

## **Interview with Kaino Ndamanomhata, member of the Namibian network of HIV-positive teachers**

Kaino Ndamanomhata has been teaching since 2000 in Ohameva school, a rural school with 237 students in the remote area of Ohangwena in Namibia. In 2002 she found out that she was HIV-positive. These days she spends much of her time raising awareness in the school and the community.

### **You recently attended a workshop to launch a network of HIV-positive teachers in Namibia. Do you feel such networks will make a difference?**

Yes. Now I feel less alone. It was helpful to meet others in the same position, and to be able to talk freely. It felt like family! We got a lot of information too. Many teachers still feel they have to hide their HIV-positive status but sooner or later the symptoms will show and people will know anyway. I convinced ten teachers at the meeting to disclose their status. Why hide away? The group is stronger than the individual - we can make plans and work together. Now I feel I can go somewhere with constructive ideas and take action. I hope other teachers will join up.

### **Did you personally encounter any discrimination in your school?**

There was discrimination when I first disclosed my status, but more among colleagues and parents than students. Also, people thought I would not live long, because they didn't know about anti-retroviral treatment. I told them: "Being HIV-positive is not the end of the world!" Luckily our principal is very supportive.

### **What form does your awareness-raising take?**

I work in my own school and neighbouring schools, holding regular meetings with young people between 14 and 16. They know my status. I call the meetings to show them they need not fear. I encourage them to take the test – the sooner the better. I tell them: "Don't spread the virus!" All the people in my school now understand what HIV and AIDS is.