

High Viral Load Suppression after implementation of an asset-based strategy - “Operation Triple Zero” - for Children, Adolescents and Young people on ART (CAYPLHIV) in four health facilities of South Sudan

Author(s): G. Jagwer¹, J.M Lurit¹, J.George¹, S.B Tombe¹,T. Yombo¹

Affiliation(s): 1 Catholic Medical Mission Board, HIV/AIDS, Juba, South Sudan

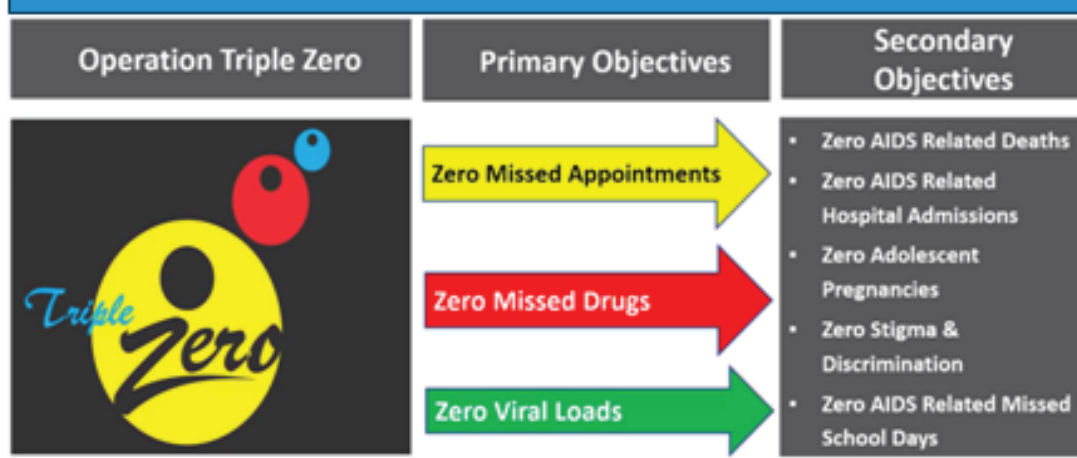
Background



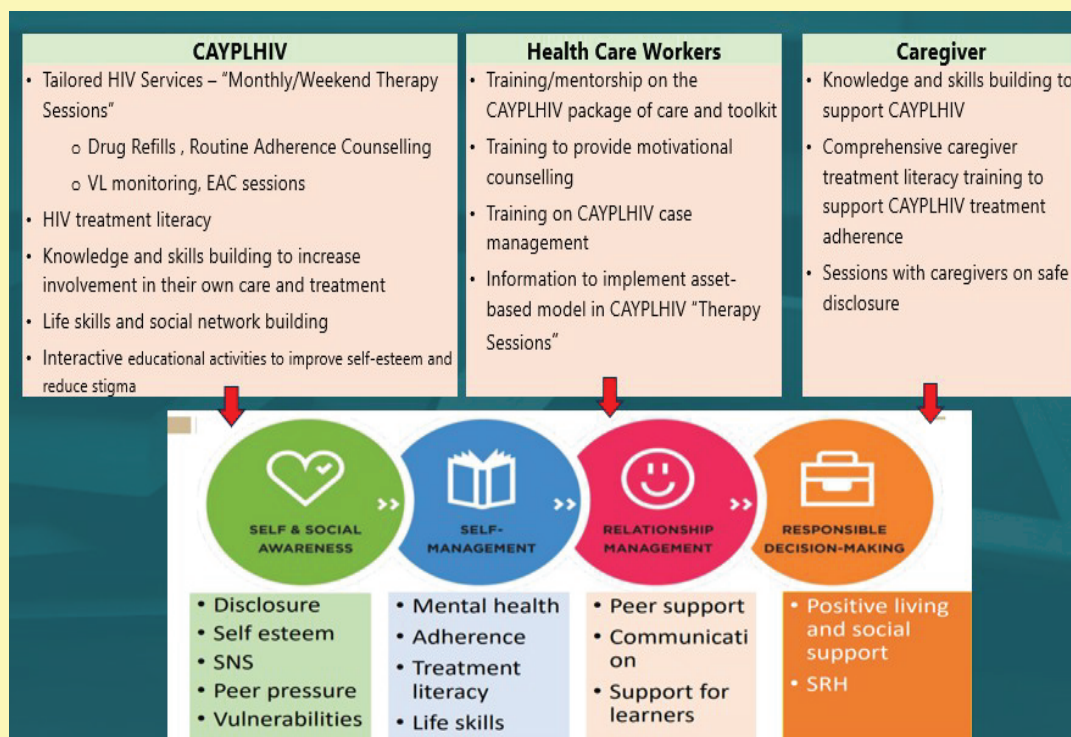
- Amidst a severe humanitarian crisis, South Sudan is committed to the ambitious 95–95–95 targets which among others stipulate that 95% of all PLHIV on ART should achieve a suppressed HIV-RNA viral load.
- CAYPLHIV face lower Viral Load Coverage (VLC) and Viral Load Suppression (VLS) rates due to poor adherence, limited youth-friendly services, stigma, and lack of disclosure.
- Unique challenges for children: caregiver dependence, non-biological caretakers, forgetfulness, and self-stigma.
- High mortality risk if VLS is not achieved in this group.
- To address the low VLC/VLS rates among CAYPLHIV, the OTZ program has been implemented by CMMB in four health facilities in Central & Western Equatorial States of South Sudan since October 2023 at:
 - Juba Teaching Hospital
 - Al Sabbah Children's Hospital
 - Yei Civil Hospital
 - Yambio State Hospital

Description

“Kula na Sifir”



OTZ is implemented through an “asset-based programming” approach that engages CAYPLHIV as integral agents in the management of their health & identifies & amplifies their strengths, so they are part of the solution



Results/Lessons

Success Storie



- I was born with HIV, by age of 8 years, I asked my mother, why am I taking these drugs while my sisters and brothers are not
- My mother answered, my body is like paper, it easily gets sickness and hence, you are put on these drugs
- As I grew up, my mother brought me to Juba Teaching Hospital HIV Clinic, when I read the writings on the wall, I came to know I am HIV infected
- This tormented me and I took a decision to end my life; but I was introduced to OTZ
- OTZ boosted my confidence
- I was able to overcome stigma
- I found a family in OTZ where I can comfortably express myself
- I thus urge member to always come for therapy sessions because we will learn a lot and be able to achieve the 3 Zeros and our dreams

93% Overall VLS compared to national average of 31%

Hospital	# enrolled	VL coverage (%)	Suppressed (%)
Al Sabah Children's	77	100	100
Juba Teaching	320	60	83
Yambio State	114	100	94
Yei Civil	95	77	93
Total	606	84	93

Lessons Learnt



- Tailored Therapy sessions reduces Interruption in Treatment and improves HIV treatment outcomes
- Use of technology and social media connected the OTZ members into one family sharing testimonies and thus reducing stigma
- OTZ strengthens peer support and encourages CAYPL HIV to open up and share experiences
- OTZ facilitates individuals' disclosure and reduces self-stigma
- OTZ improves VLC & VLS by mitigating the exceptionally higher mortality associated with unsuccessful HIV treatment outcomes
- OTZ is an appropriate platform for psychosocial support and peer-to-peer mentorship
- Home visits by OTZ Champions encourages and builds trust among the CAYPLHIV

Conclusion/Next Steps

- Findings highlight the need for targeted strategies to reach the “third 95” among CAYPLHIV in similar settings
- OTZ program showed promising results, with higher VLS rates among enrolled CAYPLHIV compared to the national average
- There's a continued need to deepen understanding of the unique challenges faced by CAYPLHIV in South Sudan
- Scaling up OTZ-like interventions is essential, with emphasis on:
 - Building self and social awareness
 - Promoting self-management skills
- Strengthening relationship and decision-making abilities among children on ART