**Tuesday, May 24, 2011**

**Nothing is more powerful than positive speak**

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By ASUNTA WAGURA

Every so often, I receive invitations from our partner organisations, churches, schools and corporate bodies to pay them a visit.

The purpose of these visits are varied. For instance, some organisations that are starting workplace HIV programs see it fit to call a woman living with HIV to talk to their staff so that, literally speaking, they can hear it from the horse’s mouth.

Others like churches may seek my services so that I can offer their parishioners the gospel truth on positive living, and try to convince them to accept those living with HIV as people, not as sinners who deserve hell fire.

When I go on radio to talk about HIV, and Kenyans take their time and money to call in and give feedback, it tells me that something as simple as a word can change the course of someone’s life.

In the case of radio, it will be someone I will never meet or have a *tête-à-tête* with, but something I said about their situation, or someone’s else’s issue, will have emboldened them to get a grip of their lives.

In my line of work, and ever since I went public about my HIV status, I have talked in so many forums, almost always repeating the same thing, that at times I swear that I talk in my sleep about positive living!

Talk isn’t cheap. Talk, positive, life-changing talk, changes lives and makes people to make decision that will have a positive impact on their lives.

Initially, I became who I was – a distraught, desperate girl who was waiting for death, because someone said something negative:

That I had six months to live because I had AIDS. They didn’t even say I had HIV. They said AIDS, and just like that, they hammered a dozen or so nails on my coffin.

And then, months later, some women talked me into living by offering me life-changing nuggets on positive living.

I always thank God for giving me the privilege to come into contact with the right people at the right time, and allowing them to utter the right words concerning my future.

Without someone to talk me out of the grave, I would be long gone and forgotten.

I especially recall one woman who went a step further, held me by the collar, shook me and told me to, “Get out of it”.

She was talking about my negative attitude, because those days I used to be one beaten woman.

She was, without knowing it, telling me to get out of the grave that had been dug for me, and which I was continuing to dig with all that negativity weighing me down.

I was emotionally dead, and just a couple of feet from physical demise.

Well, with all the merits of talk, there are times when I am invited to speak in forums, and I really question myself.

A friend once commented that I have talked for so long about HIV-related issues, that when some people think about HIV, the first name that comes to their mind is Asunta.

“That was then,” I replied, and added that now sisters living with HIV have taken the ball and sprinted with it towards the future.

I am proud of the young women who are living with HIV, and who have decided to talk about their experiences.

Some have gone public and are not afraid to speak whenever and wherever they are called upon to talk about positive living.

I understand the enormous burden of going public, what one has to endure, and the tag that a section of society attaches to any single woman who is living with HIV.

That’s why I understand why others have started blogs to talk about their living with HIV, and have decided to remain anonymous about it.

They may not know it, but their verbal therapy could be just what the doctor ordered for, for instance, that distraught college girl who has just tested HIV positive.

Kenyans, let’s talk about this.

*This is the diary of Asunta Wagura, a mother of three who tested HIV-positive 24 years ago. She is the executive director of the Kenya Network of Women with Aids (KENWA).*  
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