

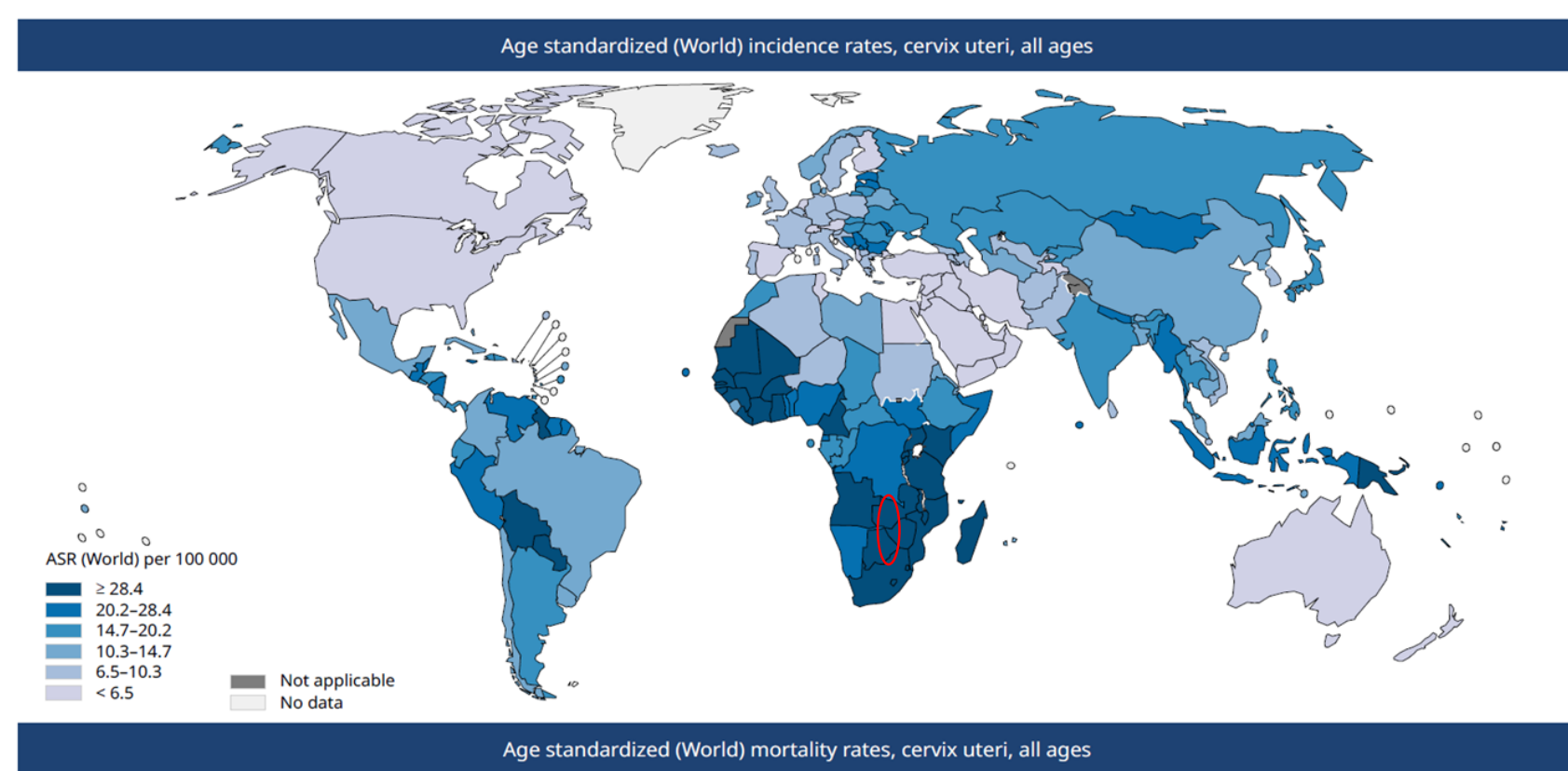
RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION IN CERVICAL SCREENING DELIVERY IN MALAWI IN THE PRESENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Context

- Malawi has an age adjusted incidence rate of **72.9 per 100,000** (second highest globally) and age adjusted mortality rate of **54.5 per 100,000** (highest globally)
- Many of these deaths could be prevented by effective screening and treatment

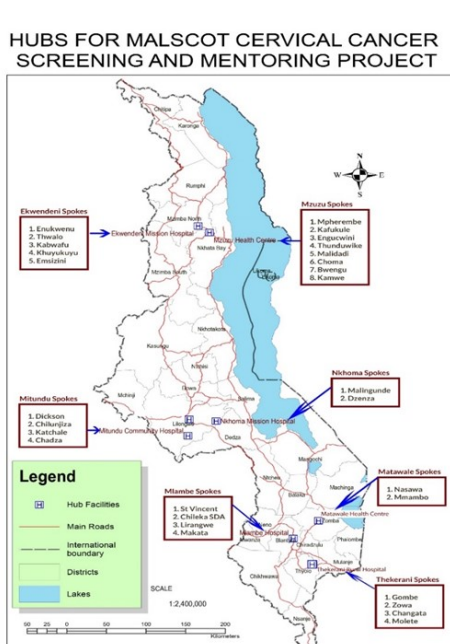


Data source: GLOBOCAN 2018. Graph production: IARC (<http://gco.iarc.fr/today>) World Health Organization

MALSCOT is a nationwide cervical screening project

- Using visual inspection with acetic acid (VIA), treatment with thermal ablation for VIA-positive lesions.
- Referral for larger lesions, suspect cancers, palliative care
- Equipping rural health centres to provide screening
- Theoretical and experiential training of new providers
- Mentoring toolkit and network; Safeguarding policy

The COVID-19 global pandemic had the potential to negatively impact screening delivery



COVID-19 – what happened in Malawi in March/April 2020?

- Closure of schools (all ages), Immediate ban on all public events, and gatherings restricted to less than 100 (religious gatherings, weddings, funerals)
- Public transport was not closed, but seating capacity to be reduced by 60%
- **COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan published** (Prevention, Containment and Management)
- **Malawian Ministry of Health’s Reproductive Health Directorate did not suspend cervical screening services**

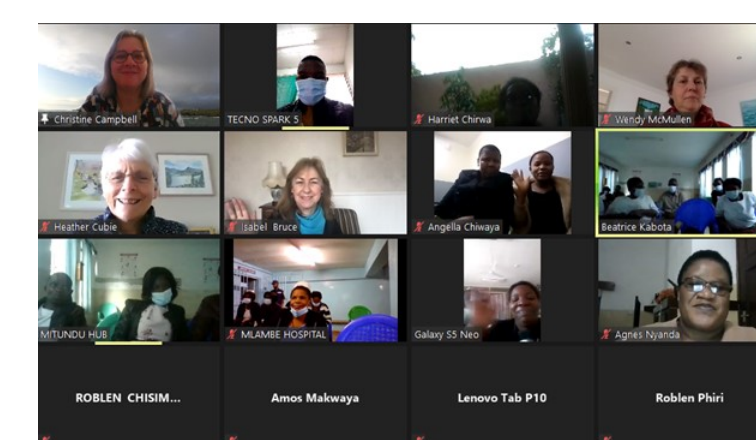
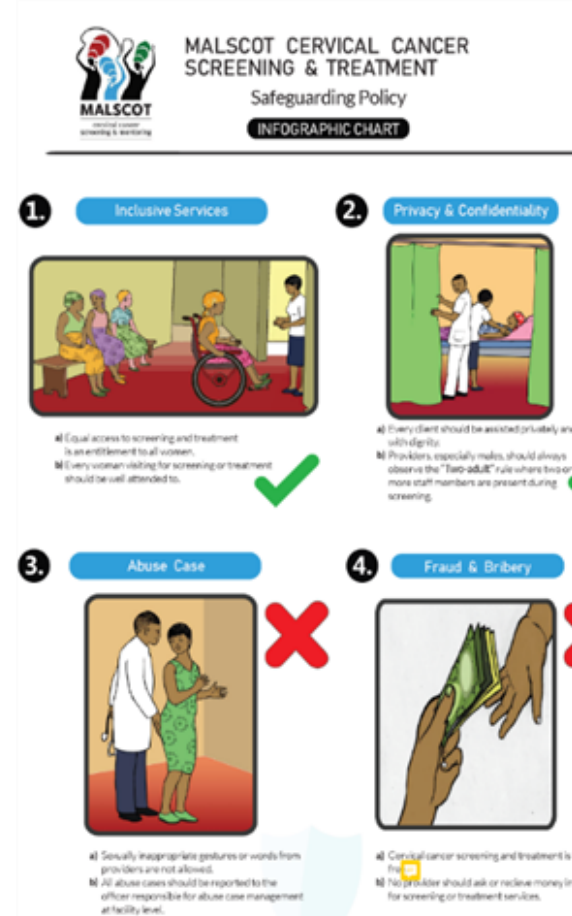
Adapting to covid-19 restrictions (1)

- **Pivoting of approach to reaching women:** Outreach events at remote health posts– less travel for clients, less time from home. Value of handheld thermal ablation devices reinforced; combined with community education about covid-19 control and vaccine
- **Infection Prevention measures at screening sites:** Social distancing, limiting the number of clients in counseling room, waiting area, provision of handwashing facilities. PPE supplies: surgical masks, goggles, disposable aprons and cloth masks



Adapting to covid-19 restrictions (2)

- **Mentoring:** Toolkit updated to include covid-19 protections, **Safeguarding policy:** Updated and importance emphasised
- **Scotland Malawi Partnership and Malawi Scotland Partnership COVID-19 Coordination meetings:** sharing of most current evidence and national strategy
- **Continuous Professional Development:** Online team meetings: Hub updates, clinical best practice, WHO guidance and policy updates. WhatsApp groups for MALSCOT team: forum for advice, and details of local initiatives.



Current project status

- Approx. 90,000 women screened in the last four years
- Over 110 nurse providers trained, and with independent accreditation from the Malawi Ministry of Health
- Screening now provided in an additional 33 health centres, in rural areas
- In-country ownership and leadership evident