoH (2020), 35% of people living with HIV receive lifelong antiretroviral therapy (ART). Yet there are around six-in-ten (65%) PLHIV who are not registered in ART centers and do not take medication.

Health Professional

- ▶ During data collection, respondents shared different cases including pregnant women who rejected delivery service due to their HIV status. About seven-in-ten (73%) of respondents highlighted that health professionals do bad things dealing with PLHIV. However, about a quarter (27%) of the respondents stated that they don't feel discriminated against health professionals.

Job opportunities PLHIV

- ▶ Most of the people who live with HIV are in the working-age but, inequality and discrimination are the top threat to the people living with HIV. We asked respondents if there is a job opportunity they missed due to their HIV status. 85% stated that they miss job opportunities because of their HIV status. 15% highlighted that they receive and maintain their jobs because they hide their status.

Employees Discrimination

- ▶ Across the people surveyed the greatest threat are stigma & discrimination. 72% stated that they face discrimination in working stations which resulted to leave them the jobs. Other 28% underlined that they hide their status which helped them to remain on the job.
- ▶ Worthy note, there's no national policy that protects PLHIV from discrimination.

Social Protection

- ▶ Somali government with the support of the world bank launch social protection fund for low-income and vulnerable people.
- ▶ We asked people living with HIV if they receive Social protection schemes known as “Baxnano”? The variable “No” receives the highest ranking of any other variable in this study almost 100% of the respondents stated that they don’t receive social protection support from the government.

Conclusion

- ▶ HIV has no race, religion, and ethnicity, everyone can become positive in a different way. Surveyed respondents expressed a negative view of the community of their HIV status. All most of the respondents stated that the community at large considers them criminals due to their HIV status. Some of the respondents said “People think the virus passes through adultery only but, they don’t know that a person can become positive through legal marriage.

Continue

- ▶ Communities need a better understanding of HIV and not to assume that HIV positive person is adultery”.
- ▶ Limited knowledge and education are the main cause of stigma and discrimination. Social awareness of HIV is very low among our communities. for those who discriminate the PLHIV have little or no understanding of how VIRUS transmits.

Thank you

