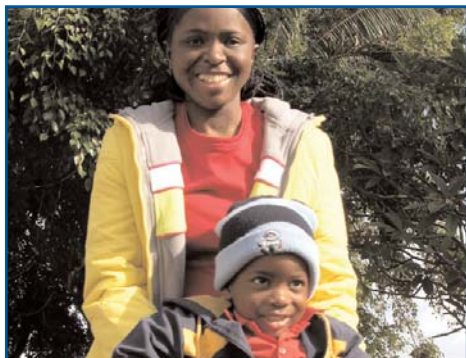




STORIES of HOPE

SOUTH AFRICA

Finding a Place of Hope



With support from PEPFAR, Nompumelelo and Elihle receive antiretroviral treatment at McCord Hospital's Sinikithemba Clinic in Durban.

"I am used to it now," said Nompumelelo, who is feeling better and looking for work again. "I don't believe that this virus will kill me. It is just there and something that I can cope with."



Nompumelelo, a 27-year-old resident of South Africa, initially kept her HIV-positive status a secret from her family and friends. "It was a very big shock when I discovered I was positive," she said. "I just cried and cried. I never told anybody. I thought I was going to die." After discovering her status, Nompumelelo quit studying and looking for a job. She worried about the health of her three-year-old son, Elihle. "I went to get him tested," Nompumelelo said. "I was devastated when he was also positive."

Nompumelelo received medical aid that allowed Elihle to start taking antiretroviral drugs immediately. Unfortunately, there was not adequate money to pay for her treatment as well. In January 2004, a CD4 test revealed that her CD4 count was down to a mere five. She desperately needed to start antiretroviral treatment.

Nompumelelo did not believe she had any options, until a family friend told her about McCord Hospital's Sinikithemba Clinic. Sinikithemba is a Zulu word meaning "place of hope," and the clinic has lived up to its name. The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Emergency Plan/PEPFAR) supports the Sinikithemba Clinic, which is situated in the center of Durban. The clinic assists HIV-infected and affected people and their families. With PEPFAR support, the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation works with the clinic to provide antiretroviral treatment to adults and children living with HIV/AIDS, including Nompumelelo and Elihle.

After hesitating to tell people that she was living with HIV/AIDS, Nompumelelo said she is now completely honest with everyone. "I am used to it now," said Nompumelelo, who is feeling better and looking for work again. "I don't believe that this virus will kill me. It is just there and something that I can cope with."

The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

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