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“My duty is to preserve my health by avoiding unprotected sex”



I took an HIV test in 2000 at the Engela State Hospital. Two weeks after the test, my results came out. They were positive. Somehow, this did not make me sad. I accepted the results and communicated them to my two elder sisters who also seemed ok with my condition. However, later I noticed some changes in the house: people began avoiding using the things I used. Even the children were told not to touch me. I guess they were told about my condition. And so, they avoided me. I then thought about joining a support group in 2004. This support group freed me. I was able to speak about HIV and my status openly.

In 2007, we started community-based support groups because the existing one was far. We were assigned to the Edundja centre. We were given a place by the Councilor of Oshikango Constituency in a village, where we met under a tree. We started with 30 members, 23 females and 7 males. These figures are increasing and we are therefore thinking of dividing the current group into two. Personally, I think being HIV positive no longer scares me. I regard myself just like any other person

The *AIDS and Me* workshop has taught me how to live with AIDS without separating myself from it and that I must be careful how I behave so that I do not worsen my condition. Also, it has taught me how to control it and the kind of diet I need. I have noticed that I have

regained my strength. I can walk around to do my work in the community. I am no longer the way I was when I tested positive. For example, recently they tested my blood three times. The tests have revealed that the HI virus cannot be seen in my blood anymore. The medication is effective. It has helped to contain the virus in me.

About sex, we all know what we are carrying in our bodies and how to behave. If we decide to have sex, we know how to protect ourselves. We know that we have to use a condom and that we must check whether or not the condom has expired. If we want to get married, we know what procedures to follow. In case we want to have a baby, we know that first we must go to the doctor to have our CD4s checked. If the CD4s of the female partner are less than 500, the doctor would normally advise against the pregnancy.

Those who have not attended the *AIDS and Me* workshops, we advise them about the kind of diet they need such traditional marula oil, traditional spinach and other wholesome traditional foods and drinks. We are lucky in this part of the country because we do not have to rely on apples, oranges, etc. We have our own traditional foods, which are equally nutritious.