

## **DAPP Zambia Accomplishments in Fighting HIV and AIDS**

In Zambia, Development Aid from People to People (DAPP Zambia), began implementing a large scale community based HIV and AIDS programme in 2006. The Total Control of the Epidemic (TCE) programme had a revolutionary approach compared to HIV home-based testing— then, an innovative best practice, replicated in many other countries.

Implementation of the TCE programme was initially carried out in the Southern Province, but expanded to Lusaka given changes in epidemiological patterns. From the inception of the TCE programme in Zambia in 2006 up until 2017, close to 1.1 million people were reached in rural and urban communities.

The HIV/AIDS fight is yet to be won in Zambia. According to UNAIDS, as of 2018 Zambia had 1.2 million people living with HIV, with an HIV prevalence rate of 11.9% among the 15-49 year population group.

Since 2016, TCE in Zambia began to focus on key populations, most at risk groups and their sexual partners with a comprehensive program of prevention, testing, treatment and retention.

TCE is driven by the principle that only the people can take total control of HIV/AIDS by taking charge of their own health. TCE provides HIV testing and linkages to treatment; it also assists people to access treatment and place emphasis on adherence to reach HIV viral load suppression.

The TCE programme's approach empowers people at-risk to take control of their own health, make informed decisions to reduce their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, and adhere to treatment.

Currently, DAPP Zambia is working closely with Provincial Health Offices, increasing uptake of HIV testing services through government-led programming. Ideally, the ongoing TCE programme seeks to demonstrate that international donor funding agencies, national government and civil society can cooperate to assist a country to reach the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets and achieve epidemic control in a country-led and cost-effective manner.

By the end of June 2020, DAPP Zambia's TCE program had 472 TCE Field Officers and 250 Community Health Workers. TCE Field Officers (counsellors) and the volunteers work in synergy with each of the local communities' health facility. In 2020, TCE worked with 237 health facilities in 18 districts funded by *U.S. Centers for Disease Control and*

*Prevention (CDC)* through contracts with Eastern, Lusaka, Southern and Western Province Health Offices.

Community based TCE Field Officers made it possible for 20,540 people to get tested for HIV, with 6,625 people testing HIV positive or 32% (October 2019-May 2020). Out of those who were HIV positive, 98% were enrolled for HIV treatment.

Local Health Center staff provide the addresses of already-identified people living with HIV – known as “Index clients” – to DAPP Zambia’s community-based TCE Field Officers. The TCE Field Officers and the PLHIV’s list as many sexual contacts as possible (partner notification) then the TCE Field Officers locate the sexual contacts and offer HIV testing, and facilitates immediate ART initiation for those testing HIV positive.

From October 2019 to May 2020, 15,082 index clients provided contact information for 36,845 sexual partners (2.4/client). 27,614 partners (75%) were successfully traced, of whom 20,540 (74%) did not know their HIV status and agreed to be tested. 6,625 people tested HIV positive. This included testing of babies for Early Infant Diagnosis, testing key populations and testing biological children and youth of HIV positive women.

The high results were achieved due to constant development of approaches, driving by debates and sharing best practices between the Field Officers, facilitated by their coordinators.

Field Officers and Community Health Workers visit People Living with HIV, who fell out of treatment to re-engage them, and assist them to form small HIV treatment adherence support groups known as TRIOs. They ensure people get their Viral Load test. They refer women HIV positive above the age of 25 years to Screening for Cervical Cancer. They screen all PLHIV for TB and refer for TB prevention. They book men for Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision, they run Youth Friendly Corners and they link vulnerable persons to Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (preventive ARVs).

This bottom-up approach, when combined with high quality services at clinic level, has proven to be a powerful model to help Zambia move towards the global UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets of zero infections, enrolling all who are HIV infected on treatment and eliminating future infections.