



Evelyn Letio Unzi Boki, Southern Sudan



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My name is Evelyn Letio Unzi Boki. I am a widow who is Living Positively with HIV for over 20 years now. I am a counselor by profession and one of the founding members of an association called PLASS (People Living with AIDS in Southern Sudan), and also one of the founding members of Southern Sudan Network of People Living with HIV (SSNeP+).

In 1996, amidst stiff sigma and discrimination I decided to go public on my status to save my people who were dying of AIDS and were calling it witchcraft.

While in exile in Uganda I provided education on HIV, counseling, and psychosocial support to many infected and affected persons who were living in the refugee camps. My personal testimony helped reduce self-stigma in many and they were able to access treatment. Some of the bedridden clients were brought from the Sudan to my home and I cared for them until they recovered.

After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement I returned to the Southern Sudan. Again amidst stiff stigma and discrimination, I volunteered to go public testifying about my status on radio and television and talk shows. I testified in schools, public gatherings and churches. As a result of my testimony, many people came out to seek for treatment and psychosocial support.

I worked with the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) in Juba as the HIV, Care, and Support Officer. I trained many Peer Educators: in seven schools, seven churches and 10 communities in Juba County. I also trained HBC facilitators to provide nursing care to the bedridden clients and organized many anti-stigma campaigns through drama in the communities. This helped to reduce stigma and discrimination against the people living with the virus and their families, and I organized radio talk shows for both the Peer Educators and HBC Facilitators.

I lobbied for funds for special nutrition for the bedridden and those starting ARVs and IGA start-up capital through the Netherlands Red Cross from 2009- 2010. The clients got seeds for kitchen garden, and even during the dry season they had greens.

I provided continuous counseling and psychosocial support not only to Juba PLHIV, but to those in Western and Eastern Equatoria states through using the telephone, thus uniting many broken families. My testimony alone encouraged many to seek prompt medical care and the hope to continue living with the virus. They nicknamed me “Mother of HIV.”

Currently I am working with the network (SSNeP+) as the Program Officer coordinating the activities of the member PLHIV associations and negotiating for programs and services that directly benefit the PLHIVs and their families etc. There are over 300,000 PLHIV in Southern Sudan and over 200,000 are women. •