AVOID THE BLAME GAME

I pray that you find love again

At the age of 47, Moses\* was full of life. He was an active member o fhis church and a talented singer. His wife was in her mid-thirties and also a dedicated member of the church.

Moses tested HIV-positive in 2009 and came to our offices to seek help.

I could tell that he was distraught. He admitted that this was the last thing he expected, and that his dreams were now shattered.

Moses also told me that he had always been faithful to his wife and could not figure how he contracted the virus. After a number of counseling sessions, he come to terms with his diagnosis and accepted his HIV status.

Moses’ wife, Rose\* was also tested for HIV. Unfortunately, she also turned out to be HIV-positive.

She was hysterical after finding out her status, stressing that she had

not strayed in their relationship. I cautioned them against blaming each other, since this was the only way they could move forward.

**Make or break**

At times like this, it is the blame game — who “brought” the virushome — that can make or break the relationship. Afterwards, during a routine pregnancy test, Rose found out that she was pregnant. The clinician referred her to a comprehensive care centre and she started regular follow-up sessions. They also joined our support group and started attending the monthly group sessions at our Garden Estate head office.

They found the sessions therapeutic and were able to deal with the intensity

of their feelings. Moses was enthusiastic during the meetings and looked forward to the next session.

The couple gradually reclaimed their life, and Moses even started a choir within the support group. The members were zealous because this was the first time that someone as talented as him was reminding them that they could lead quality lives and be of service to the community.

**Relief**

As a result of adhering to the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV sessions, Rose delivered a healthy baby girl. After 18 months, the baby was tested and found to be HIV-negative. As you can imagine, this was quite a relief for the couple.

However, just when things appeared to be going smoothly for the couple, Moses was diagnosed with cancer at Kenyatta National Hospital.

This turn of events took a physical and emotional toll on his health, which deteriorated at an alarming rate. The once vibrant Moses could no longer keep pace with the monthly therapy sessions.

Our organisation paid the bill for several tests and drugs at KNH, but the cancer hastened the disease progression, such that within a short time, he had an Aids defining CD4 count of 40.

During the later stages, he also suffered a severe bout of tuberculosis and Aids dementia. His memory lapses were so serious, he could no longer identify our community health workers who had been offering him home-based care. Moses eventually passed away in August 2011.

I have buried many loved ones who have succumbed to HIV-related complications, but Moses’ death had a profound effect on me. I often wonder what lay in store for him had he lived longer.

The cruel hand of death took his

life at his prime, when he had so

much to live for. I hope that God will

grant Rose the grace and fortitude to

move on. I also pray that people living

with HIV like Rose will reach out

to others and be reached out to, and

find love again.

This is the diary of Asunta Wagura,

a mother-of-three who tested HIVpositive

23 years ago. She is the

executive director of the Kenya

Network of Women with Aids

(KENWA).

Email: asuntawagura@hotmail.com