



## Jesca Were, Uganda

This is my testimony as an HIV positive mother from Uganda. I am now 40 years old. I am a mother of two sons; my first son has finished Senior Six Year in school. The youngest is now five years old, and the two of them are HIV-free.

I was diagnosed with HIV when I had gone to attend my antenatal clinic in 2005 when I was pregnant. My husband turned out to be negative. Discordant life wasn't easy; my husband ended up deserting me, leaving me fully pregnant and taking away all the property that we had because he didn't like to associate with the HIV virus. I didn't follow him, in great and sorrowful tears I decided to turn to my widowed mother who helped me prepare for my pregnancy operation in a far away referral hospital so I could have an HIV-free baby.

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I accepted my status and continued with my daily work as a teacher. I later felt it was important to help other mothers who are HIV positive and pregnant to find a way to have HIV free babies by acquiring prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) services, so I joined the Mothers to Mothers Programme, USAID STAR-EC. I basically serve in a health facility, Buyinja HIV Center IV in Namayingo District in Eastern Uganda, giving health education talks, referring mothers, and leading family support groups that retain mothers to have better life and feel for the future. I help children be diagnosed early through EID and those who are HIV positive be enrolled to receive ART drugs and negative babies be given Nevirapine syrups all the time at the health facility.

I feel a big serving for HIV purposes, like prevention, caring, fight for women's rights who are tortured in their domestic homes. Isis-WICCE in Kampala is a women's organization has been on my side in my community, which is a fishing community, by training us as paralegals. There are 19 of us women, and I am their leader/coordinator, running here and there in five sub-counties - Buyinja, Buswale, Boada, Mutumba, and Sigulu Island – yet I have no transport. I use my salary from the Mothers to Mothers Programme. I have no office space, I sit under a mango tree for discussions with my members. Many changes have been realized having come back for the widowed after being grabbed for 20 years. God bless. •

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