



Lucy

Who is Lucy Wanjiku Njenga?

- Founding Coordinator of Sauti Skika, the first network of adolescent living with HIV in Kenya.
- Founder and team leader of Positive Young Women Voices, a grassroots community based organization that works to empower adolescent girls and young women living with or affected by HIV.
- African Delegate in the UNAIDS NGO Delegation to the PCB.
- Alternate Board Member in the CCM

My Circle, My Tribe

The other day I had a conversation with a friend from the UK about how our parents took our diagnosis. She was diagnosed in the 90s, so she took her time until there was treatment for her to share her diagnoses with her parents. For me I went public before I could tell them about my HIV status. One Sunday afternoon, I called for a family meeting, something we never do, to tell them. They had no idea why my son had died and I was exhausted of keeping the tormenting secret when it would probably change the life of a girl like me to make better decisions and have more informed choices.

No one knew how to react to it. I knew I didn't. I was scared stiff what all this meant for me and my life. And we rarely discussed it. I think it is how we all deal, no one gets uncomfortable and if they have questions they know they can ask. The first time my mum saw me on TV she called me and cried because she could not believe people would now be talking of her daughter who has 'Ukwimi' (HIV/AIDS in Swahili). She was scared I would now be called 'Malaya' (prostitute as it's widely referred and not sex worker). Honestly, this was the last thing on my list.

Would I still have friends was a question I kept asking myself, would I have people to turn myself to and would understand me? I did get my supportive circle, they were mostly people we worked with but they did not behave as if I was tornado. My previous friends did look like they cared and I will never know what they thought because they never showed and that was comforting.

Though my best friend then told me not to disclose my status when we went on a vacation, that it was okay to not tell people. I had mixed feelings about this, but one prominent one was that I had a feeling she probably was ashamed of me. I told people of my status to educate, not to look for attention and not to overshadow my friends.

I now keep people who I want to be in my circle because my story is me and you either like the whole of me or none of me. My mother is now the one who is the support system of some women living with HIV in her community. And I have a supportive partner who I consider my biggest cheerleader and friends who never judge me or my choices. If anything they have helped understand who wants to take advantage of my story which is a new form of stigma that is subtle because I am more than the HIV story. I am a skilful worker, an advocate, an empathetic person, a mother and becoming a better woman every day.

Hiv Vereniging

The Dutch Association of People Living with HIV (Hiv Vereniging) represents the interests of all people with HIV in the Netherlands, irrespective of background.

We provide information about living with HIV and organise all kinds of meet-ups.

Servicepunt

Our team of expert volunteers can be contacted for any question about living with HIV, by telephone on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 14:00 – 22:00 hrs, or by email: servicepunt@hivvereniging.nl.

See www.hivvereniging.nl