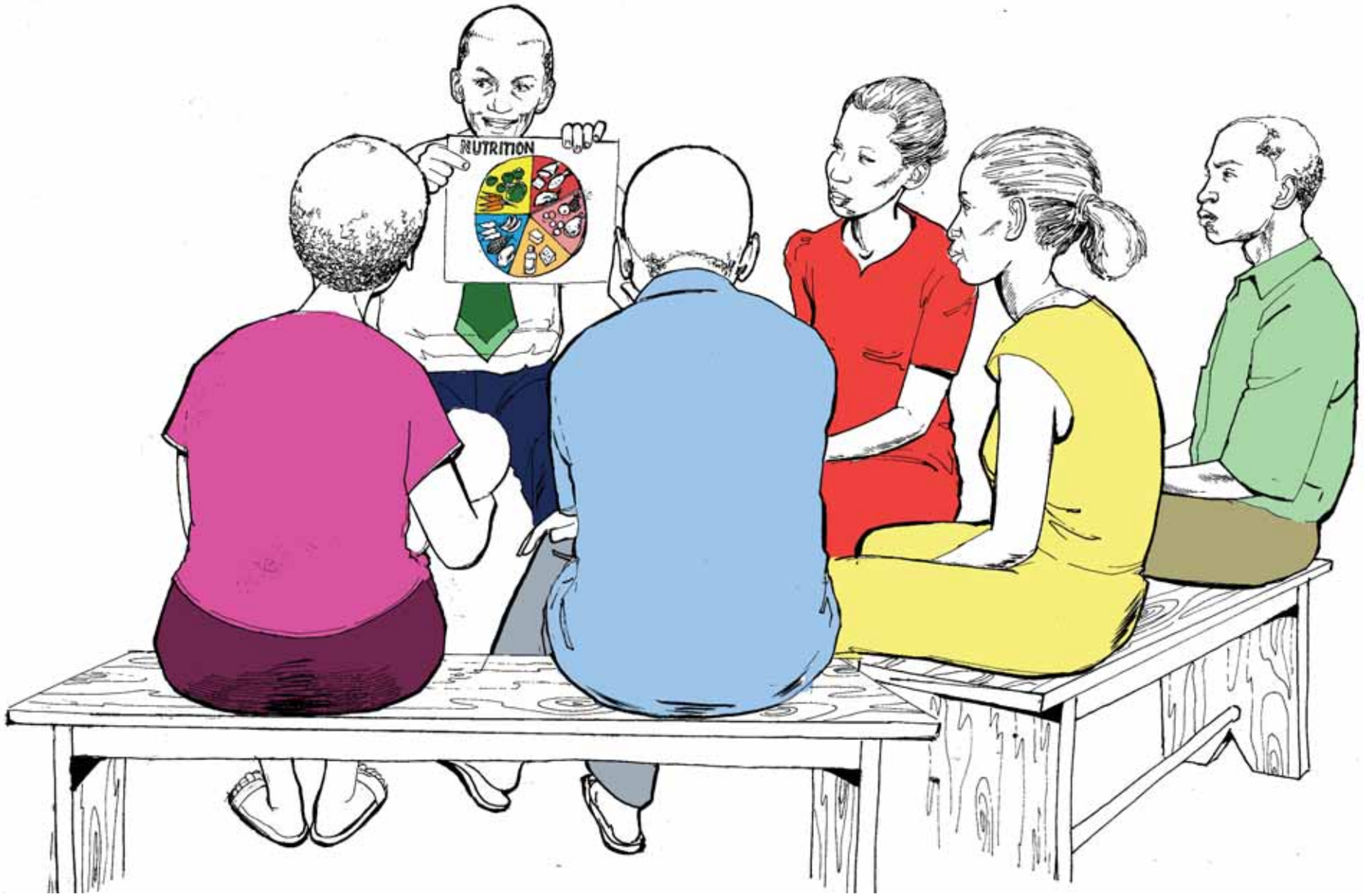
Nutrition for PLWHA - Counselling Cards



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The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID.

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For copies of this flip chart contact:
Regional Centre for Quality of Health Care, Makerere University Medical School,
P O Box 29140, Kampala -Uganda, Tel. 256-41-530888, Fax 256 530876.

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INTRODUCTION

This is a flip chart containing counselling cards. These cards are designed for counselors and health workers to enhance nutrition counselling for PLWHA.

Use these cards when counselling PLWHA or their caregivers to help them:

- Make informed choices for improving their nutrition.
- Identify and use locally available foods to meet their nutritional needs.
- Understand and adopt practices that promote a healthier nutritional status.
- Understand how to use diet to manage common HIV/AIDS related conditions.

How to use the cards

1. You can use these cards for both individual and group counselling.

2. Read all the cards to know the content before using them. This will help you to select the appropriate cards in a given counselling situation.

3. You can place the flip chart on a table or hold it to your chest. The side with the illustration should face the client/s.The side with the notes should face the counselor. Hold the flip chart in a way that allows clear viewing of illustrations by the client/s.

4.After using a card, flip it over so that the client sees a new illustration. This enables the counselor to see the notes on the back of the previous page.

- Use theme 1 cards to provide general counselling on nutrition and HIV/AIDS for both individual and group counselling.
- Use theme 2 cards to provide specific counselling on eating well.
- Use theme 3 cards to provide counselling on how to avoid infections.
- Use theme 4 cards to provide counselling for PLWHA on the importance of physical activity.
- Use theme 5 cards to provide counselling for PLWHA with HIV related symptoms

5. Maintain eye contact when talking with the client during counselling.

- Build on what the client knows. Use the key messages in the cards to reinforce or correct the client's responses as needed.
- Review with your client the key points discussed on each card to ensure the client has understood the discussion correctly.

Remember:

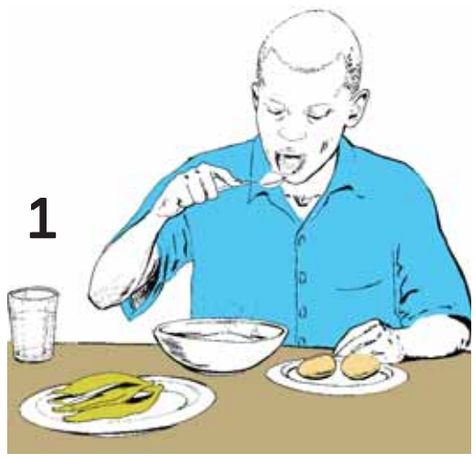
- Every client is unique. How he or she responds to information may vary.
- Clients with a recurring condition requiring the same nutrition intervention may have underlying medical needs which necessitate medical approaches.
- All cards may not be necessary for each client session. Select cards to use according to the individual client's needs.

Importance of nutrition counselling for PLWHA

Malnutrition worsens the effects of HIV infection by weakening the body's ability fo fight diseases. On the other hand, HIV infection increases nutritional needs and vulnerability to malnutrition. Frequent and chronic illnesses compromise food production capacity, and food intake, absorption and utilization.

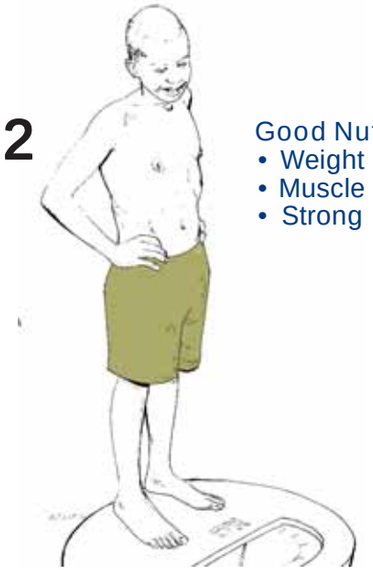
Improving nutrition can help to strengthen the body's ability to fight diseases and delay progression from HIV to AIDS. This makes it possible for the PLWHA to stay productive and live longer.

Good nutrition keeps the body strong.



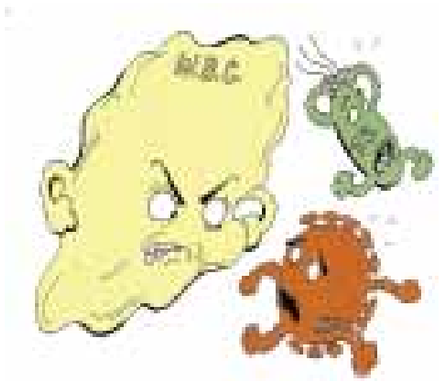
1

Nutritional needs well met
- Adequate food intake,
- Balanced diet



2

Good Nutritional Status
- Weight gain,
- Muscle size maintained,
- Strong body,



3

Strengthened ability to fight HIV and other infections

HIV/AIDS

4

Reduced vulnerability to infections
Slower progression to AIDS

THEME 1 GOOD NUTRITION IS IMPORTANT FOR THE WELL-BEING OF PLWHA

1.1 GOOD NUTRITION KEEPS THE BODY STRONG

Ask the client to describe what he/she sees in the picture.
Building on the client's response, explain how good nutrition affects HIV/AIDS.

1. The picture to the left

- HIV increases the body's needs for food.
- To meet the increased food needs,the PLWHA is eating well and absorbs foods required by the body.

2. The picture above

- Because the PLWHA is able to meet his extra food needs, he will not lose weight. He will be able to stay strong and well nourished.
- The PLWHA has a well nourished body that enables him to build strength to fight HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

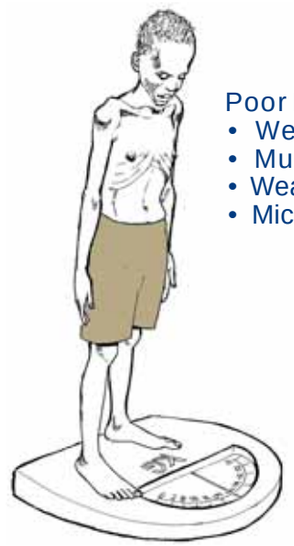
3. The picture far right

- The body's defence system is strengthened against disease and infection because the body has enough nutrients stored.
- The body can therefore fight off infections better. This delays progression of HIV to AIDS.

4. The picture below

- The body does not easily get infections. This makes the PLWHA stay strong and less dependent on others.
- Since the PLWHA does not get frequent infections, progression of HIV to AIDS is delayed. The PLWHA will have a good appetite and the cycle continues.

Poor nutrition quickens progression to AIDS.



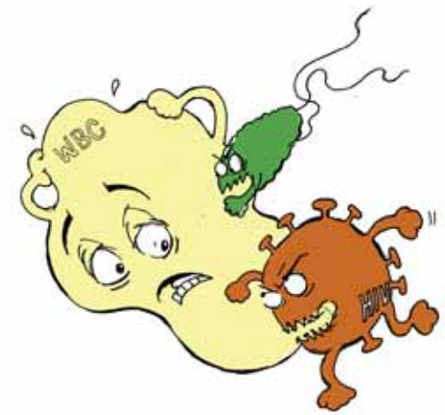
2

Poor Nutrition
- Weight loss
- Muscle wasting
- Weakness
- Micronutrient deficiency

1

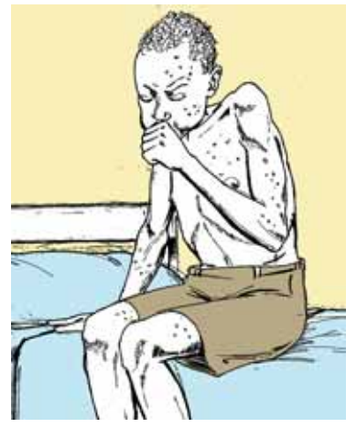
Increased Nutrition Needs
- Due to poor absorption of nutrients
- In order to address infection and viral replication
- Due to symptoms

HIV/AIDS



3

Weakened ability of the body to fight HIV and other infections



4

Increased vulnerability to infections, including TB and flu, and thus faster progression to AIDS

1.2 POOR NUTRITION QUICKENS PROGRESSION OF HIV TO AIDS

Ask the client what he/she sees in the picture.
Explain to the client how poor nutritional status affects progression of HIV to AIDS.

1. The picture to the left
   - HIV and frequent infections increase the nutritional needs of the PLWHA.
   - But the PLWHA cannot take in enough food to get the needed nutrients. This is usually due to loss of appetite, poor absorption of nutrients, and changes in the way food is utilised in the body resulting from HIV and frequent infections.

2. The picture above
   - The poor intake of food leads to loss of weight, body weakness, nutrient deficiencies and poor nutritional status.
   - The poor nutritional status weakens the body's ability to fight diseases even further, and increases vulnerability to infections and to the impact of HIV.

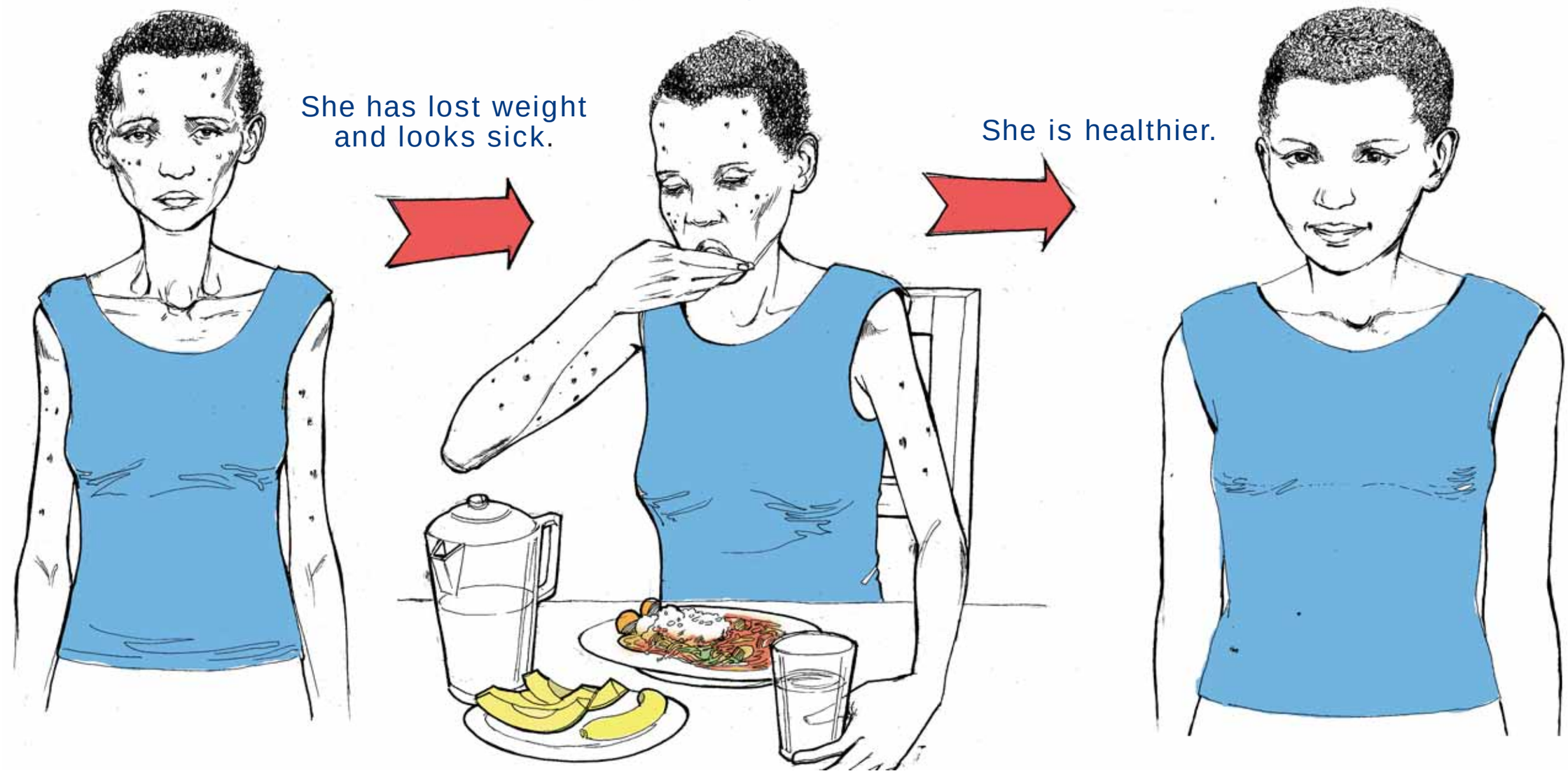
3. The picture far right
   - HIV destroys the body's natural ability to fight disease and infection.
   - As a result the body's ability to fight infections is greatly reduced.

4. The picture below
   - With a weakened ability to fight infections, the body becomes vulnerable to infections that normally may not have affected the person.
   - The frequent infections make the body weaker, and lead to faster progression from HIV to AIDS.

Same person

She has lost weight
and looks sick.

She is healthier.



1.3 GOOD NUTRITION DELAYS PROGRESSION OF HIV TO AIDS

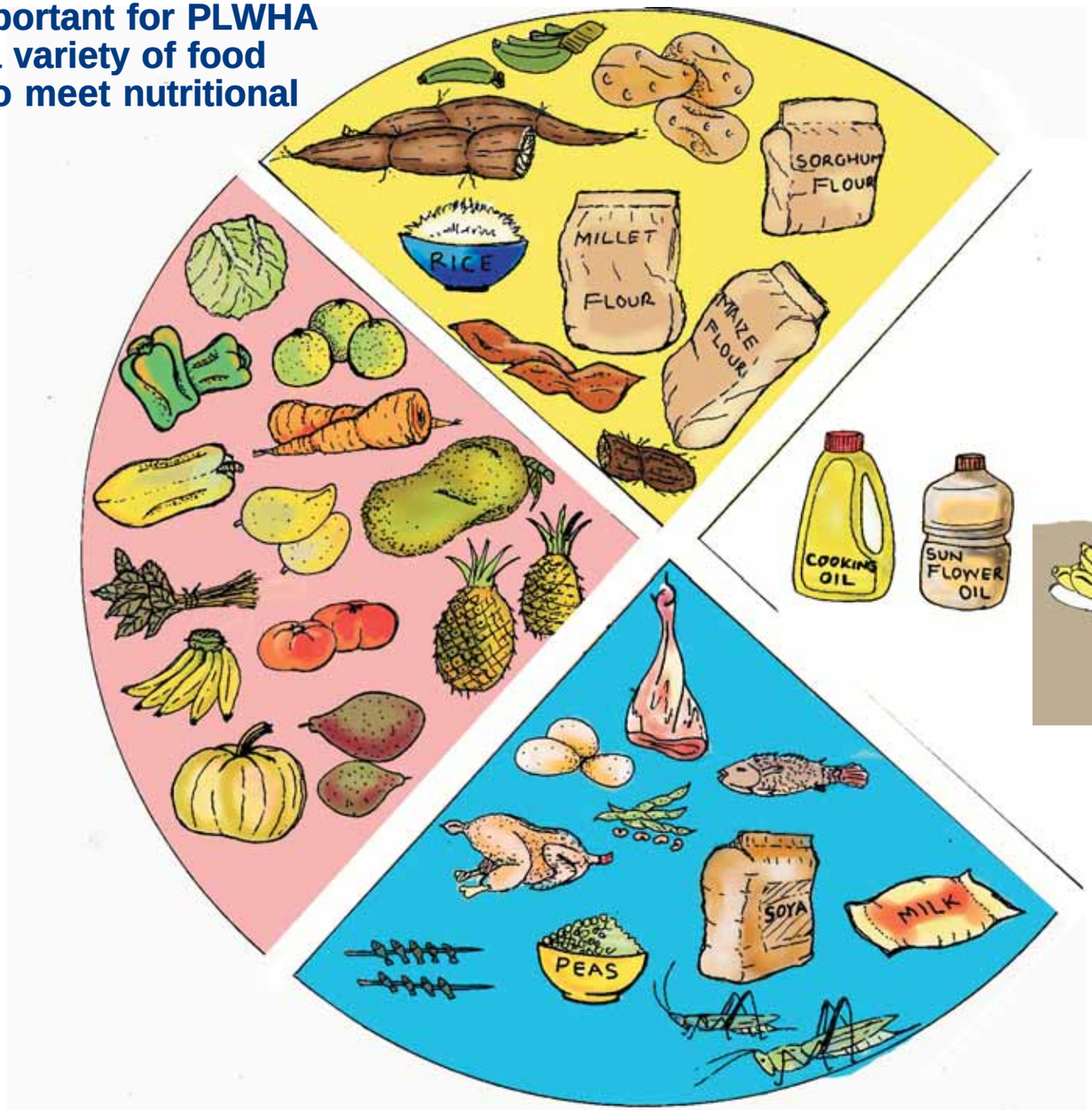
I. Ask the client to describe and explain the picture:
- It is the same person. In one picture she has lost weight and looks sick. In the other picture she is healthy.

II. Explain to the client that a PLWHA:
- Can live a healthier life, free from frequent infections.
- Can look well-nourished and be well-nourished.

III. Explain that to live a healthier life and be well-nourished a PLWHA must take special care of his/her nutritional needs by:
- Eating well,
- Preventing infections,
- Maintaining physical activity,
- Managing diet related HIV/AIDS symptoms, such as diarrhoea.

Ask the client if he/she has any questions relating to any of the recommended practices. Use the following sets of cards to provide more information about the recommended practices.

It is important for PLWHA to eat a variety of food types to meet nutritional needs.



2.1 EAT MEALS THAT HAVE A VARIETY OF FOOD TYPES

I. Ask about the client's understanding of the need for food from each of the food types:
- Energy giving foods (top and right of chart) - Provide the body with power, strength and energy to function. (e.g. cereals, tubers, oils)
- Body building foods (bottom of chart) - Needed for building of muscles, cells, body defense system and enzymes. (e.g. animal products, nuts, beans)
- Protective foods (left of chart) - Strengthen the body's ability to fight disease, help in cleansing body of toxins and by-products of body functions. (e.g. vegetables, fruits)

II. Explain that it is important for a PLWHA to eat well to meet the body's nutritional needs for proper functioning, growth, and repair and for maintenance of health.
- Different types of foods play different roles in the body. Therefore the body needs different types of foods to be able to meet its nutritional needs.
- A PLWHA has increased nutritional needs resulting from the HIV infection. In some cases medication may also change nutritional needs.
- Failing to meet the body's nutritional needs will lead to poor nutritional status. This will further weaken one's ability to fight diseases and will make one lose weight.
- Eating well helps a PLWHA to meet their body's nutritional needs. It also can help medication work better.

III. Explain that eating well means eating in adequate amounts of the different varieties of foods required by the body.
- A good meal should include foods from the three food groups and a drink.
- It is important to drink plenty of fluids, especially cool boiled water (at least 4 cups/8 glasses a day) preferably in between meals and after meals.
- A PLWHA should have a good meal at least 3 times a day, plus snacks.

IV. Discuss with the client food combinations that are available in his/her community. Ensure that they include the three food types plus clean water.

Ask the clients about questions she/he may have about what has been discussed.

Intake of essential nutrients can be increased by eating fortified foods.

2.2 EAT FORTIFIED FOODS TO INCREASE INTAKE OF ESSENTIAL NUTRIENTS

I. Explain to the client that intake of essential nutrients can be increased by eating fortified foods where available and affordable.
Fortified foods have added vitamins, minerals or other nutrients to improve their nutritional value.

II. Ask the client to name fortified foods in the picture.
- Salt fortified with iodine,
- Commercially produced/packaged cereal flours like maize, millet, soya (fortified with the B-vitamins and zinc),
- Milk products and yoghurt, mainly fortified with calcium and vitamin A,
- Oils and fats like margarine and vegetable oil, mainly fortified with vitamins A and E,
- Bottled fruit juices fortified with vitamin C (not in picture). Avoid quenchers since they simply contain coloured water, sugar and flavour.

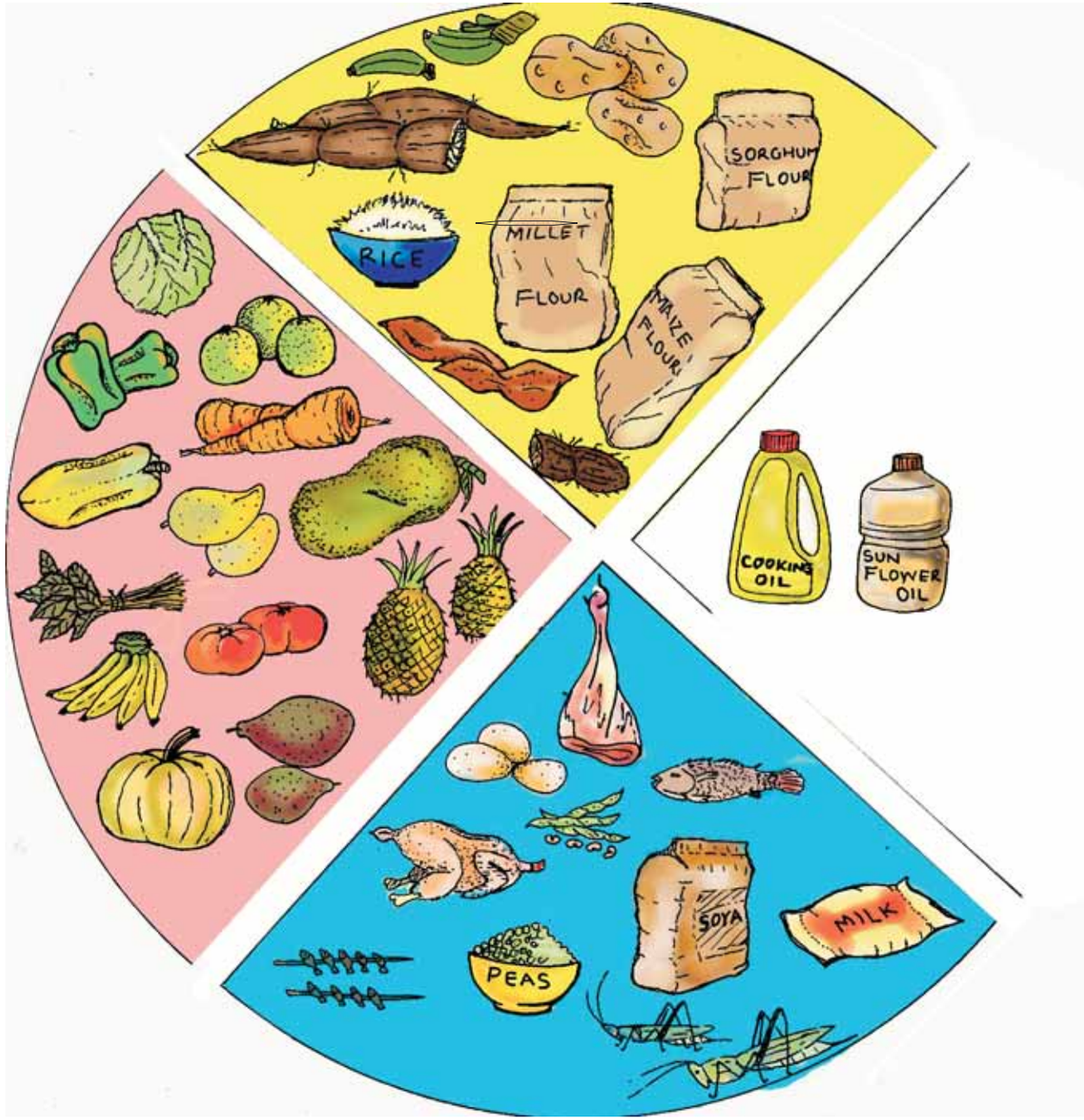
III. Ask the client if he/she knows more examples of fortified foods. Find out which foods the client can afford and is able to eat. Reinforce positive attitudes and practices. Clarify any myths the client may have about eating fortified foods.

IV. Tell the client to always remember to read product labels (or if not possible, to ask) for indication of added nutrients and expiry dates.

V. Tell the client that additional nutrient requirements can also be obtained by taking a multivitamin supplement.

VI. Explain that multivitamin supplements should only be taken after consultation with a health worker.

STRESS: MULTIVITAMIN SUPPLEMENTS ARE ONLY ADDITIONS TO FOOD AND MUST NEVER REPLACE FOOD



PLWHA need to eat more in order to meet their increased nutritional needs.

2.3 INCREASE ENERGY INTAKE BY EATING MORE

I. Explain to the client the importance of increasing intake of energy.

- When one has HIV the body's requirement for energy is increased.
- PLWHA need to eat more food than a person without HIV/AIDS. The healthiest way to meet the increased energy requirements is to eat more food from all food groups and maintain a balanced diet.
- If the body's requirement for energy is not met, the body will break down fat and muscle tissue, leading to weight loss.

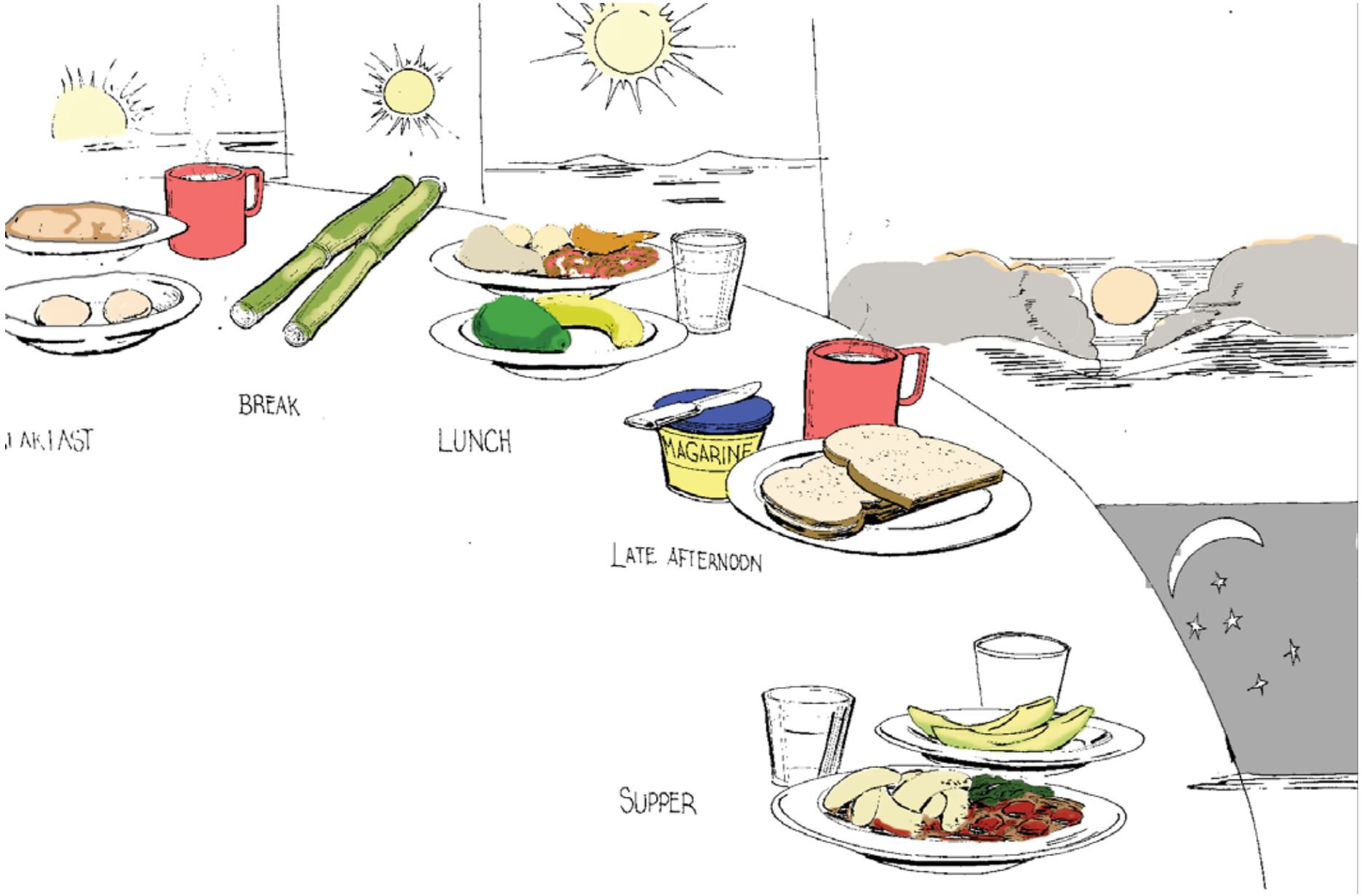
II. Ask the client how they can increase intake of energy

- Increase food intake by increasing the amount of food served.
- Increase the frequency of meals and snacks.
- Make every bite count by having foods that are rich in energy or by adding oil or sugar to food. However, large amounts of sugar and oil can be unhealthy as explained below.

III. IMPORTANT! Caution the client to limit the following:

- Amount of sugars, especially refined sugars. When taken in large amounts, sugars are stored as fat in the body. This can lead to diabetes, heart disease and liver damage. Sugar should be avoided if one has oral thrush.
- Intake of fats and oils, especially from animal products. When taken in large amounts, they can cause high levels of fat in the blood, which can lead to heart disease, especially for PLWHA taking certain ARVs. Oil should be avoided if one has diarrhoea.
- Intake of drinks like tea and coffee. These may affect absorption of nutrients and intake of other foods.

Meals and snacks over a 24 hour period



2.4 EAT SNACKS TO INCREASE ENERGY INTAKE

I. Explain that another way to increase the amount of energy consumed in a day is to have nutritious snacks between meals. Snacks should be nutrient-dense and, if possible, should have foods from more than one food type.

II. Ask and discuss with the client what they see in the picture
- Meals being taken at different times of the day.
- The person takes at least 2 snacks during the day and 3 major meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner).
- Foods from all three of the food groups discussed are included.
- The snacks are nutritious.

III. Find out if the client is able to have a snack and if so, when? Discuss the best times to have snacks. Possible snack times include:
- When one is resting or chatting with friends or during breaks.
- When one is travelling.

IV. Discuss the different kinds of foods one can take as snacks during the day.
- Explore with the client snack foods that the client likes, and can access and afford.
- The snack should be nutritious.

V. Explain that if one is on medication, one may need to plan meals and snacks based on the times for taking medications. This should be done in consultation with one's doctor.

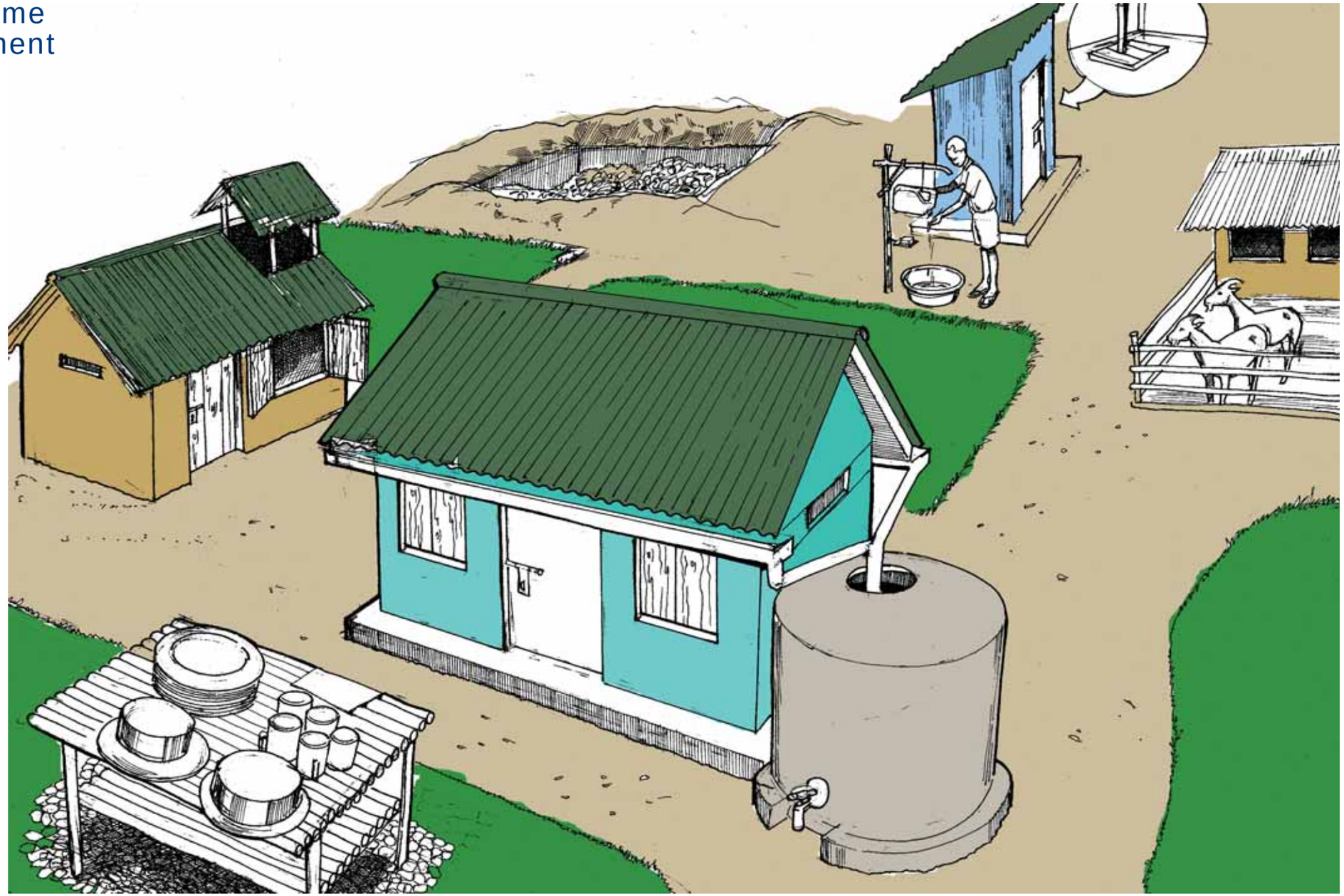
Discuss constraints to eating well and how to address them

2.5 ADDRESS CONSTRAINTS TO EATING WELL

- Ask the client about problems and constraints they face in eating a variety of foods and increasing food intake as discussed.
- Explore and select options for addressing these problems. Below is a table with examples of problems that may be faced by a PLWHA and possible solutions.

If the client(s) reports	Then advise to:
Lack of time to prepare.	▪ Use time saving methods such as katogo (mixing foods in one dish rather than cooking separate dishes) or mugoyo ▪ Double steaming or soaking dry legumes over night ▪ Buy a variety of already cooked foods (but not junk).
Lack of money to buy and include a variety foods in meals.	▪ Backyard farming ▪ Make changes to allocation of household food budget to increase nutrition benefit ▪ Explore linking to community support groups
Crops recommended are normally not grown.	▪ Grow these crops even on small scale in home garden
No one available to help buy, collect and prepare different foods.	▪ Adopt time-saving cooking methods like mixing foods in one dish ▪ Refer to groups supporting food security
Traditional food taboos. How food is allocated within the home.	▪ Encourage gradual change of attitude ▪ Involve family members in deciding on possible changes ▪ Seek alternatives
Seasonal variation in availability of food.	▪ Use watering and mulching. ▪ Store foods during bumper harvests ▪ Refer to groups supporting food security
Loneliness during meals.	▪ Consider involving caretakers to provide support and company for and during meal times. ▪ Refer for psycho-social counselling.
HIV related symptoms such as anorexia and oral thrush.	▪ Advise on diet related management of symptoms using cards in Theme 4. ▪ Simple home medical management ▪ Refer for medical care if serious.

Clean home environment



3.1 KEEP SURROUNDINGS CLEAN

I. Explain that preventing infections is an important way for PLWHA to maintain a healthier nutritional status.
- Infections may cause loss of appetite, vomiting, or diarrhoea which reduce food intake or absorption.
- Infections also increase the nutrient requirements of the body.
- PLWHA should therefore try to prevent getting infections, and if they do get infections they should get treatment immediately.

II. Explain that the risk of getting infections can be reduced by actions that minimise exposure to disease-causing germs.

III. Ask the client to look at the picture and identify some practices that could prevent illnesses.
- Keep the home environment clean.
- Have a toilet and keep it clean and covered.
- Have water outside the toilet and wash hands with water and soap after using the toilet.
- Keep animals away from cooking area.

Food hygiene and safety is one of the main ways of preventing infection

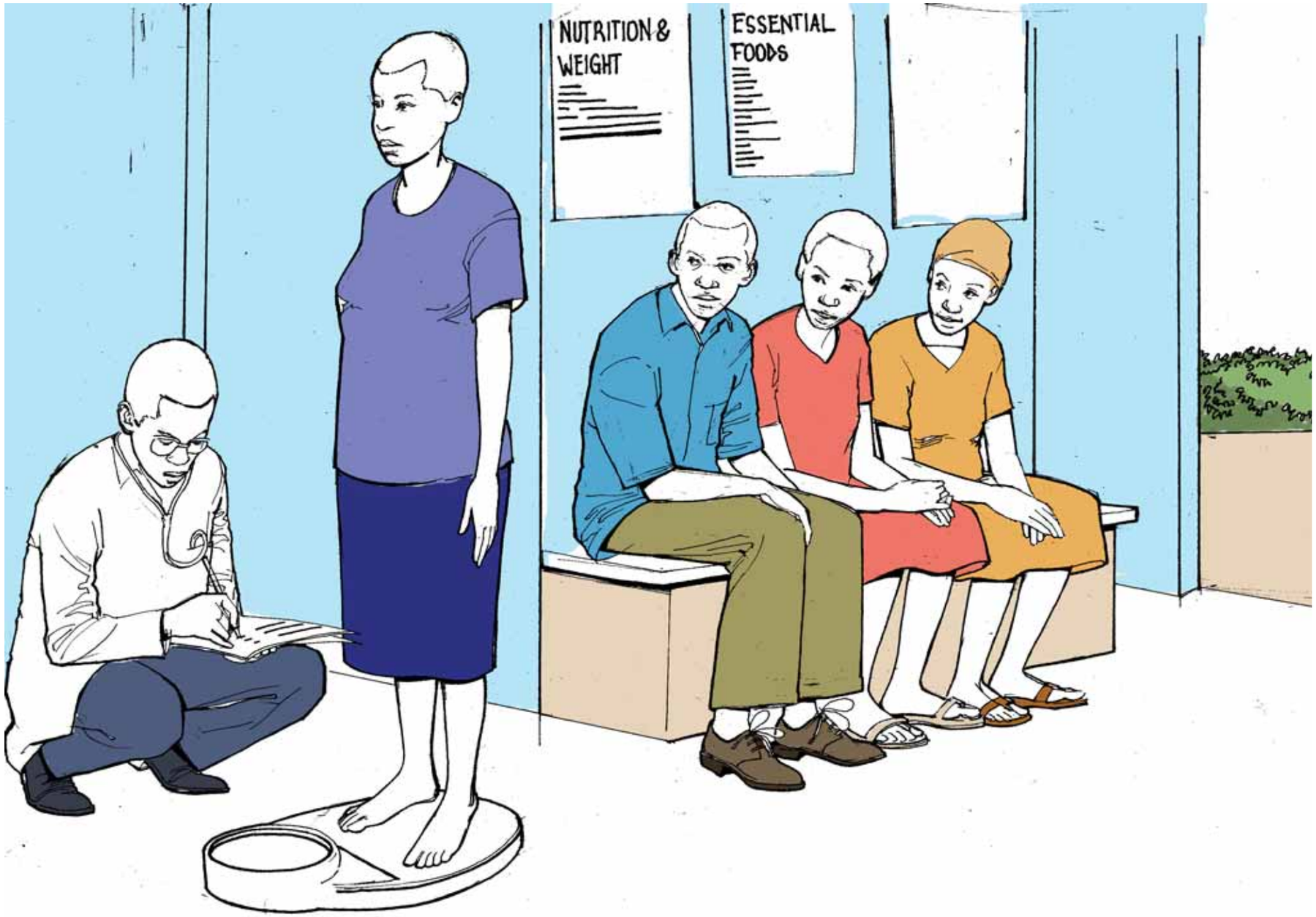
3.2 PRACTICE FOOD HYGIENE AND SAFETY

I. Explain that food hygiene and safety is one of the main ways of preventing infection in PLWHA:
- Food can be a source of infection if it is not properly handled, prepared and kept.
- Most infections that arise out of poor food hygiene and safety practices are associated with diarrhoea and vomiting. These reduce intake and absorption of food, thus compromising nutritional status.

II. Discuss vital food hygiene and safety practices in the picture:
- Wash hands thoroughly before handling, preparing and eating foods.
- Keep food and drinking water covered and stored away from insects, flies, rats and other animals.
- Wash fruits and vegetables with clean water before eating, cooking or serving.
- Use clean, safe water for food preparation.
- Wash the food preparation area and eating and cooking utensils, and keep them clean.
- Keep cooked food away from contact with raw food.

III. Emphasise that the following should be avoided:
- Eating mouldy, spoilt or rotten food.
- Raw eggs or foods that contain raw eggs.
- Raw fish.
- Meat that is not well cooked.
- Juices made with water that has not been previously boiled.

Regular check-ups are important for early identification of infections



3.3 HAVE REGULAR CHECK-UPS

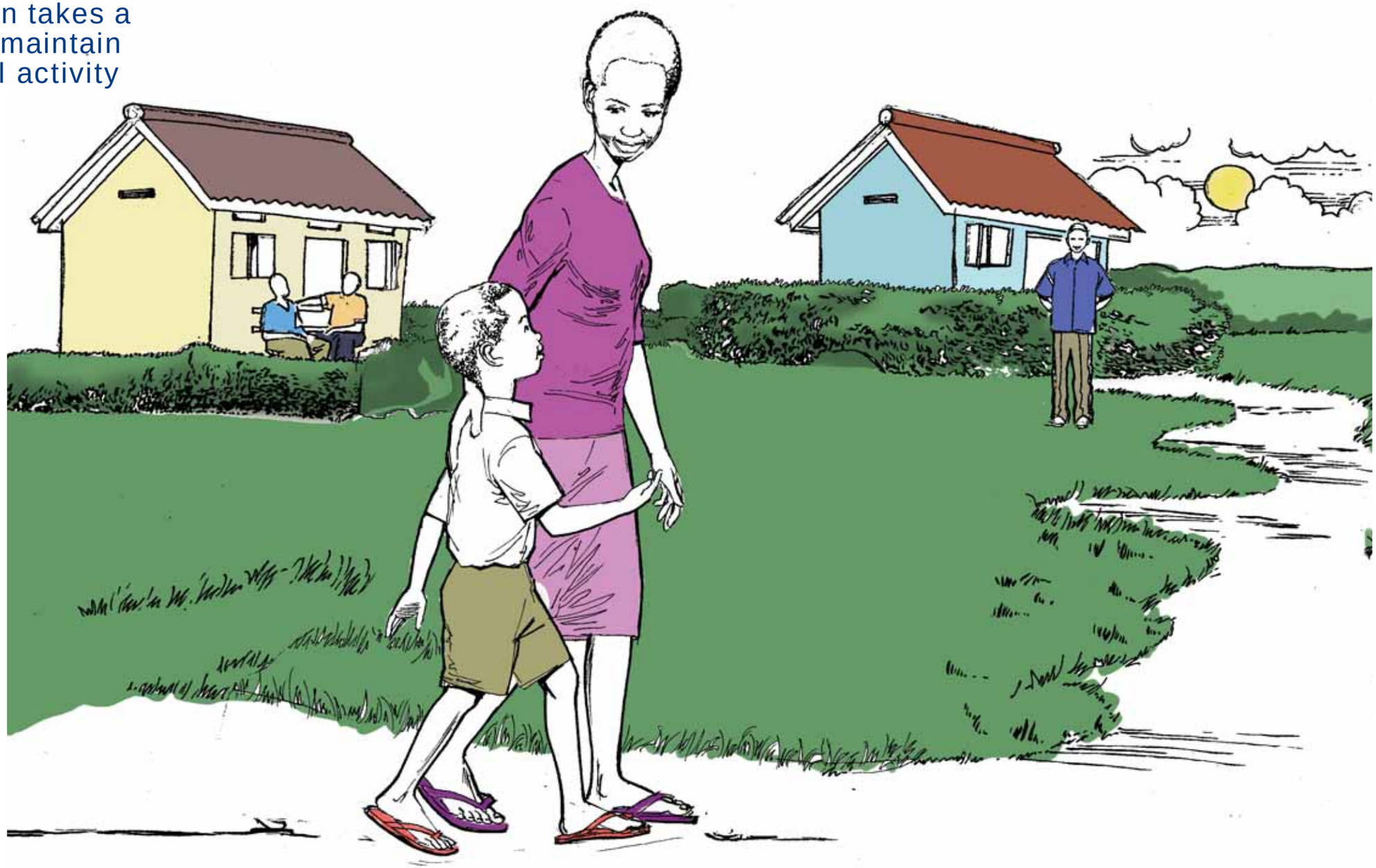
I. Explain that there are other actions a PLWHA can take to avoid getting infections. These include:
- Practicing abstinence or safe sex.
- Complying with recommended immunization and medical treatment for PLWHA.
- Having regular visits to a health/HIV/AIDS care and support centre.

II. Explain that it is necessary for PLWHA to periodically visit a health/HIV/AIDS care and support centre. PLWHA should visit such facilities for:
- Periodic medical check-ups for any infections to ensure early management and treatment.
- Weight monitoring to ensure right action is taken early in case one is underweight or overweight.
- Services that may be necessary (e.g. immunizations, deworming, ART, treatment of other infections, and supplementation).
- Information or skills that may be useful in managing HIV.

III. Explain that in addition, PLWHA should seek medical care for diseases they may experience.
- Specific health problems may include opportunistic infections, but also other illnesses like malaria.
- Presence of all new and old symptoms should be explained to a health care provider on every visit to a care giving facility.

IV. Discuss and allay any fears the PLWHA may have about visiting health/HIV/AIDS care facilities.

A woman takes a walk to maintain physical activity



4.1 EXERCISE REGULARLY EXERCISES AND CONTINUE DAILY ACTIVITY

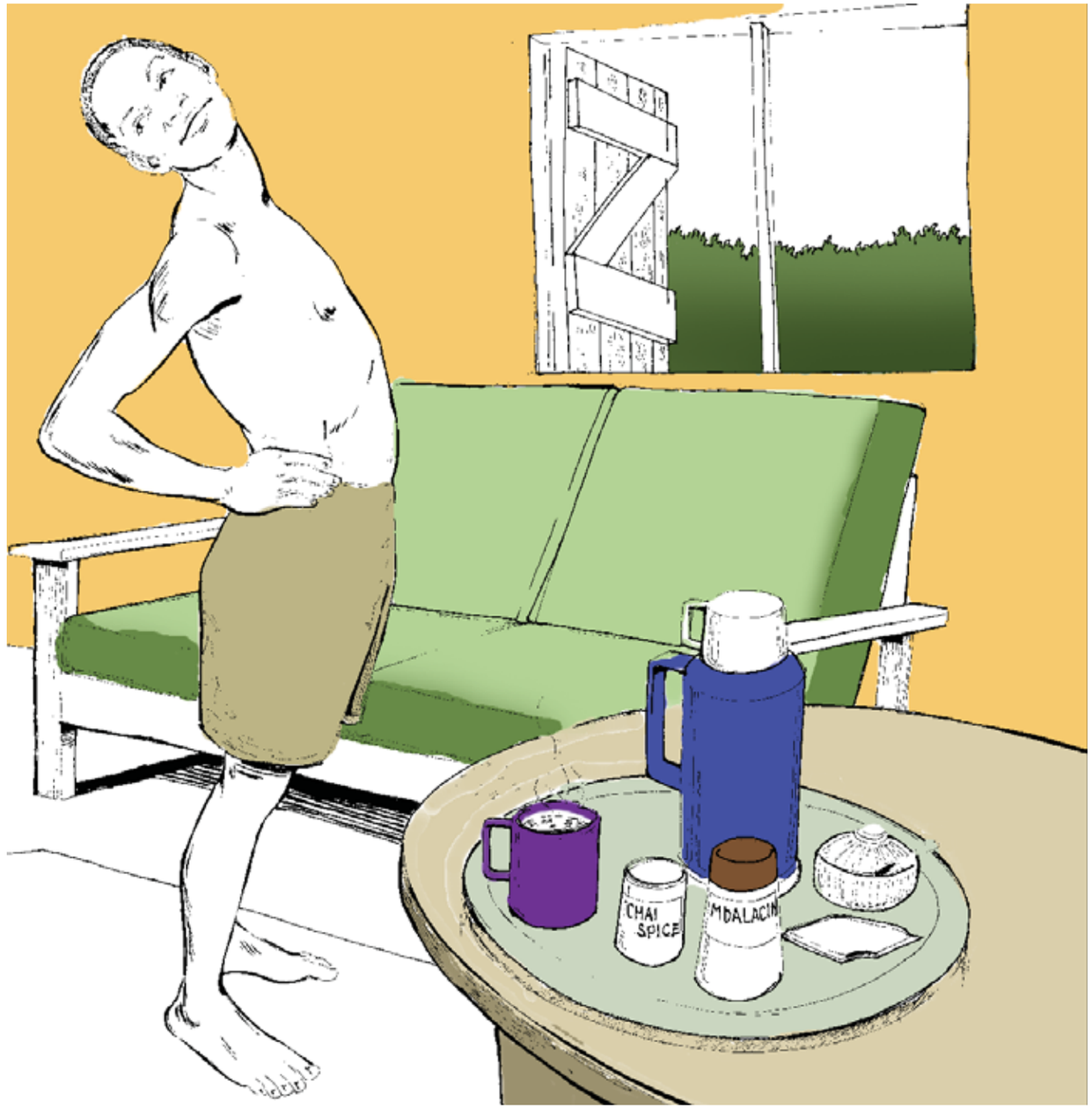
I. Explain that it is important for PLWHA to maintain physical activity to:
- Improve blood circulation,
- Stimulate appetite and improve one's mood,
- Burn fat to reduce chances of becoming overweight,
- Prevent stiffness of joints and muscle aches and wasting,
- Maintain and improve muscle tissue thickness.

II. Ask the client to describe the kind of exercise shown in the picture. Find out what the client thinks about the usefulness of such an exercise for a PLWHA.

III. Discuss with the client the kinds of exercises that they think they could easily do:
- Taking short daily walks,
- Simple regular movements of the arms and legs for at least 10-15 minutes while lying on a bed. If bed-ridden, get assistance to do the limb movement. Starting body limb movements early helps to prevent body pains.

IV. Address any misconceptions about continuing physical activity for PLWHA.

Have a warm drink soon after waking in the morning or shortly before going to bed to help stimulate appetite.



5.1 LOSS OF APPETITE

I. Explain that loss of appetite is a common symptom in PLWHA, which can reduce food intake.

II. Discuss with the client ways to help increase appetite:
- Do physical exercises that are possible given one's health condition. Exercises help to stimulate appetite.
- Eat small amounts of food but frequently - 5-6 times a day.
- Use favourite foods and spices to boost appetite.
- Take a warm drink soon after waking up in the morning, and/or shortly before going to bed.

III. Explain to the client that it is important to inform their care provider about loss of appetite.
- Loss of appetite could be due to an infection, or to the side effect of drugs. Medical attention may be required.

IV. If loss of appetite is very bad, advise the client to use a daily multivitamin in consultation with a medical provider to help maintain a good nutritional status.

V. Advise the client to ensure adequate food intake by eating nutrient dense foods such as:
- A mixture of groundnuts & simsim paste. This can be eaten on bread or as a sauce to accompany food.
- Porridge made out of millet, maize, soya, sorghum and rice. It can be prepared with milk, sugar, honey and/or egg.
- Main meal of katogo or mugoyo.

Talk to friends to help handle depression

5.2 DEPRESSION AND STRESS

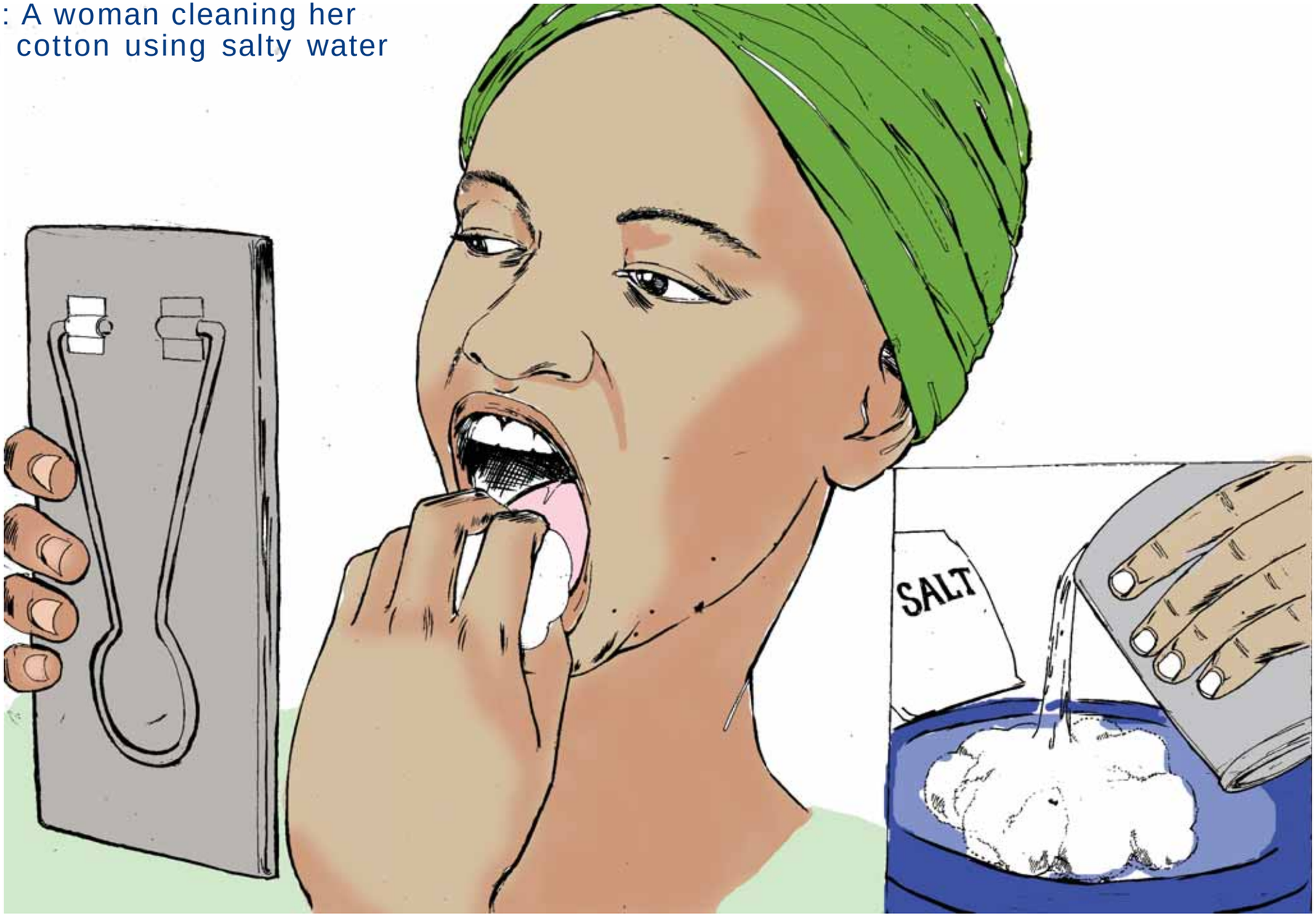
I. Explain that depression may occur in PLWHA.

II. Sometimes being depressed may make one lose one's appetite.

III. Discuss with the client ways of managing depression and stress. The illustration gives one example.
- Spending time with relatives, friends or spiritual leaders to reduce moments of loneliness.
- Eating favourite foods that do not cause discomfort.
- Exercising. For example, taking daily short walks.
- Avoiding alcohol and cigarettes, since they can worsen depression.
- Taking juices and water more frequently.
- Seeking medical attention when the need arises.
- Getting enough rest/sleep. However, avoid self-medication with drugs that make you sleep. This may interfere with waking and eating times.

IV. Refer the client for counselling or medical attention if they seem disinterested and do not wish to try out any of actions discussed, or if depression persists for a long time.

Oral thrush: A woman cleaning her mouth with cotton using salty water



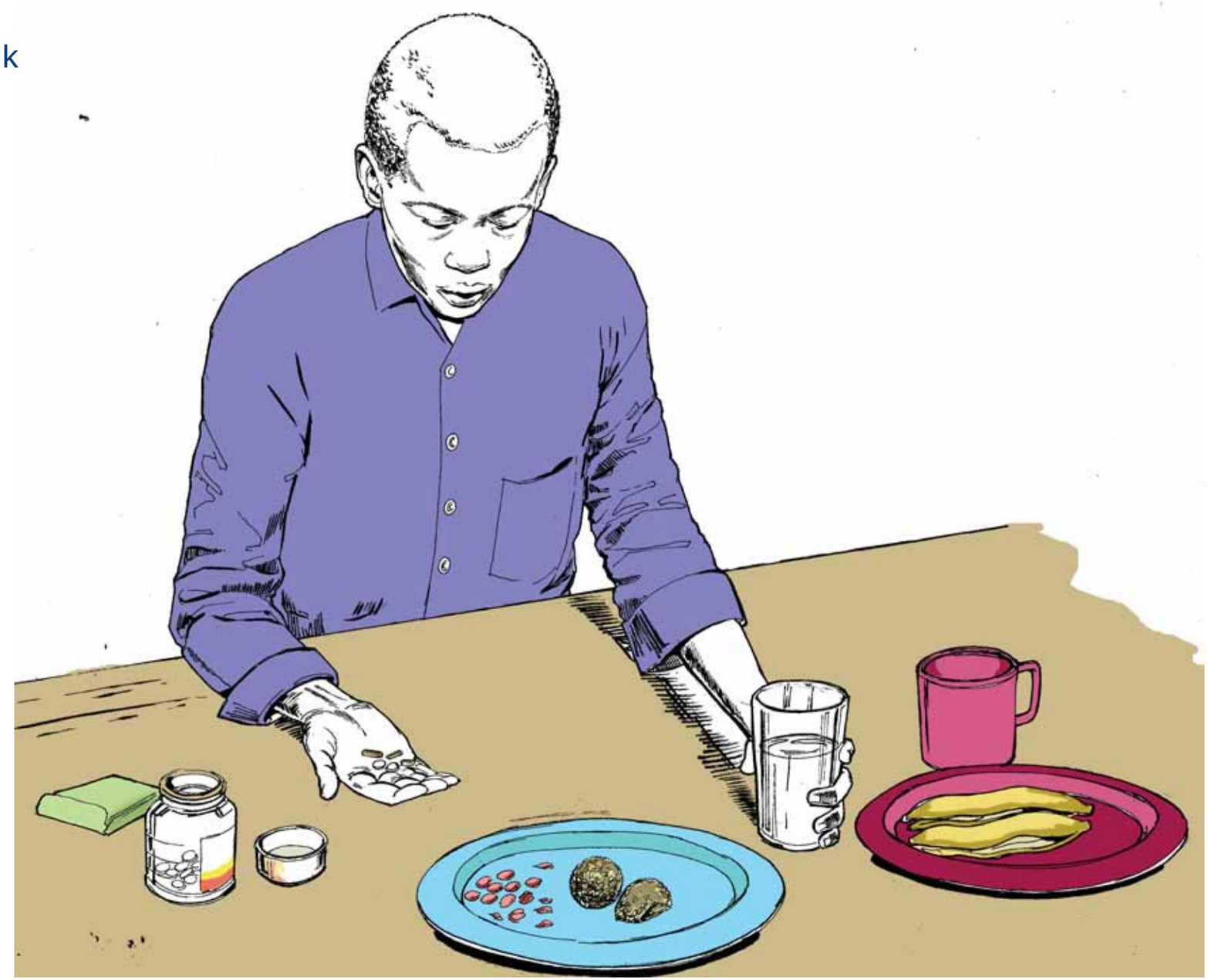
5.3 MOUTH SORES AND ORAL THRUSH

I. Explain that mouth sores or thrush are a common opportunistic infection in PLWHA that can affect eating.

II. Discuss with the client the importance of cleaning the mouth to manage painful sores in the mouth:
- Cleaning helps to prevent infection, helps to stop the infection from spreading, and promotes the healing process.
- To clean, use cotton wool with mildly salty warm water. If possible, rinse the mouth with 1 teaspoon baking soda mixed in a glass of warm boiled water.
- Clean at least twice a day: morning and evening, and preferably after every meal.

III. Describe the dietary measures that can be used to relieve sores in the mouth.
- Eat fermented products, e.g. yoghurt.
- Eat soft foods such as mashed food, soups and juices.
- Drink liquids using a straw to ease painful swallowing.
- Eat ripe pawpaw to help heal the wounds.
- Drink or rinse mouth with sour water. (To make sour water, soak grains/cereals for 2-3 days: 1 cup grain, and 3 cups of cool boiled water. Cover while fermenting).
- Avoid acidic foods like lemon and oranges.

A man taking his drugs with a snack



5.4 TUBERCULOSIS (TB)

I. Explain to the client(s) that TB needs special dietary management. TB and its medication affect food intake and the way food is used by the body.

II. Explain that TB infection increases the body's need for energy. To avoid weakening their nutritional status, it is therefore important for PLWHA to increase their intake of energy by:
- Having regular meals rich in energy giving foods and body building foods.
- Taking nutritious snacks as often as possible, e.g. whole grain cereals like maize, sorghum, millet. (For more suggestions, refer to the book, Improving the Quality of life through Nutrition - A Guide for Feeding People Living with HIV/AIDS).

III. Find out if the client is taking the TB drug Isonazaid. Explain that Isonazaid increases the body's needs for vitamin B6 and it is therefore important for those taking Isonazaid to increase intake of foods that are rich in vitamin B6:
- Whole cereals, animal products, beans, nuts, fish, meat, chicken, avocado, watermelons, and fortified cereals.
- If necessary, the client may take vitamin B6 supplements. This should be done in consultation with the medical provider. Do not take vitamin B6 supplements without consulting a doctor as it can have toxic effects.

IV. Emphasise that it is important for the client to:
- Take TB drugs at the right time in right doses as prescribed by the health worker. This ensures effectiveness, prevents resistance to drugs, and limits infection of other family members.
- Have regular medical check ups.

A woman picking dark green leafy vegetables in a makeshift garden

5.5 ANAEMIA

I. Tell the client that anaemia is common in PLWHA and may contribute to general body weakness. It weakens the body's ability to fight infections.

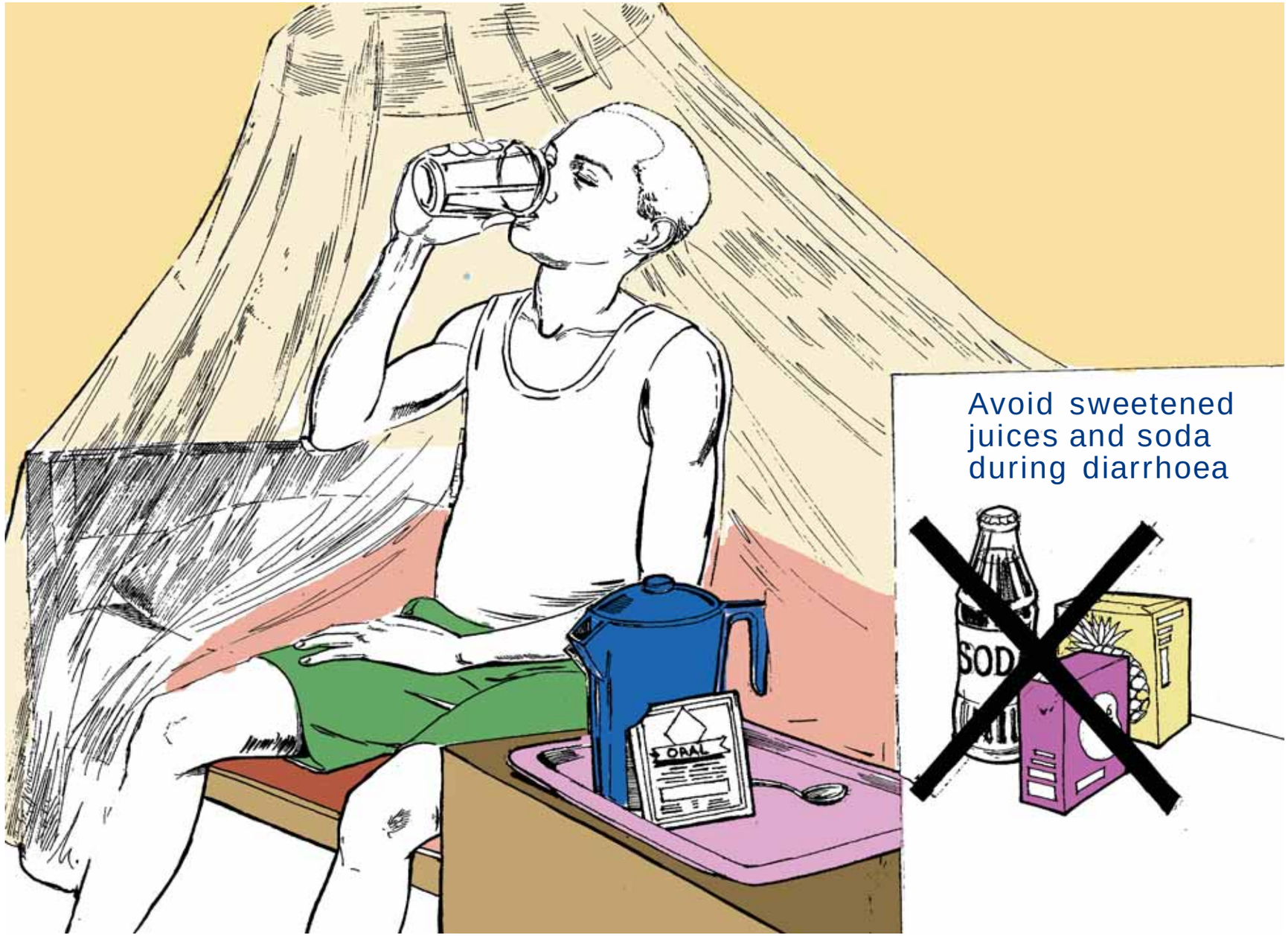
II. Explain that eating foods that are rich in iron can help prevent and treat anemia.

III. Identify and discuss with the client foods rich in iron that are accessible to the client.
- Dark green leafy vegetables (spinach, sukuma wiki, dodo, nnakati, etc.)
- Animal foods such as eggs, fish, and meat.
- Avocado leaves, purple hibiscus leaves, cassava leaves, potato leaves.
- Eating fruits rich in vitamin C like oranges and mangoes is important because vitamin C helps the body to absorb iron.

IV. Emphasise to the client that he/she needs to:
- Have haemoglobin checked at least every three months.
- Be de-wormed periodically, at least every six months.
- Avoid drinking coffee/tea with meals and avoid drinking too much coffee/tea because it reduces the absorption of iron by the body.
- Treat malaria as soon as noticed.
- Use iron supplements BUT only after consulting and with advice from a health provider.

V. Refer the client to a nutritionist or a health worker if the cause of anaemia is not likely to be diet related. (For example, the ARV zidovudine can cause anaemia.)

Managing diarrhoea: A man taking an ORS drink



5.6 DIARRHOEA, NAUSEA and VOMITING

I. Explain to the client that diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting commonly occur in PLWHA. These can greatly reduce food and fluid intake and absorption.

II. Discuss with clients options for ensuring adequate food and fluid intake when one has diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting. These include:
- Taking plenty of fluids, especially ORS, after every passing of a stool/bowel movement during diarrhoea.
- Eating soft foods in small frequent amounts.
- Avoiding sweetened juices, sodas, oily foods, coffee, and alcohol.

III. Suggest the following dishes to help ensure continued food intake:
- Plainly boiled bones (molokony) or meat, fish and chicken, in the form of broth,
- Porridge, especially obushera and soup porridge,
- Bean/pea mushroom soup.

IV. If the client has:
- Nausea and vomiting: advise them not to eat and drink at the same time, and to avoid alcohol, coffee, food with strong or unpleasant odors.
- Diarrhoea: advise them to avoid spicy foods, milk, fried or greasy foods, very hot or cold fluids, sweetened drinks.
- Heart burn and bloated stomach: advise them to take lukewarm drinks like warm water after waking up in morning to get rid of gas in the stomach, and to eat cereal porridge (maize/millet) with little or no milk.

V. To prevent and manage diarrhoea and vomiting, it is important to observe personal and food hygiene and safety. See Theme 3.

VI. Once symptoms are alleviated, one should resume regular diet, and one may need to eat more than usual for some time.