



# Attitudes To HIV Among Young People

39. Mbeya Day

Issaya Mwakapila and Ester Sanga

## Introduction:

A person who is infected with HIV/AIDS should make every effort to adopt healthy and balanced nutrition patterns in order to meet their increased vitamins, protein and energy requirements and maintain their nutritional status.

Fruits and vegetables are among of the rich sources of micronutrients (vitamins and minerals). Micro nutrients are essential to keep the body healthy. They protect against opportunistic infections by ensuring that the lining of skin, lungs and gut remain healthy and that the immune system functions properly. Of special importance are vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E, certain B-group vitamins and minerals such as zinc and iron. A mixed diet should provide enough of these vitamins and minerals. <http://www.avert.org/hiv-nutrition.htm>

This project aimed at studying the awareness of including micronutrient – rich foods in the diet of PLWHAs, assessing the availability of more nutritious fruits and vegetables in the local environment and assessing the link between the use of vegetables and fruits and the increase of life span to PLWHAs.

## Method:

Questionnaire and interview tools were used in collecting data. These were useful for the purpose of attaining the aims of the project. Data were collected from Health professionals, stakeholders of PLWHAs and PLWHAs. Structured observations were conducted to assess the availability of more nutritious fruits and vegetables in the local environment.

### PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The project aims to create the awareness of including vegetables and fruits in the diet of PLWHAs, to study the availability of more nutritious fruits and vegetables in the local environment , and to assess the link between the use of vegetables and fruits so as to increase of life span to PLWHAs. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT Since it is scientifically proved that, HIV/AIDS tend to lower the immune system of the infected people, doctors and other health professionals have been advising PLWH to include vegetables and fruits in their diet. This result into the improvement of health conditions to PLWHAs hence an increase of their life span. Therefore, the project will derive the following benefits:-

Creating awareness of including vegetables and fruits to PLWHAs

Stimulating students and teachers to apply scientific approaches/procedures in solving social problems

Encouraging young scientists in secondary schools to use materials found in their local environment in solving social problems scientifically.

To stimulate curiosity, creativity, and inquiry to students (young scientists).

## Results:

### Awareness of including vegetables and fruits in the diet of PLWHAs

Despite the importance of fruits and vegetables in the diets, a small population is aware of including them in their diets. This has a social cultural background. The population feeding system is based on filling the stomachs. In this case carbohydrate and protein rich foods are of first priority in many families.

Data from stakeholders of PLWHAs as well as from PLWHAs revealed that, few people are aware of the importance of including fruits and vegetables to the diet of PLWHAs.

Most of the PLWHAs interviewed said that they do not get enough amount of information, and this was supported by the findings from observations (Table 1). One PLWHA whose interaction with health worker was observed receiving general information about balanced diet, emphasis was not put on the importance of including fruits and vegetables in the diet; rather emphasis was put on protein rich foods.

Generally, data from the table above shows that, fruits and vegetables are rich in vitamins and minerals. Different literature review showed that vitamins are good in fighting against body diseases and infections. This proves that, there is high link between the use of vegetables and fruits and the increase of life span to PLWHAs. That is why even the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends vitamin A supplements every 4-6 months for all young children (6-59 months old) at high risk of vitamin A deficiency; this includes those born to HIV positive mothers in resource-limited settings.



Extent of including fruits and vegetables in the diet of PLWHAs	Frequency	percentage
Very large extent	00	00%
Large extent	02	08%
Some extent	05	20%
small extent	18	72%

Table 1. Awareness of including vegetables and fruits in the diet of PLWHAs

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly support	7	47%
support	5	33%
Don't know	3	20%

## Conclusions:

HIV viruses infect the helper T – cells, hence they become incapable of performing their immune functions, and the body's natural defense is impaired giving room for opportunistic infection to attack. As the body infected by several diseases, the victim decreases his/her life span. Our study in Mbeya city has revealed that, fruits and vegetables available in local environment should be included in daily diet so as to improve the suppressed immune system.

Generally, from the above data 12(80%) of the respondents supported that, including fruits and vegetables to diet of PLWHAs will increase their life span while few stakeholders who are taking care of the PLWHAs, they don't know the link between including vegetables and fruits to diet of PLWHAs and increase of their life span.

## References:

Dr. Pamplon. G.D & Roger, M.D. (2007). *Health Foods*. European Union. Valencia, Spain.

<http://www.avert.org/hiv-nutrition.htm>

<http://www.pcukraine.org/materials>

<http://www.reproline.jhu.edu>

Johnston R and Lang MM. (2007). *Formative Research on Food Security and Nutrition among People Living with HIV/AIDS* in Banteay Mean. Cambodia

## Further information:

Download at: [www.youngscientists.co.tz/posters](http://www.youngscientists.co.tz/posters)