



## FIRST PERSON Mother with HIV/AIDS Renews Hope

**An HIV-positive woman finds renewed interest in life**



Photo: USAID/Charu Dadlani

Kausar Khan, at work in Mumbai, is a strong and vocal advocate for the rights of HIV/AIDS infected patients.

***“USAID has helped me to live my life meaningfully and to make a difference in the lives of other HIV-positive people,” said Kausar Khan, an HIV-positive mother who has found a renewed love of life.***

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Women in India who are living with HIV/AIDS are burdened not only by the disease, but also by the stigma associated with it. Sadly, many of these women never thought they were at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS — their husbands passed it on to them. After learning they were HIV-positive, some of these women were dealt another blow: their husbands left them.

Kausar Khan, a mother of three, contracted HIV/AIDS from her husband. After he abandoned her, she went to the hospital to seek treatment. The hospital she visited did not provide her with proper care. Weak and feeble, she went into acute depression and began to lose hope in life.

Things began to change when Kausar started to participate in a USAID program that helps HIV-positive people in the cities of Mumbai and Thane. In partnership with the Salvation Army and the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the program assists almost 1,200 people living with HIV/AIDS and 3,000 family members struggling to cope without parents or spouses.

Kausar received counseling and treatment at a USAID-funded drop-in center. She also received a CD4 test, which assesses the status of the immune system. She had no money for the necessary medical treatment so she was referred to an anti-retroviral treatment center at a local government hospital. Thanks to the prompt treatment, her CD4 count went up and her health began to improve. In addition to helping her medical situation, the program trained Kausar in embroidery — a craft that is earning her an income of about 2,000 Indian rupees (\$45) per month.

Kausar was now determined to continue living, and wanted to help others in similar situations get better, like she had. She underwent training in peer education and home-based care services for HIV/AIDS patients. In addition to her embroidery business, Kausar now works with HIV/AIDS patients, making home visits and giving them encouragement and care. She has become a strong and vocal advocate for the rights of HIV/AIDS patients, especially women. Today, Kausar is living with her son and one of her daughters. They are proud of her recovery, and happy that she has replaced despair and depression with hope and a renewed love of life.