



## BACKGROUND

- Malawi is the **sixth poorest country in the world**, with more than two-thirds of the population living below the **international poverty line** (1).
- Malawi is one of several African countries which has made **significant progress in palliative care development** (2).
- Mulanje Mission Hospital (MMH)** is a 237-bed secondary healthcare facility located in **south-east Malawi**. It serves a catchment population of over **100,000 people** in **74 villages**. **Common conditions** seen at MMH include **HIV/AIDs, hypertension and diabetes**.
- MMH introduced palliative care services in **2005**.
- As of **March 2024**, the palliative care clinic had **253 patients** in care. The most **common palliative care conditions** seen are **Kaposi sarcoma** (a HIV-related malignancy), **different types of cancer, hepatitis B and cerebral palsy**.

## OBJECTIVES

- This **single-institution study** aims to explore:
  - Palliative care services** currently **available**
  - Improvements** made in palliative care
  - Challenges** facing these services
  - Impact** of challenges on **patients and staff**
  - How palliative care services could be **improved**

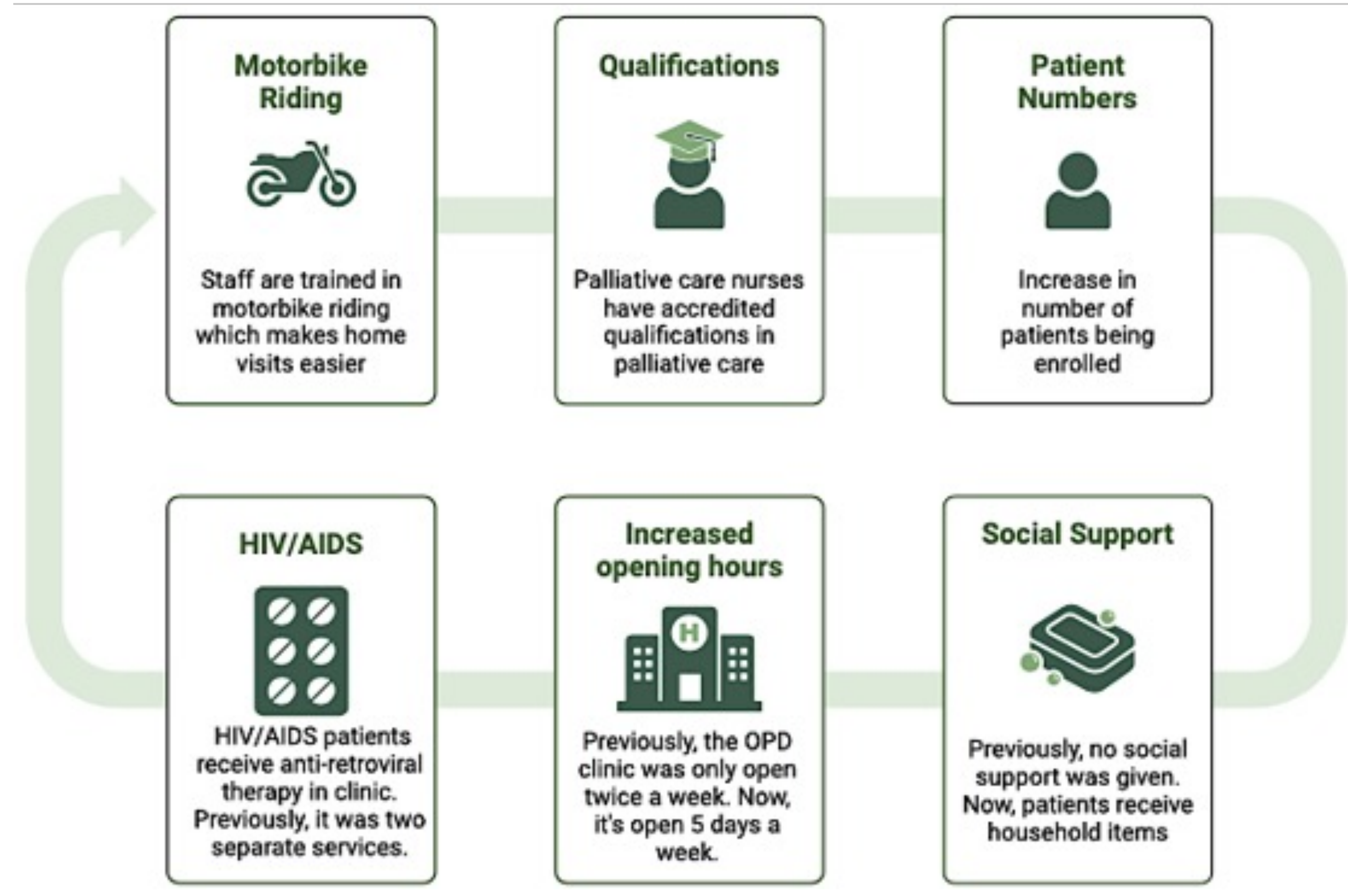
## METHODOLOGY

- In August 2024, a **7-item questionnaire** was conducted on 10 staff members (see **Table 1**).
- The following questions were asked: job title; years of experience in palliative care; currently available palliative care services and improvements in services; barriers to providing palliative care and how these barriers may be overcome.

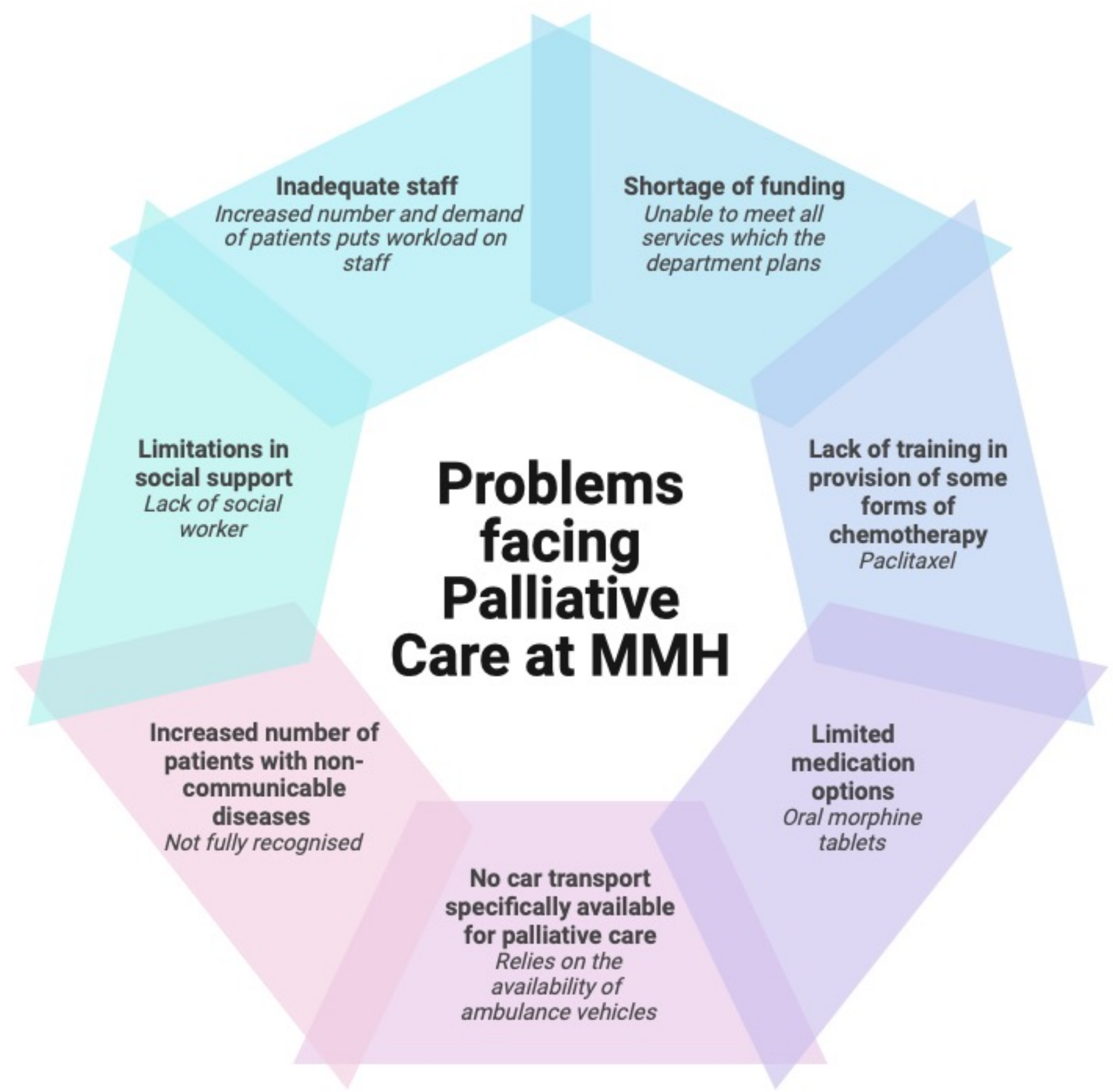
Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Employed staff at Mulanje Mission Hospital	Visiting specialists or students
Involved in the provision of palliative care at MMH for at least two years	Involved in the provision of palliative care at MMH for under two years

**Table 1:** Inclusion and exclusion criteria applied during the selection of questionnaire participants.

## RESULTS



**Figure 1:** Improvements in palliative care services at Mulanje Mission Hospital. Figure created using [Biorender.com](#)



**Figure 2:** Main problems facing palliative care services at Mulanje Mission Hospital. Figure created using [Biorender.com](#)

## RESULTS

Palliative care services currently available at MMH include a daily outpatient clinic, home visits and provision of social support with necessities and nutritional support. Strategies to improve palliative care services at MMH are to increase the number of palliative care staff, to set up palliative care outreach centres and to designate transport specifically for palliative care staff. An important barrier is the shortage of funding (52% of palliative care services are funded by international donors). Ways to improve palliative care services, without requiring additional financial support, include increasing the involvement of the chaplain and social worker by integrating them within palliative care consultations. Additionally, educating local communities about palliative care may help to increase awareness and understanding.

## DISCUSSION

**Strengths:** The questionnaire was short and easy to complete, resulting in a 90% response rate. There are no other studies which provide an overview of palliative care services at MMH, highlighting a gap in research. The selected participants come from different professional backgrounds - ranging from nurses, doctors and management staff. This helps facilitate a multidisciplinary perspective.

**Limitations:** Questionnaire participants were not selected at random which may have resulted in selection bias. Since conducting this report, the US government paused all foreign assistance in early 2025. This reduced HIV testing and treatment. Most palliative care patients at MMH are HIV-positive (47.2%) and the negative impact of the USAID stop is highlighted in the MMH Primary Healthcare Annual Report 2025 (3).

## CONCLUSION

- In the face of poverty, significant improvements have been made in palliative care services at MMH. However, ongoing challenges remain.

## REFERENCES

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- MULANJE MISSION HOSPITAL. (2024). Primary Health Care Impact Report. [online]. Available from: <https://mmh.mw/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/PHC-Annual-Impact-report-24-25-1.pdf> [Accessed 17 Oct 2025].