



FIRST PERSON

Learning to Live for Each Day

Youth Vision provides rehabilitation for drug users and voluntary HIV counseling and testing



Photo: Bijay Panday, Youth Vision Center

“I have a sense of purpose in life,” said Abin. “Beyond supporting myself and remaining drug-free, Vision Plus gave me the opportunity to make a difference in other people’s lives.”

Abin Karki was a hard-working student from a middle-class family in Nepal — until he started using drugs. His drug use progressively increased, and his school grades deteriorated until he finally dropped out after failing his graduation exams. His health was declining dramatically, and he wanted to quit drugs, but he couldn’t do it on his own.

Educators from USAID-supported Youth Vision approached Abin and gave him information about HIV/AIDS and drug treatment programs, but he wasn’t interested. It was not until a few months later — when Abin’s condition had worsened, he had no money for food and his parents said he had to leave their house if he did not change — that he enrolled in a three-month rehabilitation program at the Youth Vision Center.

After he was finally drug-free, a test administered by the center confirmed Abin’s fear that he had contracted HIV. At first, Abin said he felt like his life was over and wanted to start using drugs again. But the Vision Plus support group, hosted by the Youth Vision Center, helped him stay clean, and he later said he felt better able to deal with the test results and live as healthy a life as possible because of the center’s counseling.

After attending HIV Anonymous meetings at the Youth Vision Center, Abin wanted to help others who were dealing with the same problems he had overcome. He was trained as an outreach educator and worked every Monday and Friday as a volunteer for Vision Plus. Group members empower and support each other by sharing experiences, issues and needs. They also plan fund-raising and informational activities to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS, promote healthy behaviors among their peers, and educate and encourage at-risk people to seek counseling and testing.

Abin’s friendly nature and ability to motivate others made him an inspiring group member. An active member of HIV Anonymous, Abin enjoyed interacting with other HIV-positive people and helping others who, like him, are trying to live a positive life. Abin learned the trade of printing and had a steady income producing business cards.

In April 2005, Abin died after a brief illness. His commitment to making a difference in other people’s lives, however, continues to be an inspiration to others.