

Study title: Perspectives on oral health care integration in HIV care and research in low-resource settings: Insights from patients and key stakeholders in Uganda

Focused Group Discussion guide: People living with HIV (PLHIV)

Background:

The main purpose of this study is to assess the current the training needs, and examine the policy environment and perspectives of stakeholders regarding HIV/Oral health research training in Uganda. The findings of this needs assessment will inform the development of a robust HIV/oral health research training program to build capacity and strengthen HIV related oral health research in Uganda.

You have been selected to attend this interview because you are key stakeholders in HIV and /or oral health. In this exercise, we are going to discuss your perspectives on the HIV/oral health research training needs, which are valuable in achieving the overarching aim of this study.

I again remind you that our discussion will be audio-recoded so that all the information will be captured to aid data analysis.

FGD for PLHIV

Composition: Number of attendees, attendees by sex,

Definition: We are going to talk about oral health is among people living with HIV. Oral health is the state of the mouth, teeth and orofacial structures that enables individuals to perform essential functions such as eating, breathing and speaking, and encompasses psychosocial dimensions such as self-confidence, well-being and the ability to socialize and work without pain, discomfort and embarrassment.

Examples of oral manifestations that you may experience include, tooth decay/cavities, taste disturbances, mouth sores/ulcers, thick white or yellow patches, dry mouth, gum problems, hairy-looking lesions (warts) and oral cancer (any cancer/tumour of the mouth)

Background on HIV/Oral Health Experiences

1. Have you ever experienced or seen another person living with HIV experience such oral conditions? Share with us the experience or observation about the condition
 - Probe: Types of oral conditions faced, symptoms, impact on daily life
2. How did these oral conditions impact your *[or the person observed]* daily life, well-being/quality of life, and your *[or the person observed]* ability to manage HIV treatment (including, medication adherence, nutrition and quality of life)?

3. What barriers have you encountered in accessing oral health care services as a PLHIV?

- Probe: Availability, affordability, stigma, lack of trained providers, etc.

Priorities and needs

4. From your perspective as a PLHIV, how important is addressing oral health needs within comprehensive HIV care?

- Probe: Impacts on quality of life, overall health, treatment outcomes

5. What specific oral health concerns, issues, or needs would you prioritize for research attention and interventions?

- Probe: Prevention, management, integration into HIV care, etc.

6. How do you think research findings in this area could help improve oral health outcomes and the overall care and support for PLHIV in Uganda?

7. On the other hand, what potential barriers or challenges do you foresee that could hinder such a program?

- Probe: Stigma, resource constraints, lack of awareness, resistance to change, etc.

8. What do you think could be potential facilitators or enablers for the successful implementation of an HIV/oral health research program in Uganda?

- Probe: Resources, policies, collaborations, community engagement, etc.

Stakeholder engagement

9. How would you like to see the PLHIV community actively involved in the development and implementation of an HIV/oral health research program?

- Probe: Roles, contributions, representation, decision-making

10. What other key stakeholders or organizations do you think should be engaged in this initiative to ensure it addresses the needs and perspectives of PLHIV?

- Probe: Healthcare providers, policymakers, researchers, community groups, etc.

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Key Informant Interview (KII) guide (HIV and/or oral Health experts and policy makers)

Background:

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You have been selected to attend this interview because you are a key stakeholder in HIV and /or oral health. In this exercise, we are going to discuss your perspectives on the HIV/oral health research training needs, which are valuable in achieving the overarching aim of this study. I again remind you that our discussion will be audio-recorded so that all the information will be captured to aid data analysis.

Thank you again for allowing to talk to us about this important topic.

Research landscape

1. From your perspective, what do you think about the current landscape of research focused on the intersection of HIV and oral health in Uganda?

- Probe: Key areas of investigation, major studies/projects, research groups/centres, policy environment, implementation challenges, resource allocation

2. What are the major challenges, barriers, or limitations that researchers face in conducting research on HIV/oral disease comorbidity in the Ugandan context?

- Probe: Funding constraints, infrastructure deficits, lack of skilled personnel, ethical/regulatory hurdles, policy environment etc.

Research Capacity and Training Needs

3. How would you assess the current research capacity and expertise related to HIV and oral disease comorbidity research in Uganda?

- Probe: Strengths, weaknesses, gaps in knowledge, skills, and competencies, research priorities, interest in utilizing research findings,

4. How can locally-relevant research findings contribute to the development of evidence-based policies, programs, and interventions to improve oral health outcomes for people living with HIV (PLHIV)?

-probe:

5. How can/does a dedicated research capacity building program focused on HIV and oral health align with and support Uganda's existing national priorities, strategies, and initiatives?

- Probe: National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan, National Oral Health Policy, research agenda

Multidisciplinary Collaboration

6. How important is multidisciplinary collaboration between HIV clinicians, oral health professionals, basic scientists, epidemiologists, and other relevant disciplines in advancing research in this area?

- Probe: Examples of successful collaborations, benefits, challenges

7. What are the current barriers or challenges that hinder effective multidisciplinary collaboration in HIV and oral health research?

- Probe: Siloed approaches, communication gaps, differing priorities, resource constraints, etc.

8. How can a dedicated HIV/oral health research training program facilitate and promote such interdisciplinary collaborations, both within and across institutions?

Research infrastructure and resources

9. What are the key infrastructure and resource needs (e.g., laboratories, equipment, data management systems, bio-banks) that should be addressed to support high-quality, research in HIV and oral health?

- Probe: Current deficits, priorities for infrastructure development

10. How can a research capacity building program contribute to strengthening or developing the required research infrastructure and resources?

- Probe: Strategies for resource mobilization, partnerships, sustainability plans

Stakeholder engagement and collaborations

11. Who are the key stakeholders (academic, healthcare, government, community, etc.) that should be actively engaged in the development and implementation of an HIV and oral health research training program?

- Probe: Roles, contributions, decision-making processes

12. How can effective collaborations and partnerships be fostered between academic institutions, research organizations, healthcare providers, policymakers, and PLHIV communities to address this issue comprehensively?