

TESTIMONY BY MISS SIHLE MAHAYE

Greetings in the most powerful name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I am a woman who is living a positive life with HIV, I was diagnosed in 1996 and it was not easy. I was angry, frustrated, in denial and most of all I was afraid of death. It took some time to accept my HIV status and that cost me my job as I was an educator that time, I was failing to cope because of denial, but one day I sat down and talk to myself because after all it was me who was suffering. I told myself that I am going to fight this virus no matter what, firstly I accepted that I am living with this virus and I have to start ARVs because I was already due for them.

Yes, that was me looking at my life in a positive way. I disclosed my status to my family and friends which was a brave thing to do, but it did not stop there I started the motivational talks in my church and in prisons (Glencoe & Ncome) with support I was getting from my church especially my spiritual father. Taking ARVs and accepting Jesus as my Lord and was the best thing I did, today I am not ashamed of being HIV positive because I know my Redeemer lives. I am calling upon all those who are in hiding to come and join me in the struggle against this virus. Our government is trying by all means to help us, but if we do not come forward, it won't be easy. Just imagine if we were all to come out, how many families do you think will appreciate having their loved ones around a bit longer? I real believe that I'm still going to live till the cure is there.

You know since the day I accepted that I am living with HIV, I vowed to myself that I am going to find as many people who are living with HIV as I can. I am trying very hard it's not easy and I don't want to be alone in this fight, I will never allow HIV to deprive me by looking down upon myself, even with HIV I'm still a human being above all I am a child of God and I do believe that I was brought in this world for certain purpose which I am not going to die till I fulfil it. For me to succeed I apply the `RDP` method which is RESILIENCE, DETERMINATION and PERSEVERANCE.

RESILIENCE means to stay focused on achieving your goals no matter the odds and with DETERMINATION you will never go. A determined person always finds a way, with PERSEVERANCE you will reach your goals and dreams by taking a step as the saying goes `A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step`. I regarded HIV as the university to equip me to look at life as being very important that needs special care. I am not driven by what people say about me but I just do what I am doing better. I always tell myself that I am beautiful and will conquer, no matter what because my God is bigger, stronger and loving in a way that HIV will not be able to destroy me.

I am a South African woman, a mother, a daughter, a sister a fighter and friend to those who see me as a child of God who deserves a second chance.