

Living with HIV in the time of COVID-19

findings from a survey of networks of people
living with HIV

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Our Methodology

The three global networks - Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+), the International Community of Women Living with HIV (ICW) and the Global Network of Young People Living with HIV (Y+) came together to coordinate our response to the new global pandemic of COVID-19.

Our first step was to conduct a survey of networks of people living with HIV, including networks of women and young people.

The survey:

During April and May 2020, 59 organisations from 37 countries responded to our survey on Life in the time of COVID-19.

Networks of people living with HIV and community organisations from across five continents shared the challenges they were witnessing, their organisational needs and the strategies they were putting in place to support their communities.



THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

Ensuring a regular supply of medicine

“Most members have not managed to have their refills because the facilities are partially closed to outpatient services.”

MOPESUN, Kenya

- “They’re only given medicine for 1 or 2 weeks, so people must return to health services fairly frequently during this pandemic.”

- Jaringan Indonesia Positif (JIP), Indonesia

“Because of HIV-related stigma, people living with HIV pick up their medication from other towns but with the closure of towns with COVID-19 cases, people living with HIV can no longer travel to their health care centres.”

Réseau des personnes vivant avec le VIH/Sida au Burkina Faso



Lack of essential health services

“Due to restrictive measures, the number of HIV detections at the healthcare level is reduced by about 50-60%. Healthcare facilities are testing only urgent patients based on clinical symptoms.”

All-Ukrainian Ne
Living with HIV



“All consultations for PrEP were cancelled ... Sexual and reproductive health consultations in health centres or CBOs were closed or kept open with many limitations.”

Grupo de Ativistas em
Tratamentos (GAT), Portugal

“Mental stress is very high among women living with HIV ... women living with HIV are not able to go to hospital for PMTCT services”

ICW Asia Pacific

“

Most people with HIV do not dare disclose their status to temporarily receive ARVs because of fear of stigma and discrimination if their HIV status has to be disclosed in that area in order to get medicines at these health facilities. ”

Vietnam Network of People Living with HIV (VNP+), Vietnam.

Marginalised people face more discrimination

“Some people, especially female sex workers and some young people feel stigmatized looking at someone coming to deliver their drug. They at times feel humiliated.”

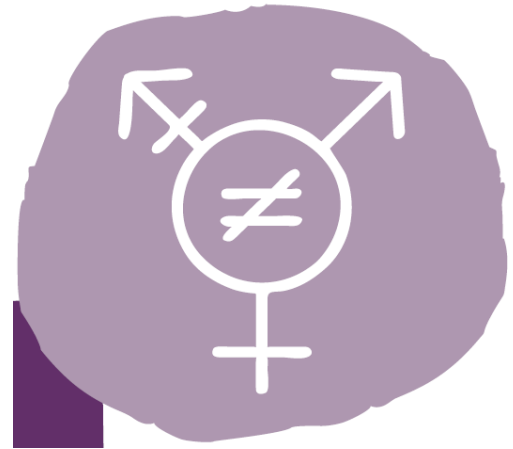
Uganda Network of Young People Living with HIV/AIDS

“It was very hard to make ARVs available to a migrant worker in India. It took almost 20 days, many conversations ... finally he got the medicine.”

ICW Asia Pacific

“verbal attacks towards PLHIV and LGBTI have increased because some people believe that COVID-19 and HIV are a divine punishment.”

Coneresa+, Democratic Republic Congo



Worsening inequities and injustices

"Women living with HIV who have initiated cooperatives have lost their products and the business suffered. They need additional support after the COVID-19 pandemic."

Rwanda Network of People Living



¹⁵ "There is the challenge of hunger and starvation especially among people living with HIV in the Nairobi slums who usually depend on low level-casual work to earn money for food."

NEPHAK, Kenya

"There have been quite a number of people who have found it hard to deal or to be able to report human rights. This lockdown has violated all human rights in the bill of rights."

Activate Change Drivers South Africa



HOW WE ARE
RISING UP AND
LEADING THE
RESPONSE

Busting myths and delivering services



“People living with HIV peers and community-based supporters are assigned to deliver ARV drugs to the specified location where the people living with HIV have agreed to get it. This may be at the district hospital, or other desirable places where clients feel comfortable, including at their homes.”

Community Health and Inclusion Association, Laos

“We have done a 30 minutes radio talk show covering most frequent asked questions around COVID-19 and being young, HIV positive and COVID-19.”

Africaid Zvandiri, Zimbabwe

Continuing to give peer support

“RRP+ is acquiring a short code (toll free) number where people living with HIV could call for free and provide information about the quality of services, they are receiving at health facilities.”

RRP+, Rwanda

“We are unable to conduct support groups, however, we are proposing to do it virtually with persons who have a smartphone and activate a data plan to cover the cost.”

Jamaican Network of Seropositives



“Want to talk?” mental health support line

Offering solidarity through social media

“We are using Twitter and Facebook to raise the challenges that Young mothers and teenage girls living with HIV are facing due to COVID-19.”

Most at Risk Young Mothers and Teenage Girls Living with HIV Initiative,



“We are trying to keep in touch with existing women in our networks (eg dolutegravir discussions, cervical cancer and mentor mother WhatsApp groups and via email listservs) to provide accurate supportive information and to learn from them what they are experiencing.”

Salamander Trust, UK

“We forward prevention and encouragement messages from the national centre for disease control on our WhatsApp group.”

PAPWC, Nigeria

Giving social protection to those in need

“In Saint-Petersburg we have managed to get private donation for food – and now are distributing food for sex workers with kids. Also we are trying to organize housing – are trying to get money for that and are renting apartments now to give housing for those in most need.”

Silver Rose, Russia

“We are providing food support to 1400 needy people living with HIV in Nepal from age 1 to 12 and we are providing menstruation hygiene kits to all female people living with HIV between 12 and 18 years in Nepal.”

National Association of People Living with HIV and AIDS (NAP+N), Nepal.



Responding to COVID-19

"We are finalizing an agreement with UNAIDS to conduct a rapid survey on the impact of coronavirus on people living with HIV in order to generate and use statistics to address the anticipated challenges to follow-ups on ART, missed appointments and overall service challenges to be faced by people with HIV."

RNP+, Senegal

NACOPHA, Tanzania



**FAMILY PLANNING AND ABORTION SERVICES
ARE AVAILABLE EVEN DURING #COVID19**

#KOMESHACORONA

SUMMARY

- People living with HIV are feeling the impact of COVID-19, as is everyone, but they are experiencing it in different ways.
- The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequities in terms of access to treatment and care for marginalized groups.
- Groups and Networks of people living with HIV have responded to these challenges in innovative and inspiring ways drawing on their experiences of the HIV pandemic.

Our recommendations

- **Invest in and engage networks of people living with HIV** – don't just acknowledge how we are central to the response. Fund our organisations and use our expertise to strengthen the COVID 19 response at national and global levels.
- **Guarantee the health and wellbeing of people living with HIV** – we will not stand by and watch the erosion of our health and rights. We demand a consistent supply of our medicines, a continued effort to integrated and comprehensive services including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), TB, harm reduction, mental health and other health services.
- **Prioritise our safety and our human rights** – we already face stigma, discrimination and violence, and our right to confidentiality and safety is paramount. We will continue to oppose repressive laws and criminalisation based on our health status, our sexual preference, our gender identity, our use of drugs or because we engage in sex work.
- **Deliver social protection for all** –these schemes continue to leave out the very people who need it most. We demand our governments acknowledge our existence and include us in policies and budgets to protect our jobs and incomes.

Engage networks of people living with HIV!



@Khawaja Sira Society, Pakistan

