QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

April - June 2023 **www.r4hmw.com**

COUNTRY DIRECTORS INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Lucy Chiyenda, Country Director

Lucy is an accomplished program management professional who brings over 15 years of INGO experience, having worked with CARE International for more than 10 years, Save the Children for 5 years, and VSO for 2 years where she held senior leadership positions such as Chief of Party, Deputy Chief of Party and Country Representative roles, managing significant portfolios. She has also served several years with local NGO's such as CRECCOM and Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP).

Lucy brings 10 years of Program Management experience and 6 years of Research, Monitoring and Evaluation. She has extensive donor funds management experience, working on small and large grants, cooperative agreements and contracts, private and government grants. She has an academic background and extensive experience managing integrated programs, including education, health and nutrition, sanitation, WASH and livelihoods.

She has built effective and efficient program and program support teams, that collaborate well for the achievement of strategic organizational objectives and improving the organizations visibility. She has mentored and grown her team members into leaders who have moved on to assume higher responsibilities within and outside the organizations she has worked in.

We warmly welcome Lucy to the R4H family and look forward to achieving greater heights under her leadership.

In Lucy's own words;
"*I am excited to join R4H because of the unique nature of the work we do and the significance of the contribution we make towards diagnostics within the health sector and in road safety. I am delighted to join this enthusiastic team of professionals. Touching and saving lives through health logistics, challenging ourselves to excellence as we innovate and diligently serve the people of Malawi through rain and sunshine literally.*

Life in the work place, as is the journey of life, wins and successes are celebrated, but at times we fall. When we fall, we do not give up. We get up, dust ourselves and continue our pursuit of excellence and success is guaranteed to smile on us again.

I look forward to working with every one of you as individuals who each bring a unique contribution to the work of R4H. I believe that our diversity is our strength. Together we can and will do great things".

Lucy Chiyenda. April 2023

THE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Lucy Chiyenda

Country Director

Kelvin Kholoma

Human Resource & Adminstration Manager

Tiyanjane Chitaya

Finance Manager

Christopher Itimu

Monitoring Evaluation & Learning Manager

Angelina Nazombe

Programs Manager, Quality Assurance

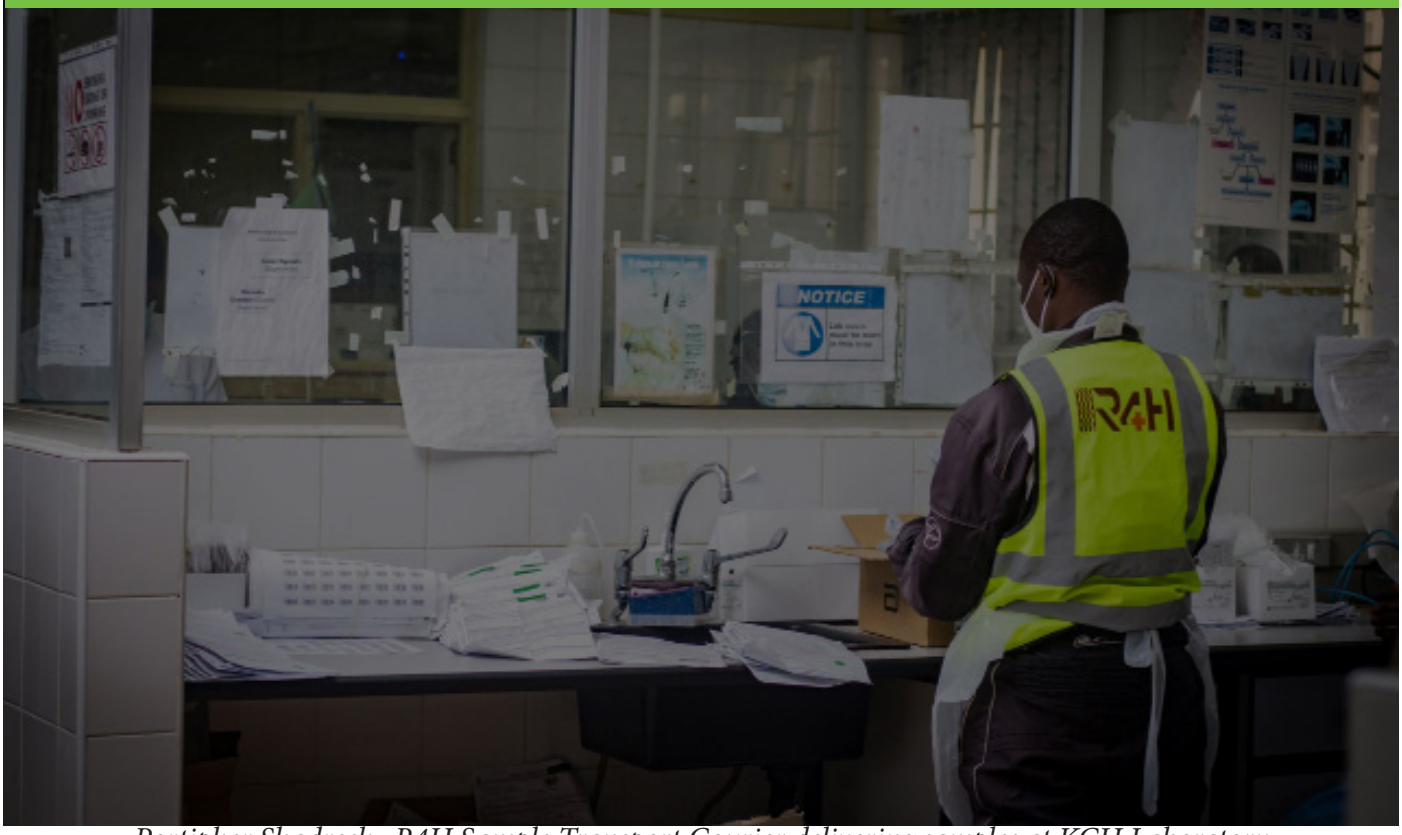
Lawrence Kachule

Programs Manager, Digitalization & Innovation

Patrick Sikwese

Operations Manager

HEALTHCARE WORKERS APPLAUD R4H SAMPLE TRANSPORT PROGRAM



Portipher Shadreck , R4H Sample Transport Courier delivering samples at KCH Laboratory

The impact of R4H's Sample Transport Program is being recognized as healthcare workers are appreciating the positive changes that the program is bringing in the health sector. Patients residing in hard-to-reach areas without laboratories or necessary machines in district laboratories for diagnosis are effectively assisted with R4H Sample Transport Program.

The program ensures that samples are collected from health facilities promptly and transported to the laboratory in a timely manner using reliable motorcycles and trained couriers on sample management and handling to ensure the safe and efficient transportation of samples. This reduces the risk of sample deterioration and contamination, as well as the likelihood of delays in diagnosis and treatment. In completing the cycle , the Sample Transport Couriers transports results from the laboratories to health facilities.

"*We use motorcycles which are well-equipped with the necessary facilities to maintain the integrity of samples during transportation, particularly in instances where temperature-sensitive medical samples are involved*," explained Shadreck Potipher, ST Courier for Bwaila DHO in Lilongwe. The couriers are adequately trained on standard operating procedures to help prevent any sample from contamination.

Mary Zgambo, HIV Diagnostic Assistant at Area 25 Health Centre shared how they work with R4H Couriers. She narrates, "*We are responsible for testing clients. As recommended, R4H ST Couriers pick up the samples from the health facility after 24 hours. We document the client's information on a lab. form and health facility register. The lab form is attached to the sample and is used as an identifier.*"

The sample transport program enables patients to receive timely diagnoses and appropri-

ate treatment which in turn significantly improves their chances of recovery. "The ST couriers also assist in getting clients missing information from the health facility" added Zgambo.

The sample transport program helps to alleviate the burden of laboratory services in some districts by distributing samples to various molecular laboratories across the country. Emmanuel Nthini, Laboratory Data Entry Clerk at Bwaila DHO explains "*R4H couriers bring well-labeled samples from other health facilities. The samples are accompanied by a requisition form which comprises the name of the health facility from which the sample has been taken, the date, and ID*".

"*Currently, there has been improvements in Turn-Around-Time (TAT) from the day samples are collected from a client, the day when these samples are picked by R4H couriers to the day results are ready for pick up at the hub and delivered to the originating health facilities*" Nthini complemented.

The decreased turnaround time enables healthcare providers to administer timely interventions and improve patient outcomes. Nthini concluded "*Having molecular laboratories in districts like Mchinji and Salima can assist in reducing the backlog in Lilongwe as samples from these neighboring districts are also sent to Kamuzu Central Hospital (KCH) for diagnosis*". The number of samples transported to the lab varies depending on availability.

Overall, the sample transport program has been instrumental in providing healthcare access and outcomes for patients in both urban and rural areas.

CELEBRATING MPHATSO KACHULE- R4H COUNTRY DIRECTOR (2012-2023)

Mphatso Kachule worked with R4H as the first Country Director from 2011 to April 2023.

She has been a pivotal figure in R4H's success over the past decade. With her unwavering dedication, exceptional leadership skills, and an outgoing personality, she has made a lasting impact on both R4H and the community it serves.

Throughout her tenure, Mphatso has displayed a remarkable ability to build strong relationships and effectively collaborate with various stakeholders, including government ministries and departments namely; The Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Transport, Department of Health Technical Support Services (HTSS), Department of Road Traffic and Safety Services (DRTSS), local communities, donors, and partner organizations. Her exceptional interpersonal skills have not only enabled R4H to foster harmonious partnerships but also successfully advocate for organizational goals and objectives. Mphatso spearheaded numerous innovative projects and initiatives that have had a transformative effect on the lives of those at the last mile.

I am grateful to the board , donors, partners, the management team and all R4H staff for their support, inspiration and continued contribution to the growth of R4H. It is not only my effort to have pushed R4H to where it is now but I had the best support from the staff. I cannot wait to see the future roads that R4H will chart.

Mphatso Kachule, Country Director 2012- 2023

I extend my heartfelt thanks to Mphatso for her hard work and tireless effort. She has been instrumental in helping R4H achieve significant milestones.

Tiyanjane Chitaya, Finance Manager- R4H

"The Sample Transport Couriers are managers in healthcare delivery because they are the ones on the ground managing clinical samples for Malawians and they are putting R4H, the Ministry of Health and all other partners on the map. I commend Mphatso for being their great leader for over a decade and for being able to maintain a donor"

Mphatso is an ambassador for R4H whereever we are sending her.

R4H Board Chair/ CD, CHAI Andrews W Gunda

I congratulate Mphatso and appreciate her for how far she has taken R4H. She has left a legacy in the health system.

Dr Stella Kasirye, R4H Board member and acting CD (March- June 2023)

Mphatso's work has grown in the DNA of R4H. I hope that the momentum she has built will be carried forwad by the R4H team. I wish her all the best.

Dr Thokozani Kalua, Country Director- UMB

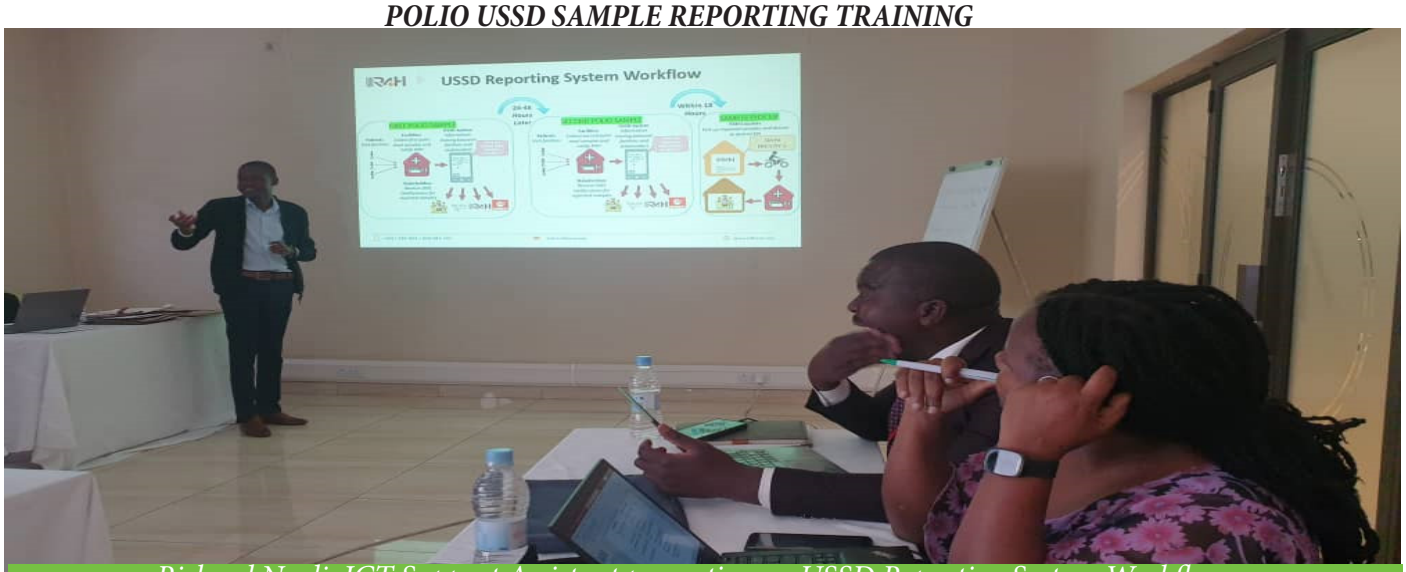
Mphatso has done a commendable work. I recall years back when we first talked about R4H, a young local NGO which is into medical sample transportation. R4H has blossomed under her leadership and i appreciate her for the relationship she has built and maintained with the Ministry of Health.

Mr Kadewere, Director of HTSS- MoH

On behalf of R4H Management and staff, we are grateful for Mphatso's contribution and dedication towards the growth and development of R4H. Her guidance, leadership and unwavering commitment to making the last mile the most important mile in healthcare delivery has not only helped us excel in our work but it has also fostered a culture of collaboration, mutual respect and empathy.

Angelina Nazombe, Programs Manager- Quality Assurance- R4H

POLIO USSD SAMPLE REPORTING TRAINING



Richard Nyali, ICT Support Assistant presenting on USSD Reporting System Workflow

In May 2023, a training program was organized with the aim of enhancing the capabilities of R4H Couriers in executing their duties within the Polio AFP sample transport program. The objective was to provide comprehensive training on the program's information management practices, equipping the couriers with the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

The training attracted a total of 38 attendees, including facilitators, couriers, and other invited participants. Among them, 28 couriers from the Southern Region were present, representing the core group that required training. Four facilitators were well-prepared to deliver an impactful learning experience.

Over the course of the training, several critical areas were covered to ensure a thorough understanding among the couriers. The sessions began with an overview of the Polio disease in Malawi, setting the context for the work they would be engaged in. The couriers delved into the Polio USSD reporting workflow, familiarizing themselves with the system's intricacies. Additionally, they received training on handling important forms, such as the revised chain of custody forms and the R4H sample transport verbal request form. Proper data handling and collection procedures were emphasized to ensure the delivery of high-quality data for the program's Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning function.

To ensure minimal disruption to the Sample Transport program activities in the Southern Region, the training sessions were thoughtfully organized over two days. The couriers were divided into two groups, with 14 couriers attending on each day. This strategic arrangement aimed to maintain the smooth functioning of the Sample Transport program throughout the training period.

The training program's success was measured by the expected outcomes outlined from the beginning. Couriers emerged from the training with a thorough understanding of the documentation used in the Polio AFP sample transportation program. They developed a proper understanding of the tools utilized within the program, including the USSD system, CommCare application, and sample tracking device.

The impact of this training program was far-reaching. The equipped couriers became instrumental in the smooth and efficient execution of the Polio AFP Sample Transport program in the Southern Region. Their enhanced capabilities allowed them to tackle their responsibilities with confidence, ensuring the safe and timely transportation of vital samples. By optimizing the documentation and information management practices, the couriers are contributing to the overall success of the program and the elimination of polio in Malawi.

1.***When did you join R4H as an instructor?***
I have been working with R4H Limited since 2017.

2.***Who are some of the clients you have trained?***
- I have trained Kabaza riders, Individual trainees and staff from TEVETA, Baylor College of Medicine, MSH, Partners In Health, VSO, AHF, C-QUEST Capital and Rhino Insurance.

3.***How do you work with the Ministry of Transport/ Road Traffic?***
I work closely with the Ministry of Transport or Road Traffic authorities to uphold the prescribed standards for driver training and education. I deliver training that aligns with the standards and guidelines set by the Ministry of Transport or Road Traffic authority including traffic rules, road signs, driving techniques, and safety practices.

With quality instructions, I prepare students for their driver's license tests.

4.On average, how many trainees have you trained so far?
I have trained more 5000 Trainees since 2017.

5. What do you like most about your job?
I find joy in helping individuals develop the necessary skills to become safe and confident Motorcycle riders.

I develop meaningful relationships with the students, this gives me an opportunity to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds and form connections based on their shared interest in driving/Riding.

I stay up to date with the latest traffic laws, regulations, and teaching methods. As an instructor, I need to continually expand my knowledge base and stay current with any updates or advancements in my field.

6. What advise can you give to Motorcycle Riders with regards to their health and road safety?
-Always wear a riding gear.
-Regularly Maintain Your Motorcycle
-Follow Traffic Laws
-Be Visible
-Practice Defensive Riding
- Be mindful of Road Conditions
-Stay Sober and Alert
-Continuously develop skills and techniques.

ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED FROM APRIL- JUNE 2023

- Conducted Optimized Sample Transport (OST) support visits in Salima and Phalombe
- Developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the Optimized Sample Transport (OST)/ ICT
- Routine NLIMS CommCare integration calls
- Engaged DIMAGI in the improvement of CommCare feature
- Courier training on CommCare (southern region)
- Systems integration visit in Mzimba North on the verification of the systems integrations with EGPAF, Luke International (LI), UMB
- NLIMS CommCare technical visits by R4H-EGPAF-LI-UMB-CDC, followed by MoH similar visit.
- Oriented health workers and R4H couriers on the chain of custody forms for polio samples, sample ID auto-generation and Tech4Med devices
- Initiated the update of the USSD system with the new changes to include the auto generation of polio stool Sample IDs
- Scheduled and approved Optimization Routes for Phalombe, Salima and Rumphi, Mzimba North and Lilongwe districts
- Routine follow-up of USSD non-complying Health Care Facilities to ensure compliance.
- Day-to-day monitoring of quality and quantity of optimized pull data reported by HCW and ST couriers.
- Coordinated Polio stool sample transportation through USSD sample volume reporting and transportation.
- Implemented ST program in 790 Facilities, 29 districts
- Conducted Monthly route schedule and fuel analysis
- Conducted Monthly motorcycle maintenance and Program reporting
- Developed SOP's for Sample Transport and Waste management
- Health Facility Spot-checks in Chitipa, Karonga, Mzimba North, Kasungu, Dowa, Salima, Lilongwe, Balaka, Mangochi, Machinga, Zomba, Chiradzulu, Thyolo, Mulanje & Blantyre
- Attended R4H-CDC Q2 review meeting
- Attended Diagnostic Network Optimization Meetings
- Attended CDC laboratory & Clinical implementing partners monthly meetings
- Attended VL Plasma collection and Transportation Orientation
- Attended EID/VL point of care quarterly review meeting

LESSONS LEARNT FROM APRIL- JUNE 2023

- Timely submission of OST periodical reports, i.e., bi-weekly and monthly reports promote quick challenge resolution within the OST.
- Capacity building to health care workers on USSD sample reporting improves the quality of OST i.e., reduction in empty trips and USSD compliance.
- Healthcare facility-level inter-personnel coordination improves the quality of USSD reporting i.e., delegations of tasks among HCWs.
- Healthcare facility-in-charge are ideal for successful implementation of ST program activities, by ensuring that HCWs comply with USSD sample reporting at all times and delegation of duties.
- Support visits to HCFs or supervision of STO program activities improves USSD compliance effectively through retraining and training of HCWs on USSD sample reporting, due to staff turnovers.
- Delayed replacement of courier tablets compromises the functionality of sample transport service.
- Partners' Engagement meetings are vital for effective implementation of ST program activities.
- Regular engagements with key stakeholders on ST programs enhances inter-organizational relationships.
- Spot-checks provide room for tracked improvements in the ST and Laboratory Results delivery system.

PROJECT PLANS FOR THE NEXT QUARTER (JULY- SEPTEMBER)

- Train staff on CommCare (north and central region)
- Procure courier Tablet and server
- Finalize deployment of advanced CommCare feature by DIMAGI
- Train staff on Quality Management Systems SOPs
- Documentation of sample transport quality manual, biosafety/biosecurity manual and client handbook.
- Provide routine support to Optimized Sample Transport
- Implement NLIMS CommCare integration activities, including possible roll out of the integration
- Participate in resource mobilization activities
- Conduct OST support visits to the OST districts
- Submit scientific abstracts on sample transport digitalization to international conference
- Conduct CommCare support visits to couriers
- Transport VillageReach polio stool samples
- ST implementation in all 29 districts
- Implementation of the OST in all 5 districts (Phalombe, Salima, Rumphi, Mzimba North and Lilongwe)
- Conduct facility spot-checks for remaining districts; Phalombe, Neno, Mwanza, Chikwawa, Nsanje, Ntcheu, Dedza, Mchinji, Ntchisi, Nkotakota, Mzimba South, Rumphi, Likoma & Nkhata-Bay
- Monthly Program and Financial reporting
- Motorcycle maintenance outreach services for all districts
- Participate in internal and external meetings, e.g. Monthly and Quarterly Review meetings with CDC and other implementing partners
- Follow-up with DICs on the implementation of the ST Program

HR UPDATES FROM APRIL- JUNE

New employees

- Lucy Chiyenda, Country Director

- Chigomegzo Malaidza, Finance Officer

- Hope Msiska, Sample Transport Courier- Mzimba

- Wanangwa Phiri, Sample Transport Courier- Thyolo

- Harlod Chimaza, Sample Transport Courier- Neno

- Chimango Manda, Sample Transport Courier- Mzimba

Promotions

- Steve Maluza - From Courier to Route Optimization Assistant Officer
- Patrick Sikwese - Operations Officer to Operations Manager

Leavers

- Mphatso Kachule - Country Director,
- Mwai Mbonyera - Finance Officer, Lilongwe H.O
- Kenneth Kandiado - Courier, Chikwawa
- Junnie Mulanzie - Courier, Blantyre
- Alfred Saphwani - Courier, Thyolo
- Lyson Changole - Courier, Ntcheu

Acting

- Dr Stella Kasirye - Country Director
- Emmanuel Ngwira - Sample Transport Coordinator

Transfers

- Louis M'bweza - Courier, ***Neno*** to ***Chikwawa***
- Amos Kaipa - Courier, ***Mzimba*** to ***Lilongwe***
- Godfrey Mphepo - Courier, ***Lilongwe*** to ***Mchinji***

R4H Country Director, Managers and Staff during Courier USSD sample reporting training in April2023, Blantyre

R4H Staff making a toast to the out-going CD, Mphatso Kachule for a decade of service

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