

## Terms of Reference

### Research on ART adherence among adolescents and young people

**Why do an increasing number of adolescents and young people living with HIV in Malawi not adhere to their anti-retroviral treatment and how can these adolescents and young people be effectively supported to adhere to their treatment?**

#### Background and rationale

The Get Up, Speak Out (GUSO) programme aims to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of young people in seven countries by strengthening civil society organisations to effectively address young people's rights and needs.<sup>1</sup> Recently, partners within this programme from Malawi, Kenya and Uganda reported an increased number of Anti-Retroviral treatment (ART) defaulters and AIDS-related deaths among adolescents and young people living with HIV.

In Malawi, Aidsfonds is working with Coalition of Women Living with HIV (COWLHA). COWLHA is one of our partners noticing an increased number of people who are not adhering to treatment, despite the increasing uptake of HIV and Reproductive Maternal and Neonatal Health (RMNH) services. In order to address the gap, COWLHA trained expert clients who work with hospitals and tracing defaulters of ART. With Malawi, since January 2017, implementing a test and treat strategy, anecdotal evidence from COWLHA expert clients suggests that the test-and-treat strategy<sup>2</sup> is even increasing the number of defaulters more than before which might be because clients are initiated into treatment before they are psychologically prepared.

#### Audience and use of findings

As Aidsfonds, we want to better support COWLHA and other partners and contribute to evidence and evidenced-based programming on ART adherence among adolescents and young people.

#### Deliverables:

- Research proposal with description of protocol;
- Focus Group Discussion and interview guides;
- Research report;
- Co-creation session;
- Two-pager with key recommendations for pilot intervention;
- Presentation at relevant conferences and forums like AIDS2018.

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<sup>1</sup> In the Get Up Speak Out programme (2016-2020), a consortium works towards a society where all young people, especially girls and young women, are empowered to realise their SRHR in societies with a positive attitude towards young people's sexuality. The consortium consists of six Dutch/UK organisations (CHOICE, dance4life, IPPF, Rutgers (lead agency), Simavi and Aidsfonds), and about 40 partner organisations. The GUSO programme is implemented in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Indonesia and Pakistan by in-country alliances. The programme is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>2</sup> The Test and Treat strategy meant that if one is diagnosed to be HIV positive, he/she is required to start treatment immediately without waiting for CD4 count to drop to a certain level as was the case before. The strategy has been implemented in Malawi since January 2017.

## Research objective

The research objective is to make recommendations to effectively support adolescents and young people living with HIV to adhere to their ART by:

- Getting insight into the primary reasons for ART defaulting by adolescents and young people in COWLHA's implementing areas in Malawi (including e.g. age- and gender-disaggregated data; diversity of adolescents and young people; pediatric vs. behavioural-infected adolescents; link technical knowledge and adherence);
- Gathering insight into how to triage adolescents and young people that need support to adhering (not everyone has difficulties to adhere);
- Getting insight into preconditions to improve adherence to ART;
- Gathering insight into the relation between the rising rate of ART defaulters and the newly adopted test-and-treat strategy;
- Organising a co-creation session, based on the results of the preliminary research phase, in which adolescents and young people living with HIV together with experts and stakeholders develop solutions that fit their needs and jointly design a scalable<sup>3</sup>, differentiated care model that aims to support young people living with HIV to adhere to their HIV treatment;

## Research questions

- What are primary reasons for ART defaulting by young people living with HIV in COWLHA's implementing areas in Malawi?
- What preconditions and interventions are important to take into account when one wants to enhance adherence to ART?
- Is there a relation between ART default and the newly adopted test-and-treat strategy?

## Methods

Research: Survey (comparative analysis for triage) and qualitative research (FGDs, in-depth interviews). Co-creation session with adolescents and young people living with HIV, partner organisations and other stakeholders

## Qualifications and experience

- Qualitative research experience preferably in the field of HIV/AIDS or SRHR
- Ability to address sensitive issues in a sensible way
- Working according to ethical codes
- Experience in working with adolescents and young people
- Communication skills
- Proficiency in English

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<sup>3</sup> Scalable in both financial and implementational terms

## Research budget

- Research: EUR 12,000
- Co-creation session: EUR 8,000

## Timeline

When	Action
December 13 <sup>th</sup> 2017	Sending out ToR
January 15 <sup>th</sup> 2018	Deadline for submitting Expressions of Interest**
January 22 <sup>nd</sup> 2018	Selection of candidate
January 26 <sup>th</sup> 2018	Contracting
February 5 <sup>th</sup> 2018	Final research design incl. data gathering tools
February-April 2018	First phase research: Reasons for ART defaulting, preconditions to improve adherence and ART default vis-à-vis test-and-treat strategy
May 2018	Results first phase
May 10 <sup>th</sup> 2018	Late breaker abstract submission to AIDS2018: results first phase research
May/June 2018	Co-creation workshop (incl. presenting first results)
23-27 July 2018	AIDS 2018 abstract presentation results first phase research

### \*\* Requirements for Expression of Interest (Eoi)

The following documents need to be submitted with the Expression of Interest:

- Expression of interest (max. 2 pages)
  - Explaining why the candidate is most suitable for the work (responding to the ToR)
  - Including comments/ideas for the approach
  - Including a small analysis and overview of recent research to be used
  - Including a timeline for the assignment (with deadlines for each deliverable)
- Personal CV (max. 2 pages)
  - Including past experience in similar projects.
- Detailed proposed budget (max. 1 page), which can cover the number of days and costs of:
  - Research
  - Co-creation workshop

Expressions of Interest can be sent to Aidsfonds: [LEssink@aidsfonds.nl](mailto:LEssink@aidsfonds.nl)

The title of the e-mail should include 'EOI Research ART adherence'.