

# Discrimination and strength – A photovoice project with immigrants living with HIV in Germany



Tanja Gangarova (Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe e.V.), Germany CU Expo Conference, Corner Brook, Canada, June 21, 2013

#### **Overview**



- Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe e.V. (DAH)
- Immigrants and HIV/Aids in Germany
- Stigma Index Study
- AfroLebenVoice Project
  - PhotoVoice Training and Implementation
  - Examples from AfroLebenVoice/Products
  - Conclusion & Discussion



## Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe e.V. (DAH)

National association of 127 AIDS service organizations (ASO)

Non Governmental Organization

Focussing on self-help and HIV prevention with vulnerable populations (MSM, IDU, CSW, immigrants, prisoners)

Structural approach to HIV prevention: social context, empowerment, community participation





# Population with migration background

~18% of the general population in Germany

High heterogeneity within group due to:

- country of origin
- legal status
- migration experience
- socioeconomic status

### **HIV-positive immigrants**

~ 30% of new HIV diagnosis in Germany

Vulnerable immigrant groups further differ by:

- HIV risks
- access to health care



## People Living with HIV Stigma Index Study

# Experiences of stigma and discrimination of People living with HIV (PLWH) in Germany

Germany	Immigrants	Non – Immigrants	Significanc e
Exclusion from a social gathering	21,5%	9,6%	0,1%
Exclusion from family activities	19,9%	9,8%	0,1%
Gossiping	67,3%	51,1%	0,1%
Sexual rejection	57,4%	43,8%	0,1%
Denial of health services	32,9%	15,0%	0,1%



## **AfroLebenVoice** – a photovoice project

Partners: Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe e.V. (the national AIDS service organization), AfroLeben+ (a national self-help group of immigrants living with HIV in Germany), Prof. Hella von Unger

Project duration: 2012 - 2013

Community-Based Participatory Research / Photovoice

Project aims: to explore the social impacts of stigmatization and discrimination of immigrants living with HIV in Germany and to evoke action for change





AfroLeben+ is a national Self-Help Group of HIV positive, primarily African immigrants which was founded in 2001



AfroLeben+ Members act as regional contact persons for immigrants living with HIV in Germany

AfroLeben+ Members offer support on topics related to living with HIV in Germany, do prevention work in their communities and initiate regional Self-Help Groups

AfroLeben+ meets four times a year. The meetings are funded by the Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe e.V.



#### **Photovoice**

Photovoice as a participatory method of community-based research (CBR)

"Photovoice is a process by which people can identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique. It entrusts cameras to the hands of people to enable them to act as recorders, and potential catalysts for change, in their own communities." (Wang & Burris, 1997: 369)

## **AfroLebenVoice - Procedure**





Photo Voice

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## **AfroLebenVoice - Project Planning**

Participatory Project Planning (2 Workshops - 1,5 days each)

- ➤ Project aims
- **≻**Timeline
- ➤ Budget (cameras, appropriate fees to participants for their time and efforts in collaboration, printing costs, board and lodging, products, translation etc.)

Who takes part? (informed consent)

Sixteen members of the Network AfroLeben+ chose to take part in a photovoice project



## **AfroLebenVoice - Training**

Training (2 Modules - 1,5 days each)

topics and criminal/criminalised activities

Introduction to photovoice
What can we take a photo of – and how?
Clarify the role of the participants
Concider ethics(\*) and data protection aspects:
Photos of persons only with their agreement
Caution with photos of vulnerable persons (people living with HIV), sensitive

(\*) Principles of research ethics: AfroLebenVoice participants must be familiar with process of informed consent, data must be treated confidentially (anonymized)



## AfroLebenVoice - Field Phase

Field Phase (4 Workshops – 1,5 days each)

Questions that guide the participants include:

- 1)What makes you feel sad in Germany?
- 2)What gives you power in life?







#### AfroLebenVoice - Discussion

Participants present their photos: What do you see here? (description of the contents); Why did you take this picture? How does this relate to your life? (context)

The group discusses the photos

Main issues and results are summarized

The assignment for the next field phase is defined

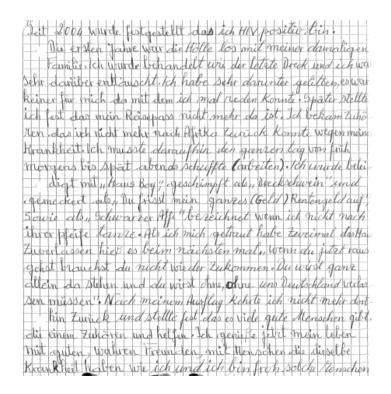
The cycle (field phase - discussion – field phase) is going to be repeated until the topics repeat resp. the main topics are discussed



#### AfroLebenVoice - Field Phase

## Further steps:

- Writing the stories
- Recording the stories (digital stories)





### A few examples of the diverse information collected by using photovoice



## Example "What gives you life power?"

Ama: "I moved to Germany in 2007, shortly afterwards I was tested and when the results came back, I was HIV positive ... In Africa this diagnosis is considered as 'a visa to the cemetery'. I decided to draw back and to wait for

death. It didn't come. Thanks for the good medical care in Germany I started to feel much better very soon ... I got in contact with the local Aids-Service-Organisation which helped me to meet other HIV positive people and share my experience with them. Many of these people told me that they have been living very long with this disease ... Thereby they reawakened my will to live and the hope that all my wishes will come true."

#### **AfroLebenVoice**



## A few examples of the diverse information collected by using photovoice



#### Example "What gives you life power?"

Kalinga: "I have to mention two points which are very important for me and are giving me energy to live – one of them is the German Social System.

The human being is one who always complains (especially the German beings) – dissatisfaction when one

gets everything on the table, people find always something to complain about – wants a bit more here and there!

I'm talking about the German Social System which gave me the chance to have a very complicated but very good health insurance! This System is the reason why I'm standing here today with a lot of power and glory... good medication and good doctors.

I have got the ability to have beautiful healthy children despite my disease – what can be more beautiful than that? I do not know where I would be today if I did not come to this country, perhaps dead...? You never know!!!"





### **Peer-based Analysis:**

- 1. Choosing photos (Which photos are relevant and show not only key forms of discrimination experienced by the participants but also their coping strategies and strengths)
- 2. Contextualization (storytelling)
- 3. Codification (identify main issues/themes)
- Development of recommendations





## **AfroLebenVoice - Main findings**

## Experiences of stigma and discrimination in Germany:

- German laws & institutions (no access to work, medical care and treatment, education services etc.)
- Medical sector (doctors, nurses etc.)
- Family, community
- Mass media (campaigns)
- Internalized stigma and fears



#### AfroLebenVoice – Recommendations

- Politics: protecting the human rights of refugees and other immigrants, overcoming legal discrimination (restricted access to health-care system, restrictions of mobility due to residency obligation etc.)
- Medical sector: offering intercultural trainings, further education related to hiv treatment and care, multilingual services etc.
- Preventive practice using positive and inclusive pictures of immigrants, (avoiding cliches and stereotypes), enabling participation of immigrants in HIV prevention, supporting self-help groups etc.
- Mass media more balanced and differentiated reporting
- Communities providing appropriate information on HIV and living with HIV

## **Products**



- Photo Catalogue
- Mobile Exhibition
- Web-Site (Images und Digital Voices)
- Publications
- New Project Ideas



## **Examples from the Photo Catalogue**

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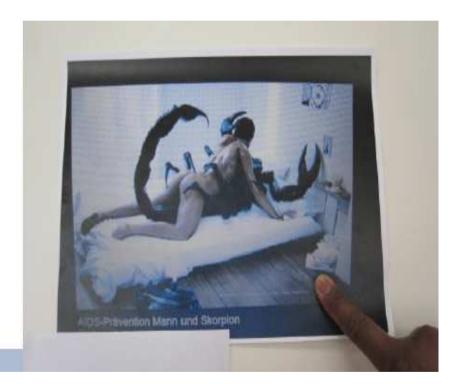
Diese Stigmatisierung von Afrikanern – das macht Komplexe, das deprimiert.

Schon vor 20 Jahren gab es viele Reportagen und Sendungen im Fernsehen, aber auch im Radio, die Menschen aus Afrika mit HIV und Aids in Verbindung gebracht haben, Es war immer dieselbe Propaganda: A frika ist die Hauptquelle dieser HIV-Erkrankung, Millionen Menschen sind dort bereits infiziert, die Afrikaner haben viel zu viel Sex. Das war zu viel. Wenn ich das mitbekomme, denke ich immer: Wie? Afrikaner sind doch normale Menschen wie alle anderen auf dieser Erde. Sie machen auch Sex wie alle anderen und kriegen Kinder. Wieso immer diese Fokussierung? Gerade bei dieser Geschichte... Als ich damals diese Massenkampagnen mit HIV-positiven Kindern und Erwachsenen gesehen habe, fühlte ich mich persönlich gekränkt. Ich verstehe das immer noch nicht, das macht bei mir komische Gefühle. Diese Stiamatisierung von Afrikanern - das macht Komplexe, das deprimiert.

Nach meiner HIV-Diagnose vor funf Jahren sind immer noch solche Kampagnen zu sehen. Die Kampagne mit dem schwarzen Skorpion war für mich der Gipfel, deswegen habe ich dieses Motir ausgesucht. Der schwarze Skorpion symbolisiert für mich Schwarzafrikaner oder den schwarzen Marin. Er ist ein Monster, er ist böse, er ist ein Teufel und eine Gefahr für die weiße Bevölkerung. Solche Interpretationen kommen in mir hoch. Das hat mich so teaung gemacht, das hat mir weh getan. Ich fühke mich schlecht. Es ist eine Schande, dass Präverkinn immer noch mit solchen negativen Bildern arbeitet – sie verbreiten Angst, Rassismus und Stigmatisierung.

#### Prävention ist auch anders möglich!

Gut, alles entwickelt sich weiter, und es gibt mittlerweile Kampagnen wie zum Beispiel die Kampagne "Positiv zusammen leben" von der BZgA, der DAH und der DAS. Sie zeigen, dass Prävention auch anders möglich ist: ohne Stigmatisierung von HIV-positiven – afrikanischen – Menschen. Meine große Hoffnung ist, dass diese Entwicklung sich durchsetzt!





## **Examples from the Photo Catalogue**

#### kalinga

: Was mich stark und glücklich macht

Zwei Punkte sind sehr wichtig für mich. Sie geben mir Kraft und machen mich glücklich: das deutsche Soziabystem und die Meimungsfreiheit.

#### Das deutsche Sozialsystem

Der Mensch ist ein Wesen, das sich ständig beklagt (besonders deutsche Menschen). Umzufriedenheit, obwohl man alles auf den Tisch bekommt. Man findet immer etwas zu meckern, will ein bisschen mehr hier und ein bisschen mehr dort.

Ich spreche vom deutschen Sozialsystem, das mir eine sehr komplizierte, aber sehr gute Krankenvenicherung ermöglicht hat. Dieses System ist der Grund, weshalb ich heuse hier mit so viel Kraft und Stärke stehe. Gute medizinische Behandlung und gute Ärzte. Trotz meiner Erkrankung war ich in der Lage, schöce, gesunde Kinder zu bekommen – was itt schöner als das? Ich weiß nicht, wo ich heure wäre, wäre ich nicht in dieses Land gekommen. Vielleicht tot? Man weiß nie!







"AfroLebenVoice is not a project, it is my medicine"

"I am not alone!"

"I am relieved!"

"I know more about my rights here in Germany. I have learnt to say "yes" or "no".

"I am a person without papers... I don't have any rights here... But I was needed for this project – which makes a difference."

"I thought that my problems are only my problems... but here I have learnt that my sisters and brothers have similar problems...which means that other immigrants in Germany have the similar problems. So, I want my story to be used in order to help my sisters and brothers outside."

#### Conclusion



The process of taking pictures and telling stories helped participants to reflect on their personal and community experience with stigmatisation as immigrant PWHL in Germany

It helped to create a critical dialogue and to share knowledge about personal and community-coping strategies and desired change

The use of photovoice allows the creation of alternative and inclusive knowledge

It enables community members to participate in a variety of ways regardless of different abilities such as literacy level or language

It enables communities to create campaings which are more accessible, inclusive and address people on many levels





"... no-one is hard to reach, just more expensive to reach." (Wilson, 2001)

Thank you!!!