

Palliative Care Training Empowers Hospice Workers, Yields Improved Care for PLWHA

When Beatrice Shambwe, a care provider at Jon Hospice in Lusaka, first visited the home of Philemon Ngoma, she found the 10-year-old boy so gravely ill that he could barely breathe. Philemon's parents had died of AIDS and he was living with his siblings, but they didn't know how to care for him properly—especially not when he got so sick.

"I was taken to the hospice, where they counseled me and did some tests. They gave me some medicine and now I am fine," Philemon says, a bright smile lighting his face.



Beatrice Shambwe checks on Philemon's progress at the Hospice's school.

The support Philemon and others living with HIV receive at Jon Hospice has improved thanks to training conducted by Twinning Center partners at the Palliative Care Association of Zambia (PCAZ).

With USAID support, PCAZ hosted two training and advocacy workshops for 26 representatives from area organizations providing community-based care to people living with HIV or AIDS.

Shambwe participated in both workshops, which focused on training caregivers and identifying key elements of palliative care

that can be effectively integrated into home-based care. The first stressed adult care, the second pediatric.

"None of our staff had training in pediatric palliative care before I attended these workshops," Shambwe says, noting that she has already passed what she learned on to her colleagues.

"The holistic approach I learned during the palliative care training and shared with staff has really improved care for our young patients," Shambwe reports. "We are now able to identify the needs of the children and work within a multidisciplinary team to better meet their physical, spiritual, social, and psychological needs." For children like Philemon, the care and support he receives at Jon Hospice has made a world of difference.

"I never used to go to school, but now I do. I receive medicine. I play with my friends and have enough to eat," he beams. "The staff here is good. I appreciate the care I get."

Philemon isn't the only patient at Jon Hospice to benefit from the improvements the palliative care training has yielded.

"When I was admitted, I had swollen feet and was not able to walk," says 35-year-old Natalia Phiri. Thanks to the care she has received, that has changed. "I really appreciate the care given to me by the hospice staff. I am now able to walk. They give me food, medicine, and even remind me to bathe every day. This hospice is the best, far much better than the hospitals and clinics I have been to," she says.



Shambwe chats with Natalia Phiri, a patient at Jon Hospice.