

# Living positively, Malawi

**FACTSHEET** MAY 2013

## Youth today – the future of tomorrow

Today, globally there are 1.6 billion people aged between 12 and 24. This is the largest generation of adolescents and young people ever. In 2010, young people aged 15–24 accounted for 42% of new HIV diagnosis. Among young people living with HIV, nearly 80% (4 million) live in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>1</sup>

Malawi is a small landlocked country in Sub Sahara Africa with an estimated population of 13 million – with 29.4% between the ages of 10-29. It is estimated that 930,000 people are living with HIV. The HIV prevalence amongst young people aged 15-24 is 6%. Young women are nearly four times more likely to have acquired HIV (8.4%) than young men of the same age (2.4%).<sup>2</sup>

The potential benefits of investing in HIV programmes catering to the needs of young Malawians living with HIV are immense. This was recognised by the Family Planning Association of Malawi (FPAM) who implemented a two year programme focusing on youth, with support from the IPPF Japan Trust Fund (JTF).



## Circles of care – a FPAM initiative

FPAM implemented “Continuum of care and support for young HIV positive Malawians promoting positive living”; a project designed to increase utilization of integrated sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and HIV services by young people living with HIV (YPLHIV), specially women, in Lilongwe, Dowa and Ntcheu Youth Life Centres.

The project used the concept of ‘circles of care’ – care provided by healthcare providers, community workers and peer educators. This circle extended beyond traditional facility based care. Support for YPLHIV covered medical areas such as anti-retroviral therapy (ART), opportunistic infections as well as promotion of condoms and safe sex information. It also extended to aspects of sexual health such as sexual rights and respect, as well as micro finance initiatives to instil self reliance and independence amongst the young participants. The project also worked with community leaders and elders. This helped increase the acceptability of the project and promoted the establishment of an environment free from stigma and discrimination.

Peer based sexuality and sexual health workshops for young people in Malawi.

### Malawi

Population: 15.38 million (2011)  
Life expectancy: 54 yrs (2011)  
Adults aged 15 to 49 prevalence rate: 10% (2011)  
No of people living with HIV: 910,000 (2011)  
No of people on HIV treatment: 322.2 thousand (2010)  
(References overleaf)

### Project Facts

Organization: Family Planning Association of Malawi (FPAM)  
Donor: IPPF Japan Trust Fund for HIV and Reproductive Health  
Objective: To improve the health and quality of life of young people living with HIV  
Location: Lilongwe, Dowa and Ntcheu districts, Malawi  
Period: 2009-2011

### Project Service Statistics

2069 young people living with HIV accessed several services in the three centers, including:  
337 Family Planning services  
746 Opportunistic infections  
299 STI treatments  
106 Voluntary Counselling and Testing  
536 anti-retroviral therapy services  
79 Young people benefitting from income generating activities  
2550 Female condoms distributed  
24796 Male condoms distributed

“I’ve learnt to discuss and negotiate condom use with my boyfriend without being ashamed”

**A girl living with HIV, describing the impact of sexuality education, Dowa, Malawi**



### Photos

1. Training in income generating activities – sausage making.
2. Training in income generating activities – soap making.

### Photos:

FPAM/Thoko Njoloma/Malawi/2010  
(front cover)

FPAM/Fredrick Chelewani/Malawi/2010  
(1 and 2)

## Case Study: Light at the end of the tunnel

Frances\* was terrified as he took an HIV test in 2005. Going through the test and learning that he was HIV positive was an ordeal and he felt that his options were limited to “only suicide”. “All the post-test counselling I got didn’t help. I had seen relations suffer and die and witnessed discrimination against people living with HIV. I told myself I could not go through that. I had to die.” he says. Frances meant just that. Three months after the test, he attempted suicide.

Today, after undertaking training from FPAM in 2010, Frances is a peer educator and role model for YPLHIV. Frances is now able to encourage other YPLHIV to come out in the open and join Mzotheka club (meaning “it is possible”), a special club organized by FPAM for YPLHIV. Through the commendable work that Frances has been doing in this area, he has motivated 14 other young people living with HIV to form a “Strong” Mzotheka club known as “Wanyemba Mzotheka Youth club.”

“I think my testimonies have changed the way most young people think about HIV in my area. The 14 young people who came out in the open could not have done so if I did not stand up,” he says.

Peer educators like Frances were able to understand the concerns and meet the needs of YPLHIV in a way that only people of the same age groups sharing similar experiences can. FPAM found this method of reaching out to young Malawians very effective. The project reached almost 600 young YPLHIV in the three sites. Of these, 130 were trained as peer educators and ART adherence councillors. Peer educators

regularly meet other YPLHIV through their clubs. SRH information is disseminated through group discussions, formal and informal educational sessions. Topics covered include living positively, disclosure, stigma and discrimination and SRH needs of YPLHIV. Peer educators work to dispel myths and stigma surrounding HIV, AIDS and SRH issues, increase ART awareness and distribute male and female condoms.

## What we have achieved and where we are headed...

By supporting this project, IPPF JTF has brought young Malawians living with HIV together and created a space for them to discuss issues that affect their daily lives, while empowering them to shape their futures.

Through implementation of the project, FPAM has strengthened its partnership with other organizations providing services to YPLHIV. The project has also strengthened the capacity of FPAM staff to develop focused approaches to meet the needs of different community groups.

The project involved the local community in the early stages of implementation to ensure activities will be sustainable through available resources even after funding ceases. Donors such as UNFPA have committed support for activities in Lilongwe District, after noting initial successes of the ‘circles of care project’. FPAM will continue looking for funding opportunities to scale up the programme to other regions.

### References

1. UNAIDS (2012) Global Report: Fact Sheet – Sub Saharan Africa. Available at: [http://www.unaids.org/documents/20101123\\_FS\\_SSA\\_em\\_en.pdf](http://www.unaids.org/documents/20101123_FS_SSA_em_en.pdf)
2. UNAIDS (2012) AIDS Info Database: Malawi. Available at: <http://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/malawi/>

\* name changed to protect confidentiality

### Malawi facts from:

World Bank (2011) Country Datasets: Malawi. Available at <http://data.worldbank.org/country/malawi>  
UNAIDS (2012) AIDS Info Database: Malawi. Available at: <http://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/malawi/>

**International Planned Parenthood Federation**  
4 Newhams Row,  
London SE1 3UX  
Tel +44 20 7939 8200  
Email [SMapa@ippf.org](mailto:SMapa@ippf.org)  
[www.ippf.org](http://www.ippf.org)  
UK Registered Charity  
No.229476

**Family Planning Association of Malawi**  
Private Bag B 424  
Lilongwe 3  
Malawi  
Tel: +265 1 773 915  
Email:  
[fpam@fpamalawi.org](mailto:fpam@fpamalawi.org)



The IPPF Japan Trust Fund for HIV and Reproductive Health was set up by the Government of Japan in 2000, to increase access to HIV and sexual and reproductive health services for women, young people and key populations in developing countries. Since its establishment, it has supported more than 117 projects in 46 countries.