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**CAMBODIA**

# FIRST PERSON

## Courageous Woman Lives with HIV/AIDS

**USAID programs help educate and care for HIV/AIDS patients**



Photo: Family Health International

Phally plays with her niece in Battagram, western Cambodia. After her husband died of HIV/AIDS, Phally learned that she too was HIV-positive.

***“I have learned strategies to manage my physical and mental wellbeing. Courage, stamina and the ‘will to live’ have been very important. Positive living has helped refresh me. I continue to be productive in my community. I continue to plan for myself and my family,” said Phally, an HIV-positive mother who works with HIV patients in Battambang, Cambodia.***

Telling Our Story  
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Phally, a mother of three, was a primary school teacher until her husband’s death in August 1999. She went for counseling after his death, and learned that, like her husband, she was HIV positive. Frightened and suddenly alone, Phally felt helpless. Her community in Battambang, western Cambodia, shut her out, she lost her job, and she had nowhere to turn. She became seriously sick twice, once with active pulmonary tuberculosis and another time with meningitis. Her family, losing hope, checked a comatose Phally into Moug Russey Hospital in Battambang, supported by USAID in collaboration with the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

Amazingly, Phally survived. After receiving intense care and treatment, Phally was able to pull through and was placed on anti-retroviral medicine. Despite living through times of desperation and despair, Phally has never given up the will to survive and to make a positive difference in the lives of other people affected by HIV/AIDS. She is now a skilled and active peer-educator and counselor for a USAID-supported HIV/AIDS program in her area.

The program has been central to improving the quality of HIV/AIDS care, treatment, and support services, and to linking available resources together in Cambodia. Phally helps run “Friends Help Friends” monthly support group meetings and conducts counseling sessions for patients. She was also key to developing an interactive video discussion tool for people living with HIV/AIDS called “Living Again.” Another vital part of her job is visiting people living with HIV/AIDS and their families while they are hospitalized. She provides moral support and information about care and treatment options.

Phally is a role model for her many of her peers. With her upbeat personality and desire to help others, she is making an enormous difference in the lives of people who experiencing the same trauma she knows so well. Working with USAID and caregivers at Moug Russey Hospital, she is able to give HIV/AIDS patients hope for the future both through her work and by her example.