

3. Squeezing lemons, making lemonade

Bhatupe Mhango

Who I am

I was born in Lilongwe, Malawi and I am 30. As my mother was a diplomat, I grew up in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. While at college in Malawi, I tested HIV positive and have been living with HIV for eight years. After the initial shock, my Christian faith, my will to survive and starting to take ARVs opened up a new chapter in my life. I joined the working world and eventually became an advocate for living positively with HIV. I was the UN Plus Global Co-ordinator for UNAIDS before returning to studies in August 2010 to pursue an MBA.

Why I am telling my story

I am sharing my story because I do not want another girl to expose herself, as I did, when she has options, and to be weak when she can be strong. I do not want anyone else, male or female, to be indifferent. HIV is so small and yet it warrants our attention – we all have to wake up and smell the coffee! It's time for us to stop making 'victims' out of people living with HIV. It's time for us all to do our part in HIV prevention, treatment, care and support – I hope you will be inspired to take action.

