ONE WORLD ACTION
FOR A JUST AND EQUAL WORLD

Making a Difference

Citizen's and their organisations and networks contributing to change

OWA PPA 2008-9: Case study 18

Title of Case Study:	**Star Chimaliro: Member of the Khaputa PLWHIV Support Group, Mzimba District, Malawi**

1. PPA partner name	**One World Action**
2. Countries highlighted in case study	**Malawi**

The 47 members of the Khaputa PLWHIV support group come from nearby villages and comprise different denominations and religions. Women living with HIV have found the support group particularly valuable as they do not get much support from their husbands. The support group is very involved in home-based care for community members living with HIV.

The support group receives a lot of encouragement and support from the local church's women's guild. The women's guild and support group members have cleared land around the church and planted an extensive herbal as well as

kitchen garden to supplement the income and nutritional levels of PLWHIV in the surrounding area as well as that of the women's guild. The Khaputa support group has received home-based kits and a bicycle ambulance from MANET+ and One World Action's 'Our Voices our Lives Programme'.

Star Chimaliro is a member of the Khaputa support group and is a woman living with HIV. She has a one year old baby daughter Mutisunge Jere ('Mutisunge' in Chitumbuka means 'keeping together'). Star's first born child is 3 years old. When Star was pregnant with Mutisunge, her husband began falling ill often. She became suspicious and decided to go for voluntary HIV testing and discovered that she was positive. Her husband also agreed to voluntary testing after this and discovered that he too was HIV positive.

Malawi's current policy is to routinely test pregnant women who attend antenatal clinics, unless they specifically say no. However, of the 500,000 pregnant women who attended antenatal clinics in the country up to October 2007 only 162,000 were tested. The risk of an HIV-positive pregnant woman passing on the virus to her baby is between 30 and 35 percent. The Malawi government is proposing to pass a controversial law that makes HIV testing mandatory for pregnant women, an attempt by government to reduce mother-to-child transmission, without actually addressing the root of the problem – that it is often the husband who initially infects the wife. This proposed law which will violate women's rights and contribute to increased discrimination against women is still going ahead, even though only slightly more than half of the 19,120 pregnant women who tested positive for HIV in Malawi in 2006 received preventative treatment[1].

Only 28 percent of the 544 clinics providing maternal services in Malawi offer prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) services. Star Chimaliro was one of the Malawian mothers who did not receive the PMTCT service and passed on the infection to her daughter, Mutisunge.

Unlike many young mothers in Malawi she is fortunate to have the support of her family and is not blamed for the infection. Star has

[1] http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=75984

not bothered to test her eldest child as she is convinced that the first born is healthy.

Star's husband went on antiretroviral therapy but it was too late and he is now dying of AIDS. She is caring for him with the support of her family. Star herself is on antiretroviral therapy. Mutisunge goes for regular checkups although antiretroviral therapy for babies is not available at her local hospital. Both Star and her baby are stable for the time being.