

SCOPE HIV SUCCESS STORY

MALAWI



Male Champion volunteers participating in a monitoring and evaluation reporting tools training.

USAID/World Relief: Dan Nyirenda, World Relief

LOCATION

Machinga, Malawi

SUMMARY

SCOPE HIV Male Champion volunteers in Machinga are working tirelessly to bring HIV treatment defaulters back to care in support of Malawi's 95-95-95 goals.

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MALE CHAMPION VOLUNTEERS BRING DEFAULTERS BACK TO TREATMENT

SCOPE HIV Male Champion volunteers in Machinga are working tirelessly to bring HIV treatment defaulters back to care in Traditional Authority Ngokwe, Chikweo and Mlomba. Staying on antiretroviral treatment is critical because it helps HIV-positive clients stay healthy and prevent death. Even so, clients on treatment still default. This is often due to several factors: Some resolve to stop taking treatment because they lose hope of getting better. Some are forced to stop treatment due to the distances that they have to cover to access treatment. Others have concerns that the treatment deforms their physical appearance. Additionally, some believe that once they have prayed, they are healed and thus no longer need treatment.

MALE VOLUNTEERS HELP PATIENTS OVERCOME FEARS

Mrs. Kachale (not real name) of Traditional Authority Chikweo was found HIV positive two years ago. She realized that she was pregnant while her husband was away, which prompted her to go for HIV testing – a requirement for pregnant women in Malawi. She was scared about her husband's response when he found out. As she shared: "My husband is not aware of this and am afraid to disclose my HIV status to him due to fear that he may end up divorcing me."

When the issue was brought to the attention of Male Champion volunteers in her community, they counseled her and helped the family get an HIV test for Mrs. Kachale's husband. Male Champion volunteers have been

trained in how to provide HIV counseling to clients who have tested positive. They are called “expert clients” as they are people who are living with HIV who came openly about their HIV status)

Mr. Kachale received the news shortly after that he is HIV negative, and SCOPE HIV expert clients have been working with the couple to ensure that they are both supported. Their goal is to help Mrs. Kachale to remain on treatment and for her husband to remain negative. The couple was also provided with condoms and education on safe sex.

Mrs. Kachale continues to be on treatment. The husband has been very supportive and encourages her to adhere to treatment. They are living positively, and they came out publicly to encourage other families to go for HIV testing and seek help.

RETURNING TO CARE

Return to care is a critical component of Malawi's 95-95-95 goals (95% of people living with HIV know their status, 95% of people who know their status are on treatment, and 95% of people on treatment achieve viral suppression). Through expert clients, SCOPE-HIV has helped project people return to care across Machinga, Mangochi and Lilongwe districts. Since 2020, SCOPE HIV has supported over 254 HIV treatment defaulters in Machinga to return to care, in Lilongwe 115 clients back to care out of the 151 defaulters, and in Mangochi, they have brought 340 defaulters back to treatment out of 540 defaulters.

This story is written by Linda Banda, SCOPE District Coordinator.