

## Maryliza Amony Marko Taban, Southern Sudan



My name is Maryliza. I am 23 years old and live in Sudan. I work with the Ministry of Health as a counselor and also for People of Hope, a small community-based organization (CBO) for people living with HIV (PLWHIV) in Torit, Southern Sudan. I am the third born in a family of three children.

I was the only one who was born HIV positive to a positive mother. I was diagnosed with HIV in May 1988; I was two years old. I was just a young girl; my mother feared to tell me my status due to high levels of stigmatization at school and misunderstanding of the disease.

However, I was on my anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment, which was taken daily for 15 years. I asked my mother why I was taking the drugs. She took time and then told me that it was good for my health as a girl. A month went by and my mother told me that I needed to see the doctor. The doctor came to the counseling room and told me that I was HIV positive.

That was the worst day of my life.

I felt great anger, denial, depression, anxiety, shock, and fear of death. My life changed. I viewed my infection as a punishment from my mother!! I was shocked at discovering my status and that is something I would never wish on my worst enemy. I thought my life was over. In fact, I started thinking of ways I could end my life. My mother and my best friend, Sara, were by my side the whole way. My mother was my number one support. I love her so much and this has strengthened my life and our relationship.

**“I was the only one who was born HIV positive to a positive mother.”**

Life was not always easy for me in school and at home because of my status. I thank God for my status and think it has made me what I am today. I disclose my status in my community of people living with HIV and work with them. In my small CBO I do many things:

- Home visits for the infected girls and boys living with HIV and AIDS
- Psychosocial care and support for the people who are living with HIV and AIDS
- Advocate for young people who are living with HIV and AIDS

This is my story and what I do for people of my status because I want and HIV- and AIDS-free society. •