

Together for Each Other: **Health Is Happiness**

A Story of One Family's Journey





In a busy town in South Sudan, a young man was out hustling to make money. He saw a young woman in the market and decided to greet her. She responded, and they begin chatting and agreed to meet again.



One year later, the young man and woman are married and living with his parents. The young man and his father were having a tense discussion about how everything was becoming more expensive.



Meanwhile, the young woman had been feeling sick in the mornings. Her mother-in-law thought she might be pregnant and congratulated her good fortune. The mother-in-law shared her memories of having children at home and encouraged her to go to the health center to confirm the pregnancy and, if pregnant, to have an early antenatal care (ANC) checkup.



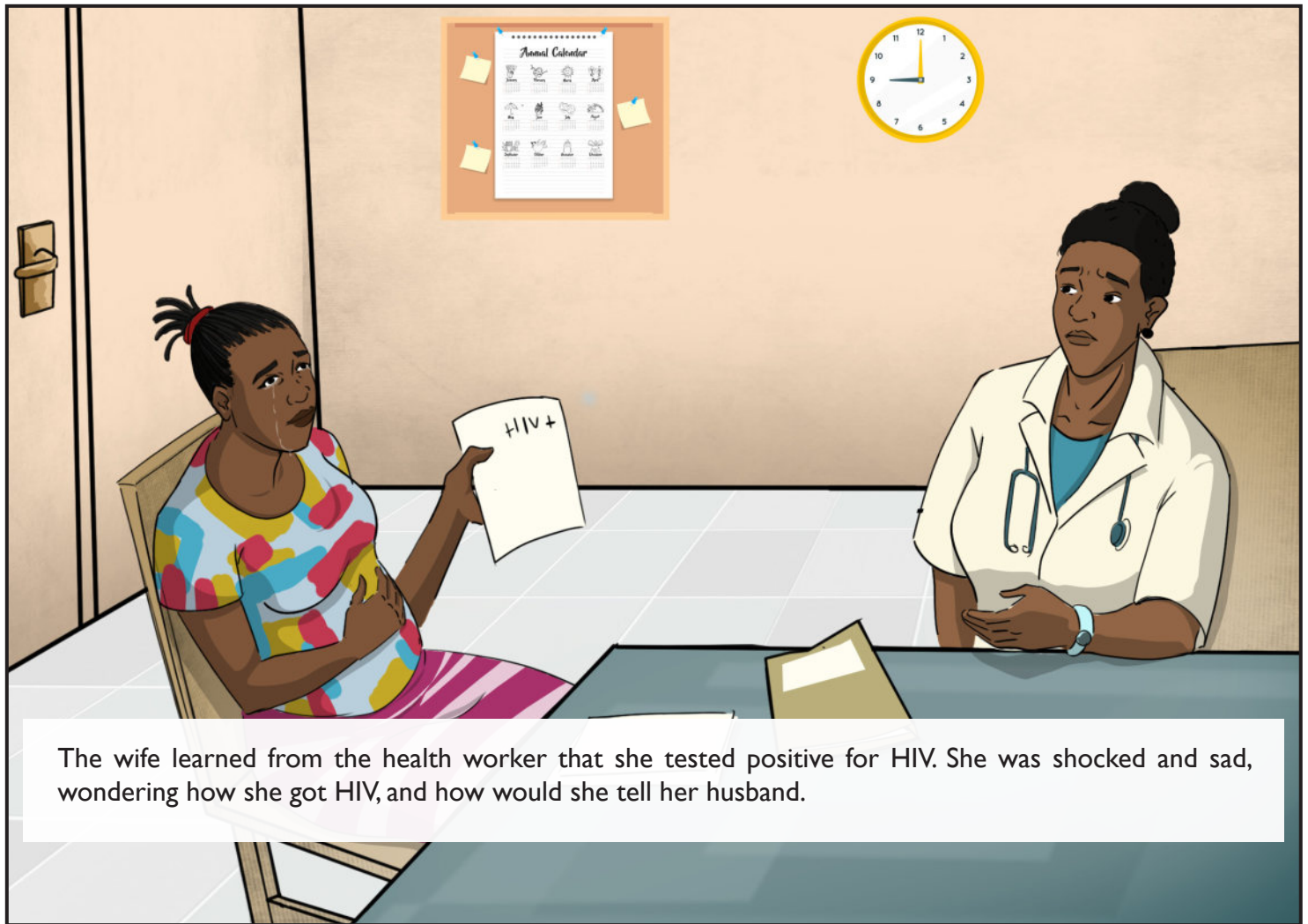
The wife told her husband she thought she was pregnant, which brought him joy! Pregnancy is a gift from God and children add to the respect and wealth of the family. The wife discussed going to the health center for a checkup. The husband agreed and encouraged her to go.



On the day of the checkup, the husband took his wife to the health center. The wife was nervous because it was her first visit to ANC services. She asked her husband to come inside with her but he refused, saying he had too much work and would come back to meet her later.



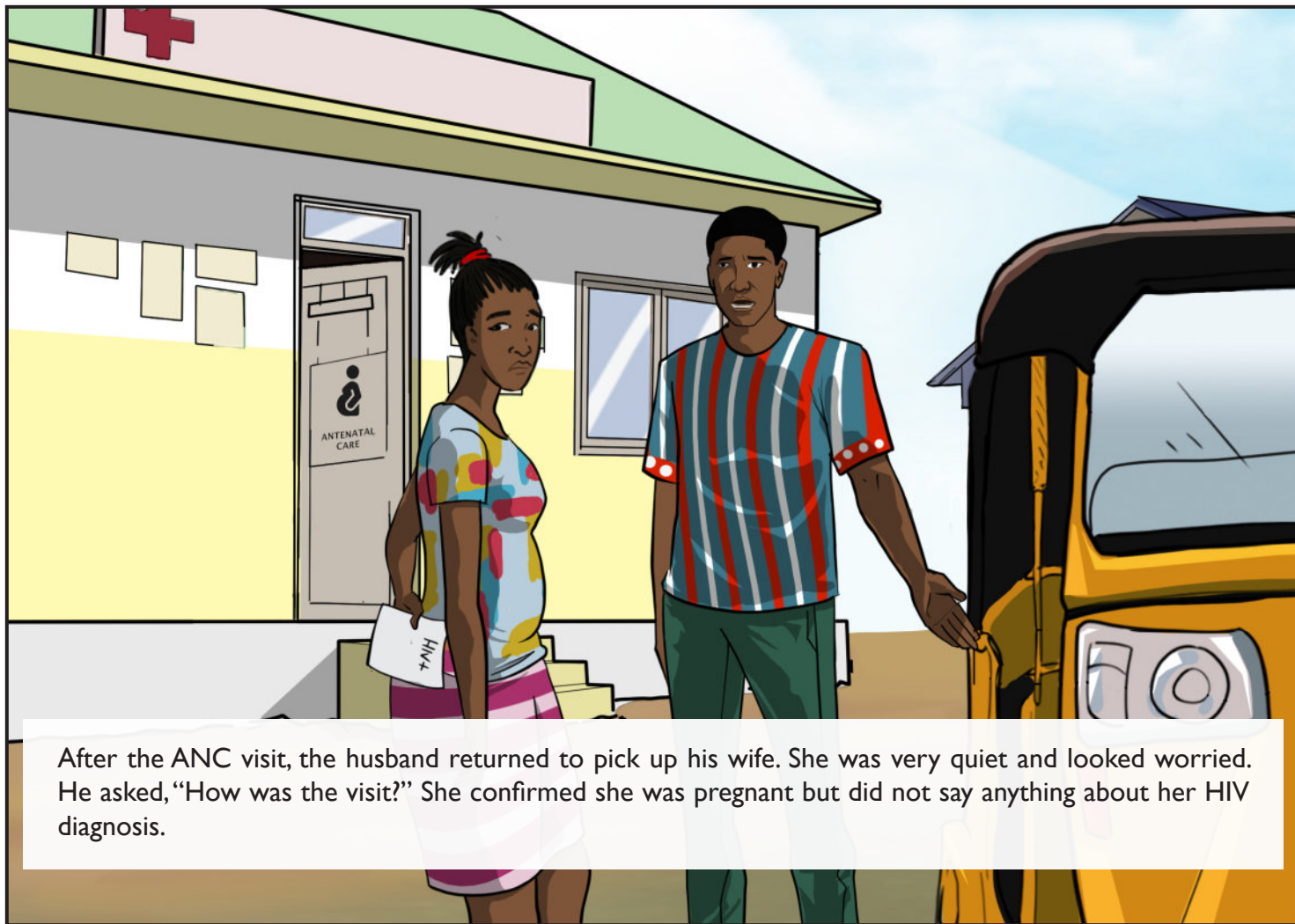
Many pregnant women were in the waiting area, some with their husbands. She wished her husband were with her. After some time, she was called to a private room where she received a confidential health check, counseling, and tests.



The wife learned from the health worker that she tested positive for HIV. She was shocked and sad, wondering how she got HIV, and how would she tell her husband.

The health worker explained that :

1. It is common for someone to feel shock and sadness when learning they are HIV positive. This is a normal response.
2. Modern medication, if taken as directed, can prevent passing HIV from mother to child and between partners. The earlier you begin medication during a pregnancy, the better. This is just one reason why going for early ANC is important!
3. Spouses should go for an HIV test if their partner tested positive. The only way to know your HIV status is to take a test. If you have HIV and do not get on treatment, you can become very sick.
4. Modern medication is available for free, but managing HIV is easier when both husband and wife support each other. It's a team effort.



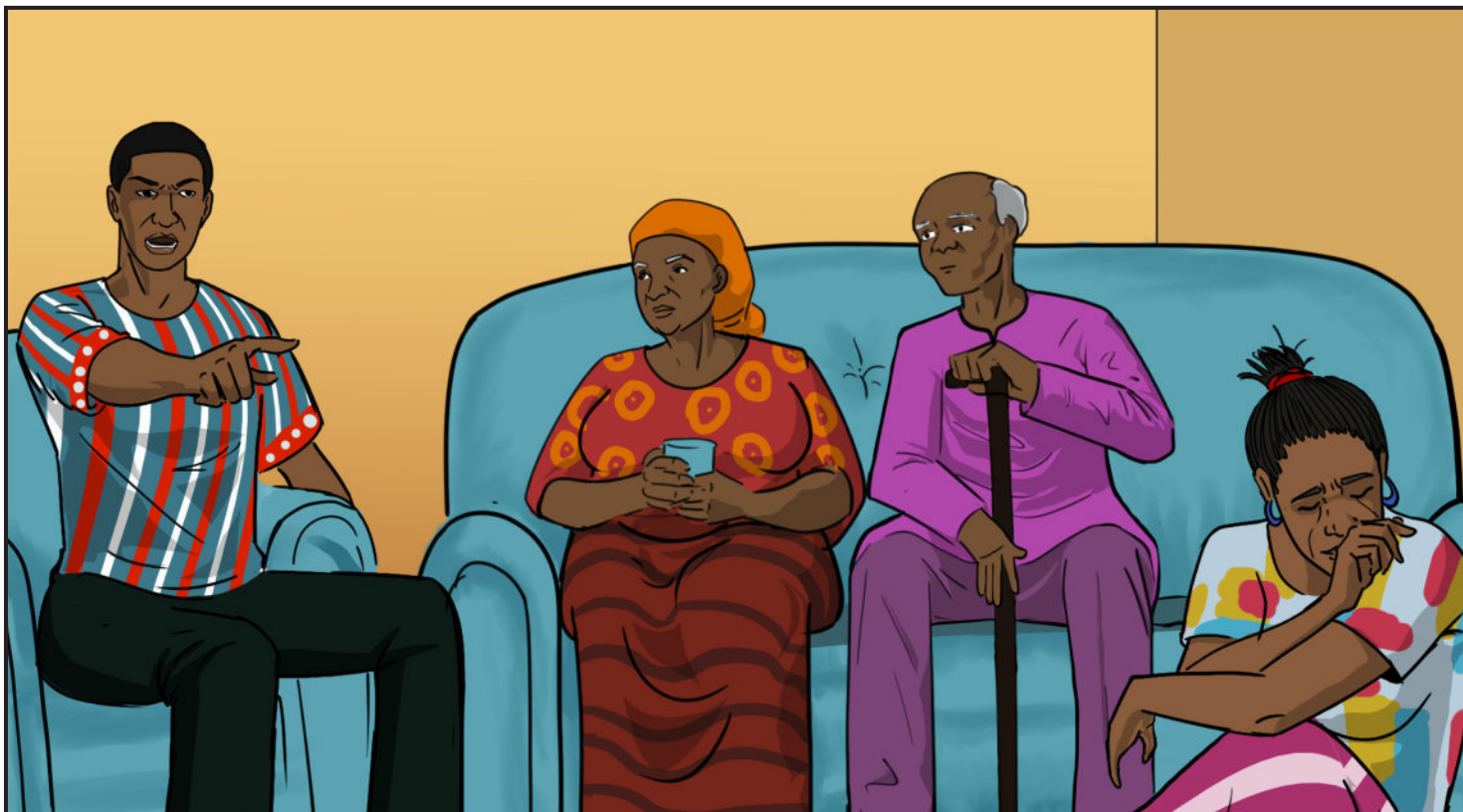
After the ANC visit, the husband returned to pick up his wife. She was very quiet and looked worried. He asked, "How was the visit?" She confirmed she was pregnant but did not say anything about her HIV diagnosis.



For the following week, the wife did not know with whom to share her HIV status. She thought about her husband and his family, her religious leader, and her own parents.



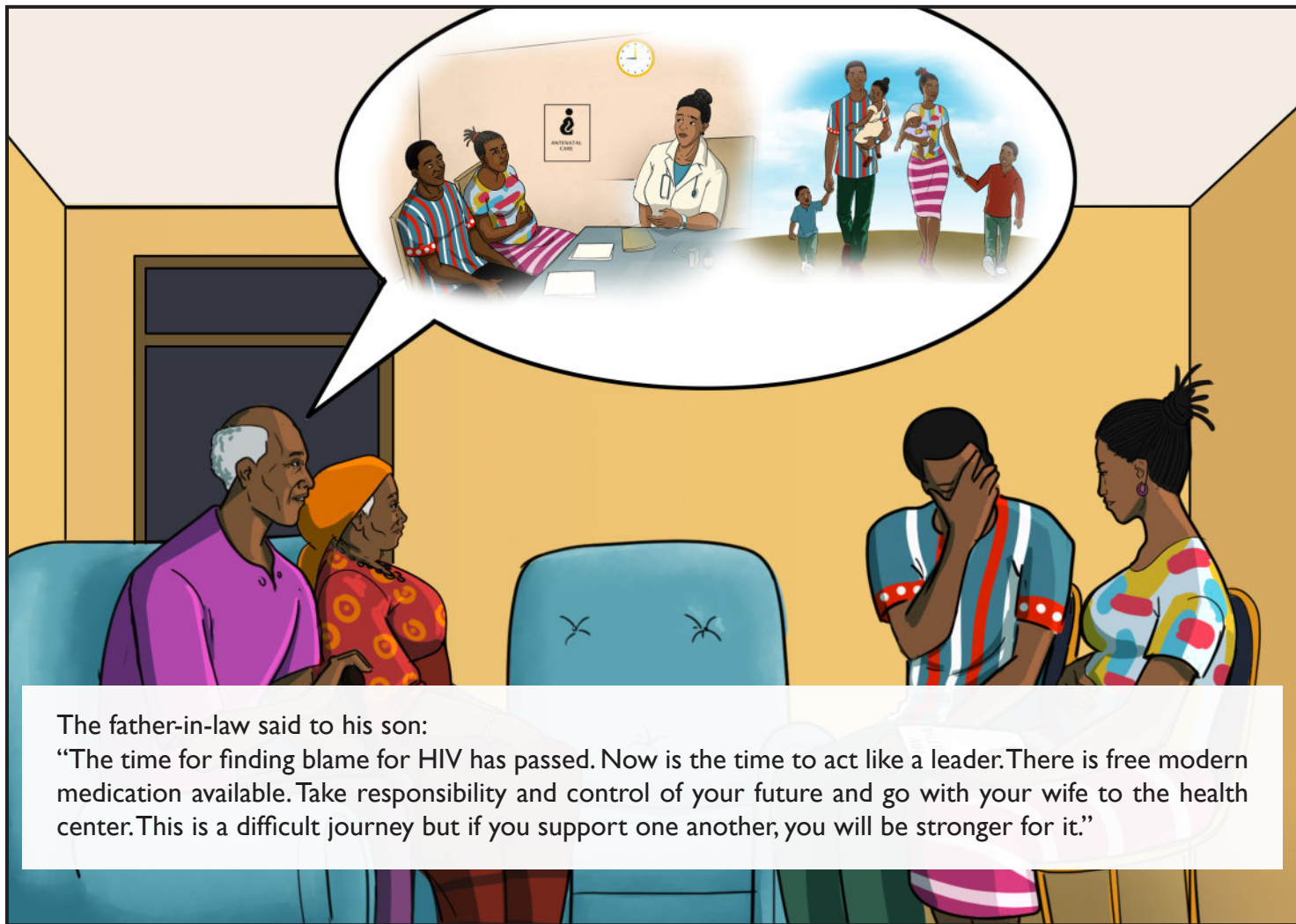
The wife decided to tell her mother-in-law about her HIV diagnosis. She hoped the mother-in-law could help her talk to her husband. The mother-in-law was shocked and angry but agreed to help after the wife explained what the health worker had told her.



A family meeting was called. The father-in-law tells his son that his wife tested positive for HIV at the health center. The son is shocked and very angry. He yelled at his wife and accused her of giving him HIV. He denies any responsibility, and his wife begins to cry.

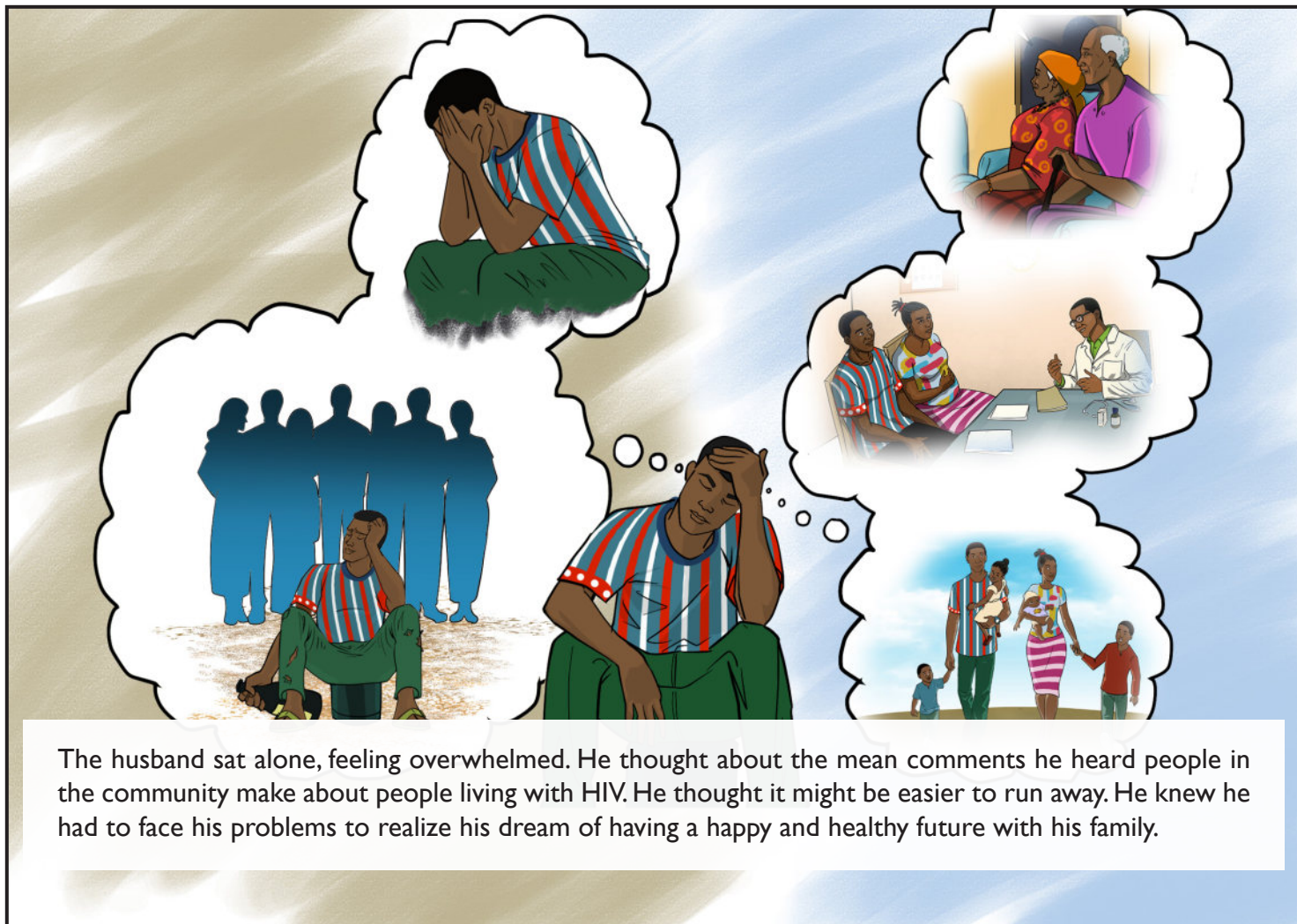


The mother-in-law reminded her son that they both encouraged his wife to go to the health center for a checkup. This was a good decision because now they know her HIV status and can get free modern medication to keep her and the unborn baby safe and healthy.



The father-in-law said to his son:

“The time for finding blame for HIV has passed. Now is the time to act like a leader. There is free modern medication available. Take responsibility and control of your future and go with your wife to the health center. This is a difficult journey but if you support one another, you will be stronger for it.”



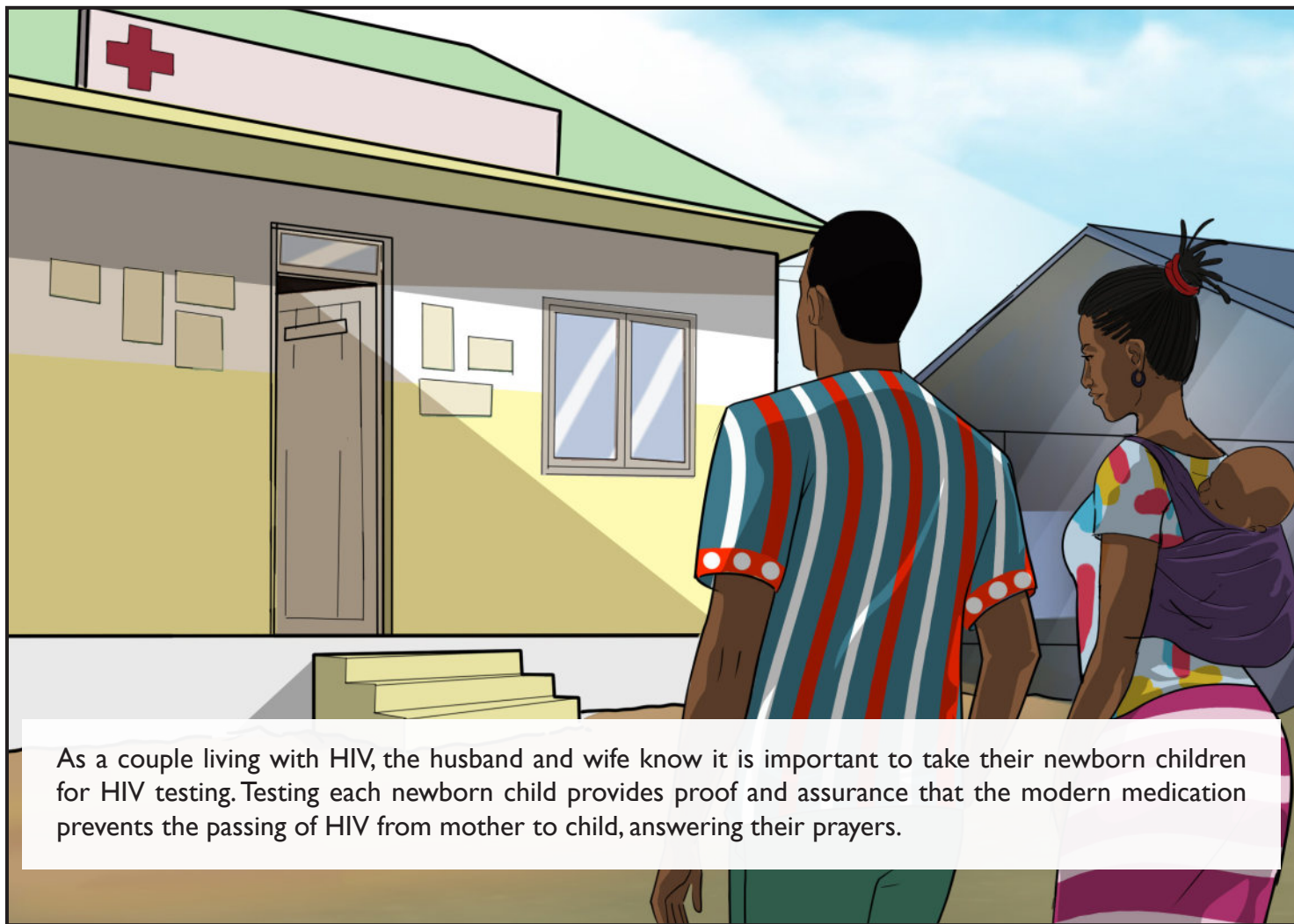
The husband sat alone, feeling overwhelmed. He thought about the mean comments he heard people in the community make about people living with HIV. He thought it might be easier to run away. He knew he had to face his problems to realize his dream of having a happy and healthy future with his family.



The husband found the courage to face his fears. He and his wife went back to the health center for an HIV test. He tested positive. The health worker eased his mind by explaining how to manage HIV and the benefits of treatment.



Ten years have passed, and the husband and wife continue to support each other. They take their modern HIV medication every day as directed. They both remain strong, and their teamwork brings them closer together.



As a couple living with HIV, the husband and wife know it is important to take their newborn children for HIV testing. Testing each newborn child provides proof and assurance that the modern medication prevents the passing of HIV from mother to child, answering their prayers.



With modern medicine, HIV did not stop the husband and wife from having more children. With each pregnancy, they visit the health center early, knowing that the health workers can help them prevent their unborn children from contracting the disease with the proper medication and support.

Further Information:

If you require additional support, you can reach it here. You are not alone.
These services are available to anyone. Men, women, youth, and elders are all welcome.



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND SUPPORT

Organization OR Contact Name

Contact Number



HEALTH CENTER (ANC AND ART SERVICES)

Organization OR Contact Name

Contact Number

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