



## STORIES of HOPE

### ZIMBABWE

#### Breaking the Barriers of Stigma Through Love



Nyevero and Hubert, beneficiaries of Emergency Plan support, prove that love has no bounds for people living with HIV/AIDS.

*When Nyevero and Herbert married in December 2005, hundreds gathered at the Utano center to celebrate with them.*



Grief brought Nyevero and Herbert Mpariwa to the Chitungwiza Utano Public Health Community Partnership, a project supported by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Emergency Plan/PEPFAR) outside Harare, Zimbabwe. Both HIV-positive and recently widowed, they came to the Utano community center to attend an AIDS support group. As time healed their wounds, Nyevero and Herbert formed a bond that blossomed into love.

In this country where one-in-five people are HIV-positive, the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS is strong. "People say that if you are HIV-positive you should never marry. It is strongly discouraged," Nyevero remarked. "We made our wedding public on purpose so that other people, especially young people who are born HIV-positive, could see that it is possible to live positively and to find love."

When Nyevero and Herbert married in December 2005, hundreds gathered at the Utano center to celebrate with them. Nyevero noted that too many HIV-positive youth are without hope. "They reach 15 and think they have no future. We wanted to be a living example to them that life does not end with HIV."

With support from the Emergency Plan, the Chitungwiza Utano Community Partnership Project works to improve coordination and integration of existing HIV services and to support comprehensive HIV/AIDS care and treatment in the community. The project has become a model for stigma reduction and promotion of positive living thanks to young community leaders like Nyevero and Herbert.

"Individuals have the ability to change communities if they are willing to take a risk and create a new social norm," said Dr. Shannon Hader, a U.S. Government official in Zimbabwe. "It's about empowerment and leadership. If empowered, ordinary people can effect change. That's a model which, if replicated, can change the attitudes of an entire nation."

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

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