

## Mozambique Prevention with Positives Program Provides Support and Renewed Hope to PLWHA



Laurinda Mojane, 24, found the hope and support she needs to live a positive life at Esperanca Center. One of two community-based VCT sites in Mozambique's Maputo Province partnering with the University of California-San Francisco's School of Nursing, Esperanca Center launched a "prevention with positives" program in January 2007.

When Laurinda Mojane learned she was HIV-positive, she says she could barely speak or even think for nearly a month. "Of course I was very sad and emotional, but after attending counseling at a local hospital in Matola I learned how to live as a person with HIV," she explains.

Laurinda told her husband about her positive diagnosis and encouraged him to get tested himself, but he didn't accept her words.

"He told me: 'You are the one who is sick and you should solve your own problems,'" Laurinda recalls, noting that his attitude and lack of support prompted her decision to leave her husband and move back to her family's home with her 9-year-old son.

That move brought her to Esperanca Center. "I actually went there to ask for a job," Laurinda admits, noting that a counselor named Fernando told her no jobs were available. Instead, he encouraged her to volunteer as an activist, which she has been doing for nearly two years.

In January, a Twinning Center partnership supported by PEPFAR launched a pilot prevention program targeting PLWHA at Esperanca Center.

Commonly called Prevention with Positives (PwP), these activities have proven effective at stemming the spread of HIV, particularly in an era when ART is helping HIV-positive individuals live longer and better lives.

"After the PwP project came here, I was trained in group facilitation and other issues related to counseling. I also took training courses in general health and received a certificate from the Ministry of Health," Laurinda says.

Now she receives a decent salary from Esperanca Center and is busy making plans for the future.

"I feel so much better in this environment. When I was a volunteer I had a lot of financial worries, but I feel the most difficult time in my life has already passed," Laurinda says with a voice full of hope.

"I am living with my parents now, but I plan to build a house of my own on some land my mother gave me. I am saving money to buy bricks," she continues,

describing the home she envisions for herself and her son. She describes her boyfriend, too. They have been together for two years.

"He is HIV-negative and sometimes he tells me that he loves me so much he wouldn't mind if he got HIV," Laurinda says. "He is a good man, but he doesn't know what being HIV-positive really means. I do; that's why we are working on keeping him negative."