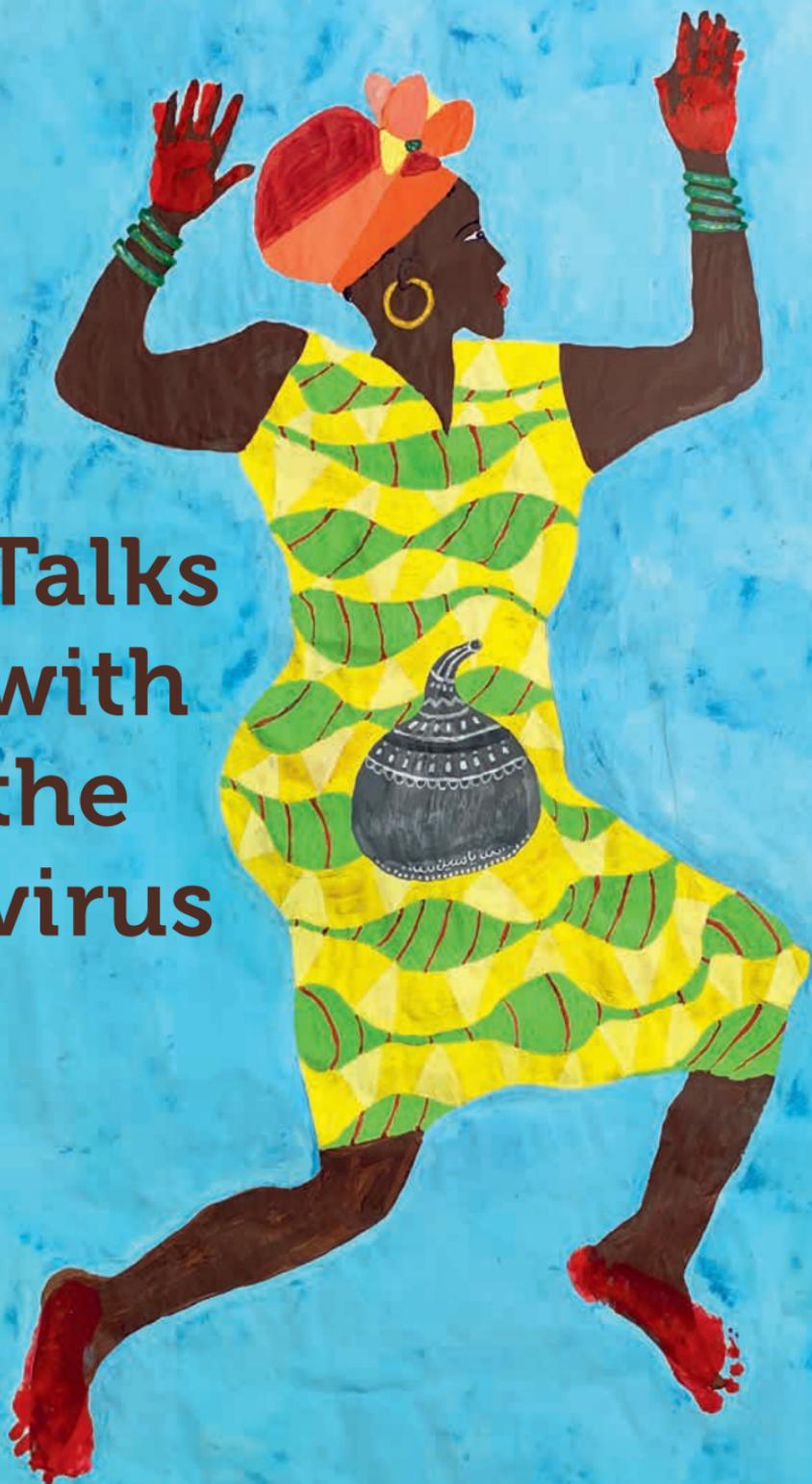


**Talks  
with  
the  
virus**



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# Talks with the virus

Poems by  
migrants  
living with  
HIV



## Foreword

AfroLebenPlus is where collective efforts are able to generate and hold a space for the exploration of feelings, emotions, ideas and modes of being, a space for sharing, being creative, hanging out, falling to the ground and being put back together by one another. Creativity needs spaces and places for expression that are safer and I still hold on to the utopian vision that when we get the chance to explore these highs with others, community can also emerge. And indeed it happened – we are community, AfroLebenPlus is our home, our network – the network of HIV-positive migrants in Germany.

We are strong, we are activists, we are fighting for a better world. Today we want to invite you into our souls. Through our poems we share with you our emotions, feelings, sadness and happiness.

We wrote those poems for us.

We wrote those poems for you.

Join us!



**BE ENCOURAGED  
(AfroLebenPlus)**

I AM A STRONG AFRICAN WOMAN

I AM A STRONG AFRICAN MAN

HIV COULD NOT KILL US

SO NOTHING ELSE CAN !!!



## Talk with the virus (Ali)

I just know your name because they  
told me that you are living in my blood.

How can I accept you?

I can't see you, I can't feel you,  
I can't touch you...

Secretly you occupied my blood.

How can I tell my relatives about you?

I don't know you.



## **Words of wisdom (Nnenna)**

I am in charge of how I feel and today I am choosing happiness.

Either I could choose to be bitter and twisted and blame whoever infected me,

Or I could make the most of whatever life I have left.

I chose the latter and to this day, I appreciate each day that I am alive.

I do what pleases me, within limits of course, and make absolutely no apologies for it.

## **A powerful woman (Ubuntu)**

I call myself a powerful woman.

I am HIV positive since 30 years,  
I am 50 years old and with 3 Kids.

I breastfed my kids normally and  
they are all healthy.

Relatives, friends and colleagues try to  
stigmatize me because of my status.

Ohhh man, Do I care?

I visit the doctor when necessary.

I take my medication accordingly.

Now look at me!

I look healthy and smart.

Nonetheless: Comrades, go for test  
and get yourself informed!

There is a saying which says:

Prevention is better than a cure!

Life is how you make it.

Life is a path, a personal path.

But I am not walking alone.

Not any more ...

I am walking with you.

You are not walking alone.

I am because you are and you are  
because I am.



## **Who am I (Maureen)**

I am a mother of 3 biological children but 100 plus in the world.

I have a very supportive HIV negative husband.

I am working mum, I am a carer, I am a cheerer.

I am who I am because of who you are –  
the principle of ubuntu.

I am living with the HIV virus in my body.

And I can cope with it!

I am managing TREATMENT, support services,  
disclosure, body changes, libido and many more.

Health does not only come from medicines.

Most of the time it's a peace of mind, peace of  
the heart and soul.

It comes from laughter and love.

It comes from leaning on those who inspire us.

My husband, my children, my family and  
my friends are my source of strength.

My faith and my networks keep me going.

I am ageing gracefully with the HIV virus.

## Non Love Poem (ML)

When you entered into my life,  
You cut my space, you took all place.  
Everywhere I moved, you moved with me:  
I slept with you, I woke up with you,  
I ate with you.  
You grew up in me, more and more.  
You colonized me, you raped me,  
you owned me.  
You robbed me of my smile, you caused so  
many tears.  
You built a wall between me and my world,  
A wall between me and my family, a wall  
between me and my friends.  
You put me in a social freeze, you put me  
in a lifelong coma.

BUT

Once you took away from me everything I had,  
everything I used to love,

I had nothing more to loose...

The depression that you pressed in me  
somehow

Gave me the power to start a small revolution.

Once I got to know you better, I began to fight  
against you, step by step...

I stood up, I rose...

You became smaller and smaller...

Me powerful, you powerless.

I can't say I beat you forever but I know I won.

You are still here, but so invisible that  
I sometimes forget that you exist.

I am reclaiming my space again.

I can move, sleep, eat, laugh, love....

You are here but you mean nothing to me.



## What a virus (Anis)

Oh, what a virus you are,  
through every beautiful lady,  
through every handsome man,  
you strip the beauty out.

You shake and drive the world crazy.

Although no one can stand your anger.

You leave no stone unturned.

You engrave your name everywhere.

And answer present,  
present as a syndrome,  
present in the blood stream.

A collection of diseases,  
you bring isolation,  
and reduce humans to nothing.

Oh, you wicked virus!

You appear and disappear in different forms.

Show your face, aameleon you are!

You kill stars and heroes, because you have  
no fear and respect for humans.

But I am telling you

Oh, yes, your time is up!

Your cage has been discovered

Supressed and trampled upon you have  
become.

Where are you, come out!

My joy has overcome your sorrow...

My state of mind has proven your quilt.

My God has delivered me.

Now you are under my control.

Oh, I am more wiser than before,  
I am more conscious than before,  
you will remain where you are because  
I believe I have overcome you.

I am happy!

My virus level has changed.

I am looking for a better tomorrow.

One day my story will be loudly told.

And you are gone forever.

I determine the rules now!

Determining like never before.

I have come to tell you.

That I have risen, and risen, and risen ...

To fall no more!

## **Network AfroLebenPlus**

Our network AfroLebenPlus is a nationwide network of migrants living with HIV in Germany. Our members mainly come from African countries, speak different languages and are active as HIV multipliers in various locations in Germany. They are well integrated in their communities on site, they do preventive and political work and involve themselves in the improvement of the living conditions of migrants living with HIV.

The nationwide meetings of our network members take place twice yearly; they foster the exchange of experiences and ideas as well as the mutual strengthening of the national network. They provide the possibility for developing information media and other offers of HIV prevention for migrants together with the Deutsche Aidshilfe e. V.

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POWER

HOPE

FIGHT

LOVE