

STUDY SUMMARY

HIGH TB PREVALENCE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN KENYA: ASSESSING CRITICAL GAPS IN THE TB CARE CASCADE THROUGH A GENDER LENS

SUMMARY

Evidence shows that young people (15-24 years) contribute to approximately 17% to the global TB burden. In Kenya, a review of the national TB surveillance data (2023) reveals that this age group accounts for 15% of all notified TB cases in Nairobi County and 16% nationwide. Despite these figures, critical gaps persist within the TB care cascade, resulting in missed opportunities for diagnosis, treatment initiation and successful treatment completion.

This study aims to explore the risk factors contributing to the non-completion of screening, diagnosis and treatment among young people (15-24 years) with bacteriologically confirmed TB. This includes understanding gender-specific barriers and identifying where the highest losses occur along the TB care cascade.

A quantitative analysis of the national TB database (TIBU) and health facility registers will identify specific points where young people (15-24 years) dropped out of the TB care cascade. This will be complemented by qualitative participatory research which will explore the underlying reasons for such dropouts through engaging both TB patients who successfully completed treatment and those who disengaged from care at various stages of the cascade. Findings will be shared with key stakeholders through various forums to inform the development of targeted interventions addressing the key gaps identified in the TB care cascade for this age group.

STUDY SITES

The study includes national data analysis from all 47 counties in Kenya (TIBU database), with in-facility-level research focusing on six health facilities in Nairobi County that provide TB services to young people (15-14 years). These are: St. Mary's Hospital Langata, Mbagathi Hospital, Rhodes Chest Clinic, Mama Lucy Hospital, Baraka Main Health Care, and Riruta Health Centre.

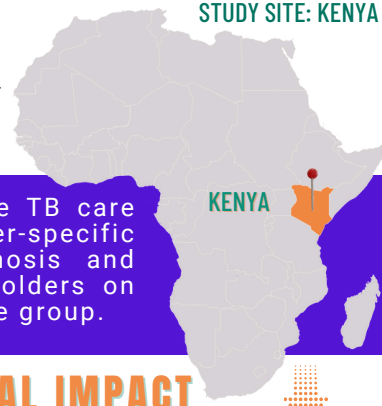
BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Tuberculosis prevalence remains significantly high among young people, aged 15-24 years, in sub-Saharan Africa, despite investing in resources to TB prevention, treatment and care. Males disproportionately bear a higher TB burden; however, the underlying reasons for this gender disparity are not well understood. While biological factors may play a role, gender-specific barriers within the TB care cascade could even be more critical in exacerbating this inequity.

Kenya's National TB Prevalence Survey (2015/16) revealed critical gaps in the TB care cascade with 95% of TB prevalent cases not being identified, 80% of symptomatic individuals not being diagnosed with TB despite seeking care, and 26% of people diagnosed with TB being asymptomatic (Ministry of Health 2017).

The high TB prevalence among young people indicates increased risks of infection and re-infection, as well as TB transmission within the community. Early case finding and timely TB treatment and care are essential to mitigate adverse health and socio-economic impacts of TB. Addressing these challenges require a comprehensive understanding of the barriers to TB treatment and care, particularly among the most vulnerable populations. This research study investigates barriers to the successful completion of all stages of the TB care cascade among young people in Kenya to inform tailored interventions for this age group.

STUDY SITE: KENYA



AIM

We aim to investigate where the significant losses occur along the TB care cascade for young people (15-24 years) and to identify the gender-specific barriers contributing to the non-completion of screening, diagnosis and treatment. We also aim to explore the perspectives of key stakeholders on effective interventions to strengthen the TB care pathways for this age group.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

a	To identify the stages within the TB care cascade with the highest losses among young Kenyans (15-24 years) who sought health services (screening, diagnosis and treatment) from 2017- 2022.
b	To identify the stages within the TB care cascade with significant gender disparities among young Kenyans (15-24 years) between 2017-2022.
c	To investigate gender-specific factors that facilitate or hinder TB screening, diagnosis and treatment within the healthcare facility and community settings.
d	To explore perceptions of key stakeholders in TB care, on priority interventions for strengthening the TB care cascade, for young Kenyans aged 15-24 years.

POTENTIAL IMPACT

The study findings will inform the development of targeted interventions to address key gaps identified in the TB care cascade.

By focusing on gender-specific barriers and young people's unique needs, the research will contribute to improved TB outcomes and more equitable TB care services for young people in Kenya.

METHODS

This observational descriptive study design utilises mixed-methods approach. The quantitative component includes data analysis of the national TIBU database - covering 47 counties- and facility-level registers from six health facilities in Nairobi county. This data analysis aims to track patient pathways and identify points of loss. The qualitative component involves in-depth interviews with young people with TB (those who successfully completed treatment and those who disengaged from care) as well as participatory workshops and roundtable discussions with TB stakeholders such as policy makers and healthcare providers.

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