# Girar site-specific topic: HIV/AIDS

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## People with HIV/AIDS

According to the kebele chairman there could be many people who are HIV positive. There were only two people who disclosed their status from whom one has died last year. There is Anti-retroviral Therapy, ART service available for the community with no any payment. Nevertheless, it is not common to see people going for HIV test and taking ART. Though there might be many people who might be positive, they usually do not go to test or take ART. On the other hand, there could also be people who are taking ART. However, in fear of stigma and discrimination, they prefer to use health facilities away from their locality, where people could not identify who they are. The HEW said there are people whom she knows well are living with the virus. Nevertheless, they are afraid to disclose their status to the community. Now, there is just one man in the kebele who disclosed his status and is now taking ART.

## Extent of the problem of AIDS orphans

There is high proportion of widows in the kebele as compared to the previous times. There are eight AIDS orphans in the kebele. These children get assistance from Iddirs and women associations.

## HIV infections

Both respondents were reserved to give a rough estimate of the number of people who are known to be infected with the virus. According to one there could be 10-15% of people who are living with the virus.

## Access to retro-virals drugs?

As mentioned by both respondents it is obvious that there could be people who are living with the virus. And it is also known that there is ART service for free in hospital level. The health centre also refers patients who are suspected to have the virus to Atat Hospital. Within the hospital, there is a separate department that gives ART service only. Recently, there are many people who are going to the hospital to get ART service. Nevertheless, they take the medicine in a secret way. They hide themselves from the community and do not want to be known since being known might result in exclusion and stigma.

## Community awareness of how the virus is transmitted

According to chairman the level of community’s awareness is increasing. They are well aware of the methods in which they might contract the virus. Thus, sharing of sharp materials is no more a problem in the kebele. As there is an increased migration rate of husbands in the kebele, it is quite common that husbands going for HIV test after their stay away from home. There are some wives who refused to sleep with their husbands when they are back home after long stay in Addis Ababa or some other parts of the country. Now a days, most of the wives request their husbands to go through HIV test when they re-joined the family. They separated their bedrooms until the husband’s test result is known. Nevertheless, there is no trend in which the couple go to another test after three months. Therefore, it is difficult to know their actual status. Not only the wives, but also there are some husbands who require their wives to go through HIV test.

## Changes in sexual behaviour

There is no polygamy in the kebele. Therefore, it is difficult to talk about change in sexual behaviour of the community. As there is also limited intervention regarding behaviour change communications, it is also a challenge to figure out how the adolescents and the youth are behaving. However, there are youth who visited the health post to get condoms. Therefore, it could be inferred that there is a good prospect that there are many young people who have access to safe sexual behaviour.

## Condom use

As part of the family planning program, HEWs distributed condoms to the community. Besides, there are also some youth who visit the health post to get condoms. There is enough provision of condoms to be distributed. Compared to the previous times, there is a good attitude to condom use. Previously, the people were afraid to ask for condoms.

## Interventions to prevent the spread of the virus

There is testing in government health centres for free. This somehow contributes to the preventive efforts. When the people know their status, they will be responsible to take care of themselves, their family and their community as well. For those people who have already known their status, there is counselling in the health centres. After the counselling, they will not prepare themselves for revenge and further attack. Rather, they might feel responsible for others and educate the community about the pandemic. All these efforts together contribute to the prevention of the disease.

At the community level also there is a separate committee established to educate the community and prevent the disease. Before 2000E.C, there is a budget allocated from the woreda HIV/AIDS secretariat. The allocated budget was used to carry out community conversation regarding the disease. There is also a committee constituting 15 people. This committee facilitates community dialogue on what HIV/AIDS is, how it is transmitted, what should be done to prevent the disease and to care for people affected and infected by the virus. Though the fund from the woreda has stopped in 2000 E.C, the community conversation continued without fund. The committee organizes coffee ceremonies where about 75 people come to the ceremony and take part in the discussion program.

## Effectiveness of actions to prevent spread

It is difficult to measure the effectiveness part. However, the change in attitudes could be attributed to the frequent community dialogues.

## Interventions to treat people infected by the virus

There is referral service within the kebele through the health post. In addition, there is ART service at hospital level. For any kind of health problems, PLWHA could talk to the health professionals and get advice for any health problems, opportunistic infections.