

Success Story: Fighting Stigma with Support

Ethiopia HIV/AIDS Care and Support Project
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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

HIV/AIDS Care and Support Program

Success Story

Fighting Stigma with Support



Nigatua in her home

“Can you imagine the feeling you have when you receive such a surprise visit and support when you are hopeless? I will never forget that day.”

Even when healthy, Nigatua Mekonnen and her husband struggled to pay their rent and feed their two children. When Nigatua became severely ill during her third pregnancy, the situation became dire. She lost the baby immediately after delivery and eventually became bedridden. Suspecting she was HIV-positive, her neighbors and relatives stopped speaking to her, and her landlord increased her rent in an effort to force her off the compound. “It was the most unforgettable black time in the history of my life,” said Nigatua.

Then one day, community volunteers from USAID’s HIV/AIDS Care and Support Program appeared at Nigatua’s door. During the first visit, the volunteers got to know the family and helped with household chores, providing a welcome relief from the isolation Nigatua had faced. During subsequent visits, they counseled the family, encouraging them to be tested for HIV. Nigatua and her husband soon learned they were HIV-positive and began antiretroviral therapy with the support of health center staff. They were happy to discover their children were HIV-negative.

USAID’s HIV/AIDS Care and Support Program (HCSP) recognizes that fighting stigma and discrimination is crucial to ensuring clients receive the HIV/AIDS services they need. HIV-positive community volunteers are trained to provide testimonials and health education in an effort to sensitize the community to the needs of their infected and affected neighbors. These volunteers also provide home-based care and link local residents to health center services.

Today, thanks to the support of HCSP volunteers in her community, Nigatua is “healthy, productive, and enjoying life with my family.” She has a busy social life and now serves on the front lines in the fight against stigma and discrimination.