

# SUCCESS STORY

## A Friend's Council Adolescent at mentors peers on drug adherence



*"I now use my life as a testimony to help other adolescents at the health center" says Aisha*

Aisha was born HIV positive to a discordant couple - her mother died from HIV and she grew up with her father who was married to four women. Aisha has eleven siblings none of which is HIV positive.

*"I started falling sick when I was about seven years old. At this time, my step mother took me to the hospital where the health worker tested me for HIV but did not disclose my status to me yet gave me medicine to take" said Aisha*

Growing up unaware of her HIV status or the importance of drug adherence, Aisha's health continued to deteriorate. Her step mother escorted her to the health center for a checkup where a series of tests were performed and she was found to be HIV positive. Her counselor's tone and sad facial expression informed her that HIV was bad.

*"I failed a lot on medication because I did not take it correctly due to lack of proper guidance and though I did not know much about HIV by then, the counselor's tone and sorry look at me made me aware that this was bad" said Aisha.*

After disclosure, the counselor explained the dangers of not adhering to ARVs and encouraged me to attend counselling sessions at the health facility. On returning home, Aisha's step mother disclosed her status to all her siblings which resulted in stigmatization at home. Aisha was forced to use separate household items such as plates and cups because her family claimed she would make them sick. At school Aisha lost her friends and boyfriend because her step mother disclosed her status to the entire school. Aisha lost interest in her education and soon after, she stopped attending school.

*"I couldn't bare the discrimination in school, I only returned for my Ordinary level final exams" said Aisha.*

When senior four results returned, Aisha's father who had been supporting her education claimed he could no longer pay her tuition because she had no future. With a lot of grief, due to the abandonment from her family, Aisha visited Kiswa Health Center IV, where she talked to a counsellor who advised her on the right way to take her medication and also told her of an upcoming competition in an "Adolescent Friends' Council".

*"I participated in this competition and with God by my side I became the overall winner" said Aisha.*

After winning the competition, Aisha received voluntary employment at Kiswa HC III which is supported by the Infectious Diseases Institute (IDI) with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). At the center, Aisha provides counselling services to fellow youth, gives guidance to pregnant adolescents and women and also advices on the importance of adhering to ARVs.

As a member of the friend's council, Aisha encourages her peers to join the council which provides an avenue to receive psychological support to HIV adolescents as such building their self-esteem. Aisha is also on track to complete a fashion course which has been made possible by the income she has earned under the IDI supported Kiswa HC III.

*"I thank IDI nurses and doctors for providing a stepping stone in my life by employing me, counselling me, helping me to reach sustainability. Because of IDI capacity building systems, I hope to be a focal point to end HIV and any kind of violence inform of discriminations" said Aisha*

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