

Health Care



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Tiko, 13 years old: “We do not get good medicines from our clinics. We are not treated well for that matter. It is like if you’ve come to the clinic, and you tell them that you’re HIV positive, they treat you like you’ve gone out of your way to get it. They shout at you and sometimes they send you back home. They tell you there is no medicine. Those who are disabled and who use wheelchairs are not going to be able to go up the stairs.”

Tebo, 15 years old: “I think government should provide medicine because it is hard to survive without it. Most of the time in our clinics we don’t have the medicine. I would be happy if they can try to be creative so that they can meet the needs of people.”

Wandile, 7 years old: “This is a bed [referring to drawing of things that he needs]. The hospitals are running short of beds. They are asking for beds.”

2.2.2 “We have no money for transport”

Many of the children complained that the health services are a long distance from their homes and that they can not afford the cost of public transport.

Wonderboy, 12 years old: “The clinics are too far from our houses and we have no money for transport.”

“ I think government should provide medicine because it is hard to survive without it. ”

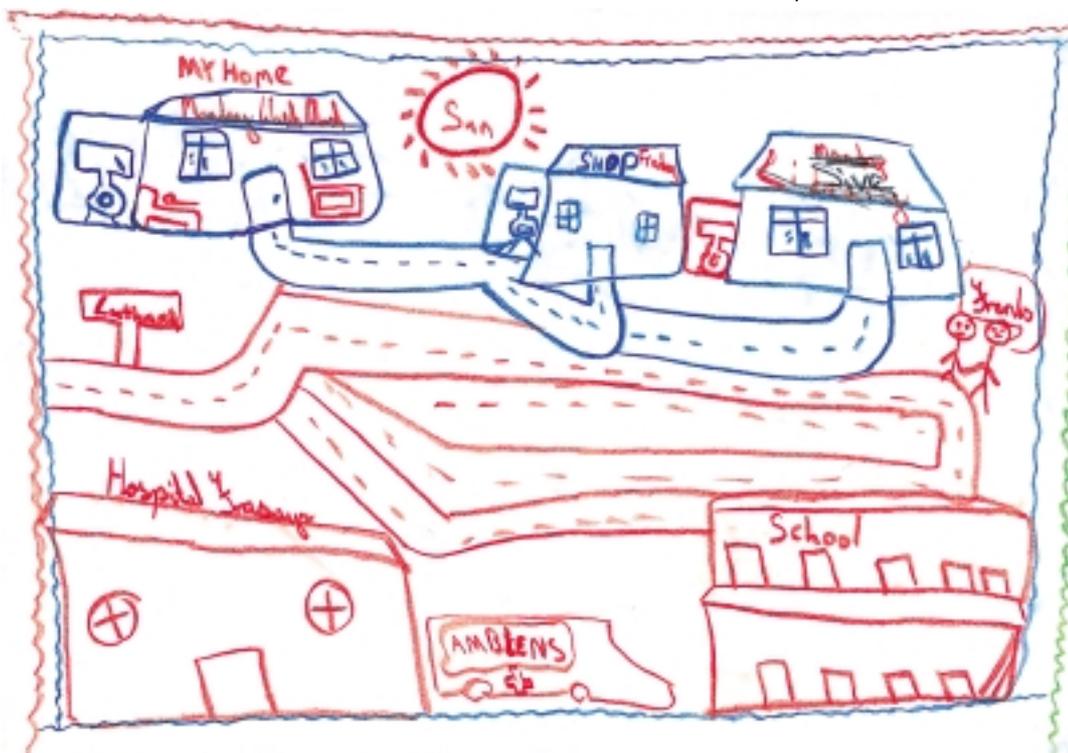
Nthathi, 15 years old: “My story is about a girl who lost both her parents to AIDS. Her mother did not know that her husband had AIDS. She needed good medication only to find that it was expensive and the clinics were far away, clinics where she could get the best medication.”

2.2.3 “We want healthy young people”

The children called for government to implement programmes to prevent mother to child transmission of HIV and to make anti-retroviral therapy available.

Lumka, 13 years old: “The government must fight to get the drugs that help the people, and to get the drugs, like AZT at low prices.”

Nthabiseng, 16 years old: “They must give them AZT if they are pregnant because we want healthy young people so that we can have a better South Africa. Government must make sure that every clinic gets AZT because it is important for our nation.”



Many of the children’s drawings contained pictures of ambulances. Lack of transport (particularly in rural areas) is a major barrier to service access.



2.2.4 “I am worried about the rural area”

The children spoke about the lack of equity in service delivery and asked that special attention be paid to services in rural areas.

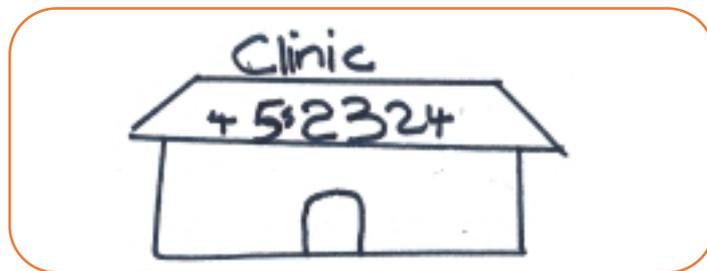
Delani, 16 years old: “Challenge number one is the medication. Most of us in the rural areas, we don’t have the special funds to buy the medication. It will be better if we can get them cheaper because we know there is nothing for Mahala [for free]”.

Nthabiseng, 16 years old: “I am worried about the rural area because most of them are the victims and they don’t have resources. No one wants to work there because people are dying everyday. I will be happy if government can focus on the rural area. People don’t have food. That is why they keep on having sex without using condoms because they are far away from the clinic. Government talks about free condoms but people who are living in the villages don’t get the opportunity to get them. That is why the rate is very high in the rural areas. No one wants to help them, everybody wants to deal with people of Gauteng or Cape Town. I will be happy if they can go house to house and not only at school. It is difficult to teach adults about HIV/AIDS because I am young, but for someone like a social worker, it is easy. People who don’t use condoms are grown up, not children who go to school because children don’t mind to walk long distances to get a condom. The information is there to stop the high rate of this disease.”

2.2.5 “They do not keep your file private”

The children expressed their concern over the lack of confidentiality in health facilities. They talked about instances where nurses had openly discussed a child’s HIV+ status in front of others. The fear of being publicly taunted made some of the children reluctant to visit a clinic.

“ I am worried about the rural area because most of them are the victims and they don’t have resources. ”



“ The nurses pointed at her in front of the people saying she is the one. ”

Ncobile, 16 years old: “While she was passing she saw the nurse who tested her for HIV/AIDS. Now she was greeting this nurse and the nurses pointed at her in front of the people saying she is the one.”

Nolwando, 18 years old: “Nurses, they jump you in the queue, they ignore you when they know your problems. They do not keep your file private. They just talk to you about what’s in your file even when there are people around. Sometimes there is no medication. This is a big problem. Sometime when you go to the clinic they say come tomorrow, then you go home and die. Maybe if they had helped you, you wouldn’t have died.”

Vuyani, 14 years old: “Doctors must not tell our parents about our results until we, as their patients, are ready.”

2.2.6 “They say we are too young to ask”

HIV/AIDS prevention and reproductive health information go hand in hand. Health services have a key role to play in ensuring that preventative information is available to children and youth in appropriate formats. Many of the children spoke about how they had approached clinic staff to get information on HIV but were chased away because they were seen as too young to be asking questions.

Robert, 14 years old: “Sometimes they get angry when we ask questions about HIV – they say we are too young to ask.”

Delani, 16 years old: “When you are with a nurse and you tell them you are HIV+ and you are young they will ask you to repeat yourself and tell you ‘why did you engage in sex so young?’ and ‘go back to where you got it’.”

Tiko, 13 years old: "I don't see any problems at the clinic because they must teach us, at my clinic they teach us. But sometimes they get a bit angry at us when we ask them too many questions about HIV and AIDS, and they don't want to give out medicines to people who have HIV."

Vincent, 13 years old: "They shout at me, 'how do you know about HIV/AIDS', things like that, when I go to ask for more information. They shout at us like we shouldn't be talking such."

“ Sometimes they get angry when we ask questions about HIV – they say we are too young to ask. ”

2.2.7 "They lash out at us even when it is not our fault"

The groups were asked to talk about the way in which children are treated at health facilities. While the response was mixed (both positive and negative), the majority of the children expressed concern over the attitude of clinic staff and the fact that patients are made to wait in a queue for hours before being seen.

Tebo, 15 years old: "I don't like the attitude of the nurses. They don't like their job. The way they treat people is like nursing, it was the opportunity and they didn't like it. They like to shout at people. They don't have good caring approach."

Nthombi, 11 years old: "Some nurses do not treat people well at all. You get to a place at five and they treat you at nine. You queue for a long time."

Celiwe, 15 years old: "In our community clinics we do not get good treatment. Even if it is an emergency they insist that you follow the queue, even if this takes longer. Sometimes they re-use needles and this way people can get HIV. Nurses do not understand, they'll send you home and tell you that there is no treatment. Even the disabled do not get the treatment that they deserve and our clinics are too far."

Thozama, 12 years old: "Nurses don't understand us; they lash out at us even when it is not our fault. The nurses ignore people and treat them with disrespect and swear at them"

Verna, 15 years old: "At the clinics the nurses treat you like dirt because the nurses know that no-one else will treat you besides her – therefore the government needs to have nurses change their attitudes."

Ayanda, 18 years old: "In some hospitals treatment is good. In some hospitals it is bad. It is only that nurse who told me to go home to wait for my day of death. I had isifuba [TB]. I stayed in an oxygen tank for a week. I was not treated well. I would ask for an extra blanket then I would be told that I am nagging, when will you go home. We've had enough of you."

Sindile, 14 years old: "Nurses must stop discriminating against people. Their work is to help people to be healthy not to discriminate against them. Nurses should get training so that they can know how to approach people, especially when they tell them about AIDS. It is very hard to accept that you are HIV positive."

2.2.8 "Nurses also help you"

The children also spoke about their positive experiences of health facilities and the fact that many clinic staff go out of their way to help you when you are sick

Ndileka, 12 years old: "This is a hospital. When I am sick they give me pills and inject me. I pay R7,00. Even when I don't have the money - they treat me. They know that I am sick and I have to get the pills."

Thabang, 13 years old: "When you're at the clinic they help you with medicines, and they tell you things about getting well."

“ You get to a place at five and they treat you at nine. You queue for a long time. ”



“Nurses also help you, they tell you what happens when you have HIV.”

Samantha, 10 years old: “If you come to my clinic, they don’t say anything, they just see if they can help you.”

Aphiwe, 13 years old: “They must help you at the clinic if you’re HIV. Sometimes they even come to speak to you at school about HIV.”

Helena, 8 years old: “Nurses also help you, they tell you what happens when you have HIV.”



“Even when I don’t have the money - they treat me.”

2.3 Conclusion

The children’s shared experiences highlight the need to critically review the services available to children at primary level health care facilities. While some children shared positive experiences of the services they had received at clinics and hospitals, many spoke about being verbally abused and discriminated against as a result of their HIV status. Many health facilities are not child and youth friendly resulting in children being unable to access advice, counselling, testing and condoms without being subjected to verbal abuse.

Children described how, in their experience, health facilities are not adequately equipped with the necessary infrastructure and pharmaceuticals to address basic illnesses. Clinics are largely inaccessible to children because of the lack of transport and children asked for subsidised or free transport to health facilities as well as mobile clinics. The children called for the extension of programmes to prevent the transmission of HIV from mother to child and for antiretroviral treatment for themselves and their families.