FIRST PERSON Clinic Gives Woman Health - and Hope

HIV-positive mother, once bedridden, sees medical center as family Lettie was thin and weak when she arrived on a stretcher at the USAID-supported Ndlovu Medical Center in Elandsdoorn, South Africa, in April 2004. She could only lie on her stomach, due to severe bed sores; every other position hurt too much.



The doctor took one look at her skeletal form and decided to test her for HIV. Lettie had no energy to cope with the news that she was positive. The doctor also told her she was eligible for treatment immediately, and admitted Lettie to the clinic. She could not walk.

Ndlovu became Lettie's new home. She received good food and care, and was helped with her treatment from the clinic. She did not experience side effects from the antiretroviral drugs, but it took a year before she could get out of bed and into a wheelchair.

A data capture clerk in the offices of the Ndlovu Medical Trust, Lettie could not walk when she first arrived for treatment. She and her medical staff are optimistic that she will walk again one day.

Lettie has two children whom her mother has been caring for since she has been at Ndlovu. She does not see them often, but knows the pain they have endured to watch her suffering through her condition.

Care and treatment by the USAID-supported Ndlovu Medical Center have given Lettie a new chance at life. After two years at Ndlovu, Lettie, who now works as a data capture clerk in the offices of the Ndlovu Medical Trust, feels she has become part of a bigger family. She says the clinic staff gives her hope that keeps her going. They are committed to her care and are optimistic about her future. Lettie's road has been long, as she has progressed more slowly than many other patients. Despite this, the staff has enabled her to believe she will walk again one day.

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