

POOR INFRASTRUCTURE AFFECTING PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

By Starphel Sithole

Among other factors associated with non-adherence from antiretroviral therapy (ART); is the fear of disclosing an HIV status to prevent stigma and discrimination. Stigma and discrimination can be facilitated by a health infrastructure whose service space is not spacious for privacy and confidentiality. Recipients of care ask for addressing the problem in health facilities where it exists.

Kaluluma Health Center located in the north of Kasungu district is one of the facilities under the Citizen Science Community Led Monitoring Advocacy (CS-CLMA). The facility has inadequate space for offering services which is affecting privacy and confidentiality of recipients of care on ART; the same with Kasalika Health Center in the same district.

According to Kaluluma Health Centre Clinical Officer Gift Chilangiza, a spacious room is needed for the provision of Anti Retro-viral treatment (ART) and other HIV services since the current space is small and some people do not find it comfortable standing on a queue which sometimes extends outside due to lack of space.

'Infrastructure has hindered people living with HIV from receiving treatment resulting into registering higher defaulter rates at the facility. Despite having multi-months refill some people do not feel comfortable coming on an open place for ART services.' Said Chilangiza.

A Female Sex Worker at Kaluluma Health Center, who seeks health care at the facility concurred with the health worker saying, the issue of privacy is very crucial when it comes to ART due to the nature of their work.



Open ART waiting area

'Kaluluma Health Center does not have a fence. On top of that the waiting space for ART is too small which gets us exposed as the facility has specific days for ART clinic and many people come at once in large numbers, prompting them to wait outside for long. So, being sex workers, we do not want to be seen on an ART line hence this leads to treatment interruption as many of us do not like to be exposed,' she said.

Kelvin Banda a youth from Titha Youth Club a member of men having Sex with men at Kasalika Health Center bemoaned inadequate ART room at the facility as it also affects the services.

'I am one of the men having sex with men and a recipient of care which makes me a frequent visitor to the health facility. However, when I come to the facility, I have to wait for hours outside which exposes me to the public. This makes me feel stigmatized and stop coming to the facility for the services.' Banda narrated.



Small place for HIV services at Kasalika

The Malawi 2018 Act on HIV and AIDS Prevention and Management part 5 says a person living with HIV has the right to privacy, dignity, physical integrity and confidentiality with regard to information concerning his/ her HIV status. In addition; the Act says that in implementing the ART clinic there is a need for consideration of strategies to ensure that privacy and confidentiality is preserved.