

The Community has been our strength.

My name is Sunati Wayiti. I am 25, married and have one child. I come from Tsoyo in the area of Traditional Authority Tambala in Dedza district. I became a member of Tiyanjane Hub of Tsoyo Health Centre in 2021.

We received training on how to be mentor moms, which required us to work with local health professionals and other peer educators to empower and inspire HIV-positive expectant women and new mothers to take charge of their own health and that of their children.

Because of our status, we faced stigma and discrimination in our communities. We couldn't associate with other members of the community without being accused of having HIV. We were unable to even visit our friends because they would sometimes walk away when they saw us approaching their homes and behaved as though they hadn't seen us.

However, following meetings involving Manerela+, Tsoyo health personnel and local chiefs, things are looking better as we can now take part in community events. We have come up with songs and dramas, which project a good message, and we perform them in various villages.

Through the knowledge I gained from Manerela+ and Tsoyo Health Centre, I persuaded my friends to be open about their health status as it is for their own good.

Since I joined the hub, both my life and my friends' who are also impacted by HIV have improved since we can now take the medication as directed. We used to skip our medication because of our busy schedules like farming. But since Manerela+, in collaboration with Tsoyo health staff, taught us the importance of taking our meds as scheduled, our lives, our immune systems, and our health in general seem to improve day by day.

When it came to gender-based violence concerns, we were behind the times. We were unaware that it is unacceptable to be pushed by a partner to have sex when you are not in the mood for it.

We also requested business advice and financing from Manerela+, and they agreed to let us operate businesses in groups. Even though we appear to be failing in certain areas, we are thankful to Manerela+ and ask them to continue assisting us since the little profits from our small enterprises enable us to lead better lives.