

Prevention is our business....

Violet Atieno a 30-year-old from Huruma slums in Nairobi is a proud and valued woman as she puts it in her own words with a broad smile. Like every other woman, her children remain her main priority in life. She is a single mother of two boys aged 11 and 3 years. Sex work is her mainstay source of livelihood complimented by a small business of selling second hand clothes.

In January 2020 she was awoken to a new reality of life when she tested positive for HIV. Like other girls at the hotspot, she had come for HTS services as she has been accustomed to at least every three months round the year when there is a similar activity at the hotspot. Upon the new revelation, she seemed confused and was not ready to start ART treatment.

Conscious of the importance of treatment SWOP Kenya service providers commenced on a journey to persuade Violet to take up treatment. This was through constant phone calls, home visits and SMS. What started off as normal patient-service provider communication turned into more frequent friendly discussions highlighting the power of determination. To her confession, she spent sleepless nights, her mind was occupied with suicidal thoughts wondering how life would turn out especially for her young kids. Worse was the realization that a man she had recently fallen in love with was on HIV treatment and had not disclosed. The constant communication with the clinicians went on for over three weeks and with trust having been built, a clinician introduced her to a support group to have a listen in on the experiences of others on treatment.

After all the support and encounters she took a leap of faith and took up treatment. She indicated that the constant support by clinicians and community health and dignity prevention champions changed her perspective and was now more informed. A manifestation of change is further highlighted by Violet's willingness to volunteer as peer mobilizer and she currently is one of the most vibrant mobilizers. She has even offered her room where HIV testing and support group meetings are conducted.

Today Violet is a proud member of SWOP Kenya always encouraging others to know their HIV status and to live positively. She is a proud sex worker who uses her status to encourage others to take up and adhere to treatment.