



MAPPING MY STORY



A COLLECTION OF PAINTINGS AND STORIES FROM ADOLESCENTS LIVING WITH HIV AND DEPRESSION AND FROM THEIR CAREGIVERS

AND CATS





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*Stories and paintings by adolescents and young people living with HIV and their caregivers.
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Foreword



The voices of adolescents living with HIV and their caregivers are largely absent in the discourse as we grapple to understand and effectively treat HIV in adolescents. Yet, hearing from those directly affected is critical to improved understanding. To date there is much that we know and more that we need to learn. It is known that despite widespread efforts in the treatment of HIV and significantly decreased death rates in adults, this is not the case for adolescents, where rates continue to rise. It is also known that mental health conditions are common especially during adolescence, but there is increasing evidence that adolescents living with HIV are particularly at risk, including depression, anxiety, trauma and grief. These can be caused by difficult life situations, challenges related to living with HIV and other medical problems or medication. Without proper support, mental health conditions greatly affect adolescents' quality of life, both as a young person and in their adult lives. These conditions are often missed as mental health is frequently not talked about openly. This makes it hard for young people to get help, and may lead to challenges with adherence or engagement in services. In extreme cases, it may lead to them harming themselves or others.

Zvandiri is a programme for children, adolescents and young people in need of HIV services. It supports governments to provide children, adolescents and young people with the services they need so that they may live happy, healthy, safe, fulfilled lives. At the forefront of Zvandiri are trained, mentored young people living with HIV known as Community Adolescent Treatment Supporters (or CATS). A recent study in Zimbabwe known as the Peer Support Intervention (PESU) study, set out to explore the role of CATS in supporting other adolescents living with HIV who were failing Antiretroviral Treatment, including those with depression. During this study, it became clear that the young people receiving support from CATS had many experiences to share, as did their caregivers and the CATS themselves. We wanted to ensure that their voices were captured.

In November 2017, we worked together with 16 adolescents living with HIV, their caregivers and CATS in a body mapping workshop. Body mapping has been widely used in Zvandiri as a participatory, creative method to engage young people with difficult life experiences. It has been found to be highly effective in enabling them to identify and externalize experiences in a way that has meaning for them and to express themselves. The adolescents, their caregivers and CATS used colours, pictures, symbols and words to represent their lived experiences of HIV, depression and the CATS intervention. Each participant then described their painting in depth, using it to narrate their individual life story and experiences.

In this book, we have compiled a collection of the body maps and stories created by adolescents living with HIV and depression, as well as those from their caregivers and the CATS who have been supporting them.

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**All names have been changed to protect anonymity. The pseudonyms of the caregivers and CATS were chosen by the participants themselves.*

Tafadzwa



The colours I used, black and blue and light green are not my favourite colours, but it's just that the feelings that I have most of the time are dark. In the dark world, blue represents small happiness here and there and lime green shows some confusion. The first day I was told of my high viral load I cried and was scared because at the hospital I had recently heard about a healthy girl who had just passed away. They told me that it was possible for one to look healthy outside but inside it will be a different story, you could be slowly going down. I just thought "the grave". It was tough.

It started way back for me, when I was a border in form 1. At school I used to keep plenty of food in my trunk. A girl who had observed my pattern of drinking my tablets at a certain time, wanted to find out why I took this medication. One day she went to my trunk to collect food without asking me. This is where I also kept my tablets. I don't know why I kept them there, maybe I was blind or stupid. I got to the trunk just as she was taking the food and I realised that she had taken my pill bottle. I realised this because of the sound that they make. I asked her what she was doing with my tablets, then she ran away with my bottle and shouted to the other girls, showing them my tablets. She told everyone that she knew what the tablets were

for, she said that her mum drinks them because she is HIV positive. This made my life very tough as everyone now knew my status. All I could do was cry. I denied any knowledge of the medication, but they were there in my trunk. Other girls gossiped about me and laughed at me. Our school matron knew about my status because my brother had told her. She called all the girls and told them that it was a criminal offence to spread news about someone's HIV status and she asked them to go and tell everyone at the school that they had been lying about my status. From then it was never easy for me. **I stopped drinking my medication because I did not want others to believe that I was HIV positive.** From form 1 I used to leave the tablets at home so that even if they followed me to see if I would drink any tablets or search for the tablets from my trunk they could not find them. It was only when I fell ill with severe headaches, diarrhoea and I had lost weight, I was asked to go back home. I did not want to go home because no one really cared for me at home and life was not easy. The only person who took care of me was the school matron. **The discrimination, stigma and humiliation that I faced from my school mates caused me a lot of pain.** That is when all my trouble started. I tell you it was just hell.

I have drawn a football jersey, though I don't play soccer, but I play basketball. But my half-brother whom I stay with loves soccer. The other one is me with black. It represents sadness. **My upper part of the head is blue, showing fake happiness, but my inside was always sad. I was always depressed, the worst you can think of. At some point I thought of ending my life.** There was no one for me then, even the brother I was staying with. I felt that he was neglecting me at that time. Everything they were doing at home, I would feel that I was not meant to be part of them. I would keep to myself in my room and complain to God, asking questions like but

why God? I would shout at God because I was so angry at him. I think if God had his way he would have beaten me up because I used to say nasty words to him. What pained me most was that I was the only one who was HIV positive in our family. I asked God why it was me with HIV and not my half-brother who was so cruel to me. He is my older brother and he is the one I stay with. When God was not responding in favour of me I got into drugs. I was drinking alcohol and getting drunk. When he tried to talk to me and ask me what was going on I would find it as an opportunity to shout at him. I wanted to get even with him. I painted purple to show I am something great. What happened did happen, but I feel I am someone special, even though my brother used to tell me that I was a child of mistake because there is an age difference of nine years between us yet there is a difference of one year among my other siblings. We are six in my family and I am the last born. So it was this age difference that also caused me to rebel. I would just get my beer and drink it and wait for him to talk to me. I would shout at him, just looking for a fight. I would scream and cry and tell him hurtful words. I just wanted attention. By then my viral load was 65 068. I started drinking ARVs in 2010. **Even when I was told why I was drinking the medication and why it was important to adhere well, I was not taking them well. I would just ignore them because I was too angry and I would tell myself that if anything went wrong the grave was there for me anytime.** I tried to end my life many times. I know my HIV status made me who I am and it made me stronger because I managed to go through it and I am still alive. I even tried rat poisoning, but all that it did was to cause me stomach pain. I don't know why I didn't die. I did not tell my brother the truth when I suffered from stomach pains after taking the rat poison. I just told him that I had ate some chillies. I suffered for days. Till now you are the first people I have opened up to that I tried to drink rat poison. **I painted my heart red and it is broken. This is because I was thinking, why is it that most people I love are the ones who hurt me?** This road is showing my journey in 2015. At least now I am a happy girl and no longer suicidal because I was helped at Zvandiri.

The support I always get from my CATS helps a great deal. At first I struggled to open up to her. I think the reason was that I had never been open to anyone before so it felt strange to have someone wanting to talk to me about my life. But she was persistent until I started warming up to her and slowly and slowly I began to open up to her. Of late we have become good friends, we can talk about anything and everything, even about boyfriends.

Talking to a peer supporter is different than talking to an adult.

There is no way I will tell an adult about my boyfriend and stuff. I will not be free with an adult as I am free with a peer supporter. I can tell her all the things I do with my boyfriend.

The peer supporter also motivates me. The support she gives really helps me.

Rudo



As you can see, green, blue, yellow, purple, red, black. I put these colours because they're bright and represents the shining me, the brighter side that I am now.

Honestly speaking, before, I did not know anything. I did not know what a viral load was until my CATS explained to me the meaning of the viral load. I was shocked. All I knew was that I had to go to the clinic to have my blood collected.

My issues are plenty. Firstly, I never had back up support. They would tell me to drink my tablets, but no one made a follow up to see that I was drinking them. I would just go into my bedroom and shake my bottle, just to make a sound and pretend that I was taking a tablet. But in actual fact I would not even open the bottle. I was tested in 2008 when I was in grade 7. In form 1, I became a border at school. Everyone was curious about everyone else there. They wanted to know why I had these tablets and why I drank them all the time. I would lie that they were for my chest problem because I would visit the clinic in every two weeks. But they would pester me, wanting to know why I took the medication. So I finally decided that to avoid being asked too many questions I would stop drinking the medication. I got so sick and I had a stroke. The doctors told me that I had stroked because of defaulting my

medication. Still, this did not move me and I still did not take my medication. I would drink them haphazardly without any care or any remorse. I would skip them for a long time, just telling myself that I would try to drink them tomorrow, but tomorrow would come and I would not drink them. This led to my treatment failure and I was switched to second line. I drank the second line tablets the first few days but I told myself that I could continue with my habit of not drinking the tablets as I was now used to the idea of skipping the medication. I told myself that since I had been switched to second line now, if I fail again they can switch me to third line and fourth line and so on. Then I was put on Atazanavir. I did not like that tablet. It smelt so bad, it was too big, it caused me to vomit and left me weak and sick. So I stopped taking it. I was changed to so many doctors because I was a problem. I then met a doctor from the PESU study. **She helped me by sharing her life story with me and how she managed to overcome it. She encouraged me not to focus too much on the hurts and bitterness in my life, but to focus on my health so that I would get better and achieve a better life.** The people who had hurt me were living their lives to the fullest and enjoying themselves, while I was wallowing in misery and pain. She encouraged me to show them what I was able to do it in life, no matter the pain they had caused me. This really helped me realise that my father did hurt me by giving my mother HIV and later dumping us, but that he is living his life and enjoying it. Every time I default taking my medication and fall sick, he tells me that I'm the one with a death wish and even if I died life would just go on for him, he would continue with his life even when I was dead. This is when I realised that I had to live my life. This really encouraged me to view life with from a different angle.

We are four in my family. I am the third born and the only one who is HIV positive, the one who comes after me is negative. This was so painful for me. I wondered how my younger sibling would be negative since he was born after me. At times I would just find myself hitting my young brother for no good reason, because I hated the fact that he was negative and I was positive. My mum would then beat me up, but I did not care. As long as I had beaten her baby I would be happy. In my heart I did not care about anything. I felt that it was my life and I would do as I pleased. Trust me, I did what I wanted and what I felt like doing at that time. If I wanted to go anywhere I would just go. They did not have a say in my life, they just looked at me because I had become so stubborn and rude. My mother reached a point of giving up on me. She actually told me that she was not my mother and I should look for a new mother.

The counsellors at Parirenyatwa referred me to the PESU study where I was linked up with my CATS. She knew everything that was happening in my life. She knew about all the partners I was dating, as many as they were. I was able to share with her about my STI and she referred me for treatment. I had not even shared that with my doctor or the nurses. Though she discouraged me from having too many sexual partners, I always believed that I could do as I pleased in the area of dating. Then I was given a new CATS because my first CATS became fully employed. She, too, discouraged me from having multiple sexual partners. Both of them would tell me how bad it was and how dangerous it was to have too many boyfriends, for both them and me. **She explained to me how having too many boyfriends would affect my viral load as long as I was not using protection, which I wasn't at that time.**

My life got better after having a CATS as a companion because at home there was no one who I talked to. My elder brother would always shout at me, telling me that I was a sick person and I would shout back at him. Here I drew my mum, daddy and brothers and put them in a circle because they have their own bond. We are like different families. They do what they want as a family together and I have no one in my family. This always pained me and made me cry. That is why I have painted my face red. It is showing crying eyes. **My life began to change because of the CATS. I was no longer lonely. I had someone to talk to whenever I felt like talking to someone. I have painted a broad smile, which shows that I am now happy because I see myself shining.** The letter Q is for my boyfriend. He is now the only one I have. He knows about my status. He said he did not care and he wants to marry me. If all goes well, we will marry this coming December. I will invite you all to our union, but what I want first is for my VL to go down.

Rufaro



When I was first told about my viral load, I was so pained, as I thought that was the end of my life. My viral load was 27 000.

Sometimes I would forget to take my medication. I used to wonder why I had to keep on drinking the tablets. **I did not know the reason I was taking the medication.** It used to worry me that I was the only one drinking the tablets when everyone else was not. Whenever I felt not in the mood to drink the tablets, I would just skip them.

I used to stay in the rural areas with my grandmother. I was not able to do any work because I was sick most of the time. My grandmother would shout at me saying that I was just lazy. This pained me and I cried most of the time. I stopped drinking my medication, as I thought it was better to die. I always prayed to God to come and take me because I could not face life anymore, until my uncle came to take me. I was glad, but I was not always happy, because I was worried about my illness. This is shown by the yellow and black colours that I have drawn. As shown in my painting, **my heart was always troubled and in great pain. I'd ask God when my problems would come to an end. I wanted God to take me so that I would just**

die and rest. My heart is painted in black to show how hopeless and ready to die I was. I have also painted the side effects that I suffered. I was not able to sit up straight and spent most of the time sleeping. I was taken to the clinic, where I was told that my viral load was too high and I had to join the PESU study. They informed me that the CATS would visit me and they would help me. **When I was introduced to the CATS and she started visiting me, that is when my heart started to warm up. I was happy that someone cared for me and I began to share with her my fears. We talked a lot and I found a friend in her.** I was very happy and I started changing my attitude. She helped me. My viral load is now at 27.

When I was told that my viral load was high and the reason why it was high, I started doing as I was told. I began to improve on my adherence. I stuck to drinking them on time every time. When it's seven o'clock I would make sure I take my tablets. My CATS helped me by sending a daily reminder SMS and a missed call to remind me to drink my medication. I liked the messages because she would just send a little phrase like "have you done the deal?" The messages did not say anything about medication, so even if someone saw them, they would not know what deal she was asking me about, but I definitely would know the deal.

It helps to have a peer supporter because the peer supporters ask you to tell them what is in your heart. If I share with a peer supporter everything that is in my heart, it helps me because I pour out all my feelings, everything just goes out of me and I feel better. They also encourage us to drink our tablets. **They share with us their own life stories. These help us because they also drink ARVS and they look so well and healthy. This encourages you. You want to be like the CATS, so you start to do as she tells you.**

As you can see, now I am now so happy and I can wear earrings. I pray that the CATS will continue to remind me to take my medication and do home visits for me even when the study is finished so that I will not go back to where I was before.

to be someone

ADHERENCE

GOOD

CONFIDENCE

HAPPY

motivated

PUT COME

DO IT





Tatenda

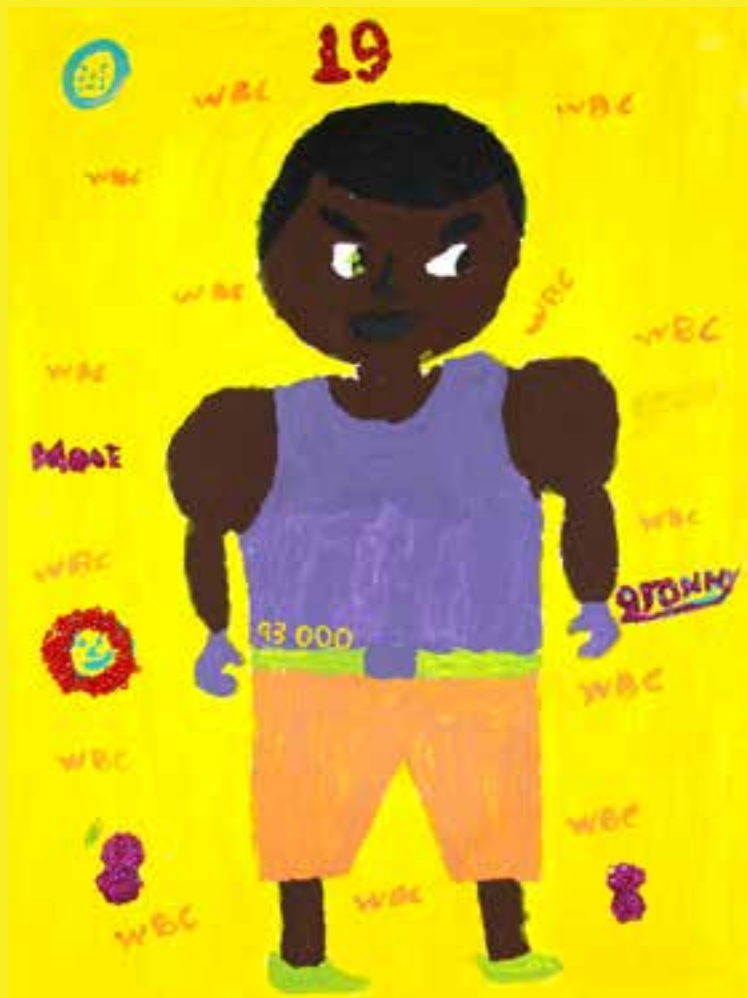
I thought all was going on well for me as my viral load was going up high. I thought the more the viral load, the healthier I was. I was so pleased with myself. No one had explained anything to me.

To be honest, I only drank my tablets when I was ill, when I had a headache or stomach pain. When I did not have a headache or stomach pain, I would not drink the tablets. It was only when the CATS played the soldier game for me that I realised the importance of drinking your medication every day.

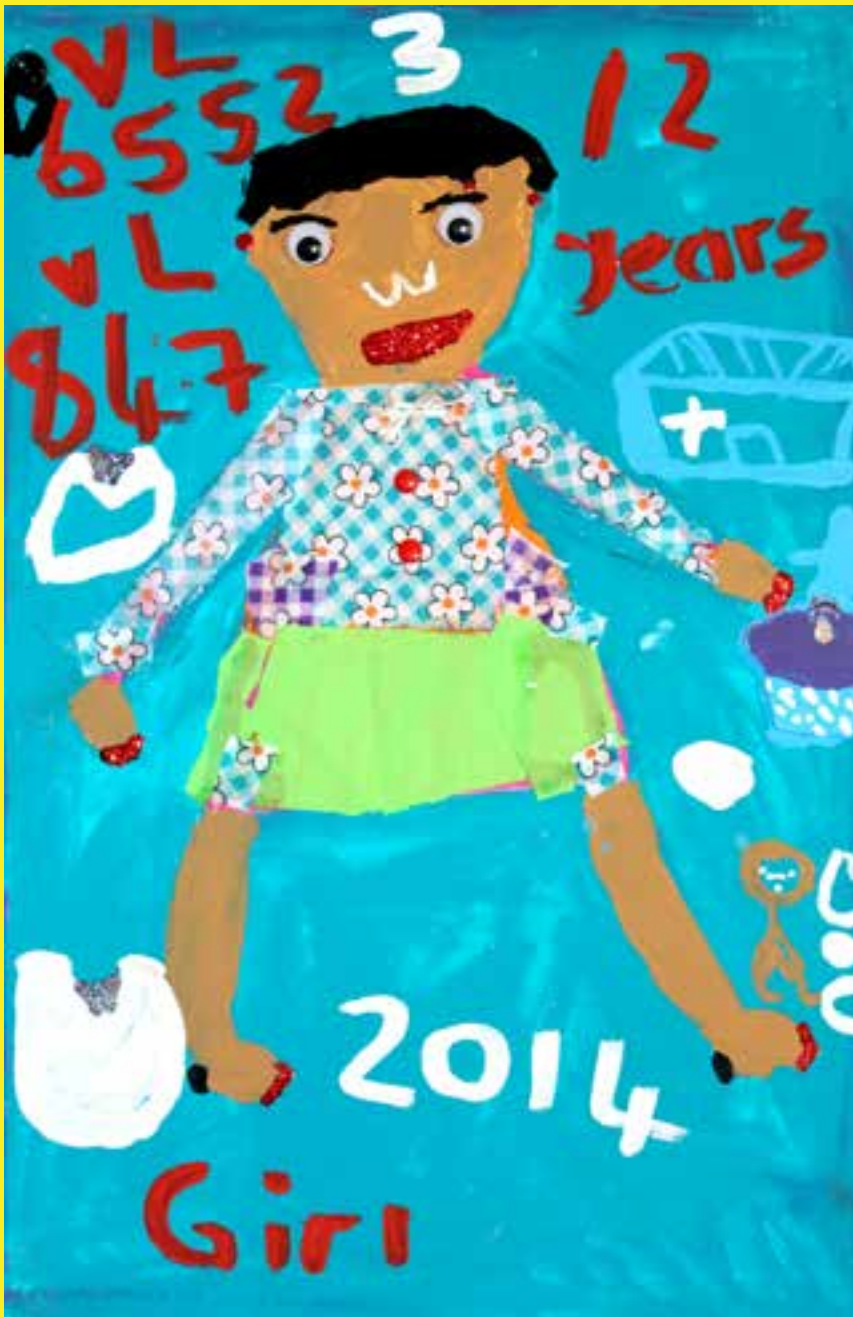
Though I am now 19 years, I want to tell you that I turned 18 years through a fight. I had to struggle to be alive, because I was not taking my medication at all. I had to be forced to stay alive. People had to pull hard for me to turn 18 years. I did not care about life at all. I only started to improve on my adherence when I turned 19 years. I painted my face red to show joy and happiness in my mind. I am happy that I am still alive. I have also painted the face with tears showing how sad I used to be because I thought I was the only one who was HIV positive and the only one drinking ARVs. When I went to the OI clinic and saw

people in a queue, I would think that they had other illnesses and not HIV. Later I realised that they were all positive and they also had come for their reviews and drug pick up. That is when I became happy and started loosening up. I was tested in 2008 and that is when I knew of my status. I have also included my granny in my painting because she is the one I stay with. My mother passed away a long time ago. You can see my appearance today. I am not very big, but I used to be big and muscular because I am a rugby player. I started picking up weight again when my sister came back from Bulawayo and told me that she was also HIV positive. She showed me her medical record card. I was glad that my sister was also on treatment.

The CATS I'm supported by told me something that changed my thinking. He told me that if I did not drink my tablets I was going to be history. I would die and they would just talk about me, saying there was once a boy like so and so, who used to do this and that. He did not drink his medication and he died. He told me that **my story would be used to teach other children who are not adhering well to their medication, that if they continue not adhering well they would end up like me, dead.** So, he encouraged me to drink my medication every day on time so that my viral load would eventually go down. I was not feeling well by then because I had been defaulting on my medication. **Now, I have started adhering well by drinking my tablets on time every day.** I am hoping that my health will improve and my viral load will go down, because I don't want to die.



Apple



When I first heard about my child's high viral load I was bitter and I felt so much pain, I wanted to know why the viral load had gone high. But as time went by and **I began to monitor my child, I realised that there was a time when my child was skipping doses and not taking her medication.**

This helped reduce my worry. When I was referred to the PESU team, I was given a CATS who came to my house with aunty Abi. I was excited that there was someone now to help me monitor my child's adherence. I was happy that the CATS was also HIV positive and young and, therefore, I hoped she would become friends with my child.

The CATS helped by counselling us and sharing information. The CATS is helping us with adherence and my child is taking her medication on time.

I am happy now because my child's medication was switched to Tenolam from Zidolam and her health is improved. The doctors wanted to put my child on second line but they said they would give her another chance on first line. They switched the first line regimen in August and this has helped her to improve greatly. Everything is going on well, there is no problem at all. I

also get moral support and counselling from the church that I go to. They helped me to accept that my child's condition was God's will.

This is a girl who is wearing a top and a skirt. She is looking good with painted nails and lips. I painted black on the heart, because her viral load was too high and my heart was painful. But now my heart is smiling because of my child's improvement. Things are changing for the better. I have put a symbol of the church to thank them for the support they are giving me with food stuff and everything I need including prayers. **I have also drawn the CATS as a great pillar of strength as they support my child. They provide counselling and daily SMS reminders. They invite her to the support group. They phone day and night making follow ups.** I am very grateful for the Zvandiri team. That is why I put white and C for CATS, because they are really supporting me.

Mai Sinyo

I was really affected by this viral load. I was so worried. The child had been staying in the rural areas with her grandmother. She would lie to her grandmother that she was drinking her tablets. She became very ill and we brought her here to Harare. They took her viral load. It was 4000 and we were referred to the PESU study. The second viral load taken again at PESU Clinic showed that it was still too high. They told me that they were going to change her medication because her weight was very low and that she was failing on ART. She was switched to the paediatric drugs because those were the ones which were suitable to her weight. I was so worried and stressed in my heart. I felt that my child was going to die because the situation was hopeless. But now I am so thankful and happy because she is improving. She has gained weight and is now 43kgs. I would also like to thank the PESU staff and also the CATS. She helped us in a great way. **She used to phone and send text messages asking if my child had taken her medication, because my child did not want to drink her tablets, she believed that she had been bewitched. I just want God to bless our CATS because of all her hard work.**



I have drawn a painting of my daughter, I have used brown to show her complexion. **The tears are showing the time when we used to cry together because her viral load was too high, but because of the support we got we are now smiling.** Her viral load has gone down to 18. I have also shown the house that we stay in and the picture of the CATS doing a home visit for my child. This CATS is ever smiling has a good heart. This boosts the spirit of my child. I have also put this big black dot to show how sorry and sad I was because of the situation when my child was sick, her viral load was too high and she was not eating at all. She had too many ailments at one time.

Sekuru Gora



What happened to me was a long story. My late wife was the one who used to look after the children. When she died there were lots of things that happened. My children's tablets were misplaced during the funeral. Because of what I was going through I did not even check if the children were taking their medication. No one else knew that the children were supposed to be drinking their tablets. So these are some of the reasons why the viral load went up. There was no one monitoring the children anymore because their mother had passed away. This really pained me. My wife used to go to the clinic with the child to collect the tablets and I knew about it. The problem arose when my late wife's relatives came to do the things that are normally done in our culture during the funeral. They mixed the mother's medication together with the children's tablets and threw all of them away. The clinic cards were thrown away together with the mother's also. Because I was mourning my wife I did not realise this. Culturally you have no say over your late wife's things, her relatives dispose of them as they please, so I just let them do what they wanted to avoid tension and arguments. It was well after the funeral that I had to start afresh with the children, that is to go to the clinic to get tablets and a new clinic book. This is the major reason why my child's viral load was high. My child started taking

medication in 2010 when he was ten years old. Now he is 16 years old. He mother passed away when he was 15 years. The problem is I cannot really tell for how long my child defaulted in taking his medication because most of the time it was the mother who used to give him his medication. I think both the mother and the children were not adhering well when the mother was still alive. These days I am following up and monitoring them and I am seeing an improvement.

This shows when I was really troubled. **My heart is sore because of the pain I experienced when my wife passed away. But now my I am happy because of the help and support that I am getting from the clinic and the CATS. People had no hope for these children. I realised that people don't understand because they have no knowledge about HIV. They don't know that if they follow instructions given to them they can live longer.** I have accepted my status and I look after my own children alone. I have drawn flowers to show that life can be better and one can enjoy it. I have put a symbol of the sun. This shows that everything is bright now even if others don't understand it, but to me it's very clear and bright. I have painted a white heart and this means that there is now clear communication between my child and I. He also now understands that he is not the only one with HIV, because soon after his mother's death there was lots of talk from the relatives. Unfortunately people think that children are too young to understand all that will be happening, but he heard everything and this caused him to be depressed because he thought he was going to die too. But as time went on and after joining the PESU study and meeting up with the CATS, attending support groups and mixing with other children he now knows that he is not the only one, and that there are people out there who care and love him. I also show my children how much I love them by being there for them. He now understands that we can also live longer. **The CATS is his great motivator. My child started taking medication in 2010 and his adherence has since improved because of the reminder SMSs we receive and the home visits from the CATS.**

T.C.F

LIFE

Garibol 4



Mango



It has been a difficult time for me because this child is not my own child, but I tried my best for this child to survive. If I look at him now and compare to when I started with him, I just want to thank God. I feel grateful to the Zvandiri team and I pray for the grace of God to always be upon you. I appreciate all the communication that I get from Zvandiri. You always phone to follow up. You know my social problems with my family. **Right now I feel so happy because of the change in my son. When I first met him he had lots of health problems, such that his immediate family would always comment and complain of his retarded growth. But now if you look at him, he is changed and one cannot help but to admire him.** His own mother is now proud of him because of the changes she is seeing in him. She used not to care about him when he was young and frail. Even his father's relatives did not care to help, they stigmatised him. I am his step mother. I just want to thank God. When I was enrolled into the PESU study, they explained everything about the study to me and I felt this was a good opportunity for us to be helped. There are some tests which they required us to pay for at the OI clinic at Pari, but after joining the PESU study the tests for my child were done for free and they reimbursed us with transport money. This was very encouraging to me and I did not lose hope. My son's viral load

fluctuates, it goes up and down. The main reason for this is that he has to go and stay with his mother during weekends and holidays. Most of the time he's there he skips taking his medication because his mother has not disclosed her status to her new husband. I am glad that the Zvandiri team helped me with this issue and now my child's adherence has improved. I pray that the viral load will be stable now and decrease. His skin has greatly improved because he used to have a very bad skin. When he was young people used to gossip a lot about him in our neighbourhood. Some said he was just going to die.

I have drawn my son with different colours. The symbol of a black dot represents his biological mother. I put this black dot because his biological mother has a hard heart towards her son. She has a man that she is staying with, but she does not want him to know that her child is on ART. She does not care about her child. She is a person who is just self-centred. She is a hard hearted person with evil intention. I have also added this red colour to represent his father, who is my husband. I try to encourage him to act on behalf of his son, to help monitor his child's adherence and go to the clinic with him. At one time this situation affected me so much. I was depressed and I wanted to give up on this child because his own parents really are not worried about him. I want to thank you for the counselling sessions I received from Zvandiri, they helped me to cool down. **I used to cry all the time because I felt helpless until I was helped by the Zvandiri team. I have drawn a symbol of a heart which represents the love that I have for this child. I realised that I have to love him and be there for him even if he is not my biological child.** Even though I did not carry him for 9 months, I still have to love him unconditionally. I have to take him as my own child. Like I said before, his viral load is not stable because of

the challenges he faces when he visits his mother. He was tested in 2010, but his mother refused for him to be put on ART for 4 years, until he was sick in 2014. That is when his mother came to dump the child at my house. I took him to the clinic and he was then initiated on ART then. In 2015 I tried to do partial disclosure. I would not do full disclosure because I felt it could cause him a lot of pain.

I think the reason that children get a high viral load is the caregiver and the parents not caring for the child. They just assume that the child is now of age therefore the child should be responsible for himself. For example, we believe a 10 or 17 year old is now grown up and they should be responsible. As parents we just tell them go and take your medication. If you don't drink it's your fault because this is your life. Yet I should really monitor to see the child drinking the tablets. **So many times, as parents we lack that support for our children.**

Some children find it easy to accept their HIV status while others find it difficult. They ask themselves "why me, where and how did I get HIV?" This affects their acceptance of their status and causes the child to be depressed. They are always stressed and affected by worry. They are never happy and, because of this, they skip taking their medication. They become lonely because they are isolated and stigmatised. Some have a low self-esteem and they don't want to associate with others and this leads to defaulting in taking their medication. Another reason is due to non-disclosure to the child and to important people around the child. For example, child's situation: if he goes on holiday to stay with his mother, he will default taking his medication. His mother wants to hide his status from his step father because she fears that if he discovers that her son is HIV positive he will divorce her. So at times I refuse to let him go on holiday because I don't want him to default taking his medication. This depresses him because all his friends will have gone on holiday and he will be sad that he cannot go on holiday. I end up compromising on his health by just letting him go. Whenever he goes to his mother I am the one who is depressed because I know exactly what will be happening to him and the problems I will face when he returns from the school holiday. He will have skipped taking his medication and eventually he will become sick and I will have the burden of caring for him.

Teemsy



I've used blue in my drawing because I love blue. It shows intelligence and that's what I am made of. I have mixed many colours for a reason. Brown, that's my skin and green which shows life and humps which shows some ups and downs. The drawing is showing how I felt when I was a CATS and I was given my participants. This purple is representing the hope and the strength that I had during my work time.

I am enjoying being a CATS because I faced so many challenges before. Before I was a CATS I was once a defaulter, I was naughty. But with the help from the other CATS, I adhere well to my medication. With their support and their love, they made sure they were there in hard times and good times. If I was admitted in the hospital, the CATS were there for me. They made sure they would give me much of their time.

Honestly, when I was told I had my first participant, I had so much pain in my head, which is what the red represents. How will I manage this person with a high viral load, how will I make an impact in their life? I cried when I

was on my own. I did not show any one that I was really hurt, but the tears are showing the pain that I had inside. I had passed through that point when I had a high viral load and things were not ok with me, so I felt the pain that the participant was going through. My heart was really broken. **The blue represents when I started my work to monitor that child. Hope started to come, that I can do this,** we can walk through this journey together. My heart was sealed with hope that if I am here as a CATS my participant will make it in life. I had the green part because I had life in me and I also had that hope of saving life of my participant. **I had open arms to say "my participant, come let us walk together" and this clenched fist shows that we would fight together, we would stand together and we could do it together.** By then I was very proud, I was really happy. I was strong, my heart was filled with love. I had to make sure that we had confidence together. We started doing DOTS, Directly Observed Treatment Support. We made sure that the participant was receiving SMS reminders from me. I was a treatment buddie and my reminders would be sent on time daily so that we would fight through this high viral load so that it would be suppressed.

There was a time I felt weak because my participant's high viral load was being suppressed but then went up again. I reached a point when I said, "Am I doing my job here or am I just useless?" So that point made me to feel weak, but with the support from my other CATS and aunties I said, "No, let me raise up, because if I am a CATS I don't have to show that I am weak, but am there to support the participant." Till now the viral load is ok, it's suppressed.

I had to share what I was going through with my peers, other PESU CATS. Others encouraged me not to give up, especially my mentor. My mentor said, "If you just give up now, how can this participant make it in life?" So I had hope. The advice and support that I was given made me to be stronger.

Since our mandate is to make sure that the viral load is suppressed, given a participant whose viral load is still going up high while it is supposed to go down, it's hard because I will be thinking, "Where is it that I am going wrong, what exactly am I not doing that is not being adopted by my participant?" **There is also that empathy that I felt for the participant considering the situation I faced before when my viral load was very high. So, I will be in the shoes of my participant. I try and open the eyes of my participant so that they can see and encourage them to try so that the viral load can go down.** While it's still high it gives me trauma in my head, questioning my mind where exactly am I going wrong. That is my main worry, so it becomes hell on earth for me while their viral load is still high.

As a CATS I feel very confident. Honestly, I feel like crying because I can see that I am someone who is very vibrant and I am someone who has so much influence in the community that I am living. So I feel very strong and motivated.

Merry



The brown is representing when I first heard about the child. It's like, am I going to suppress the viral load of this child? **This blue colour on my face, I have hope that although this viral load is very high I can still do it because the sky is the limit. At first, when I received the viral load of the child, my heart was very hard like a stone. I just felt so sad,** I didn't know what to do with the high viral load, will it decrease or increase again? But with the support I got from my mentor and from the peer supporters I work with, I have the confidence. I managed to refer the child to the support group so that he may engage with other children and feel confident and supported. Other children, they just stay at home by themselves isolated, not knowing that there are other children who are HIV positive. They just think that they are alone. **Being with others at the support group, they feel happy hearing others' stories, like how others were helped by the CATS after they had defaulted taking their medication and the child will start to take her medication.** That is why I wrote the support from the support group. I put the green colour on my hands and on my feet because I think green shows that I can do it even

though the viral load was very high. I can do anything, nothing can stop me, even if the person was older than me. I can do it because I will have knowledge so that the child can suppress the viral load

The small hearts are the love I showed to the child. When I first visited the child, she was just playing alone without friends. She just thought that if one is HIV positive they do not play with others. To default would be the best so that she could die because there was nothing she could do. **The love I gave to the child and the support motivated the child so that she could continue to take her medication.**

I did have a participant who passed away. I felt very sad. When I first I visited him we were not that close, but as time went by we became close. When I heard that the child had passed away and also that the child had a disability, I felt sorry for him. At first I felt that there was something I was doing wrong as I did my work. I asked myself, "did I fail this participant?" and would I be able to help others if I failed him? So I had lots of questions on my mind. But the support I got from my other workmates and aunt helped me feel motivated and strong.

Pink Bear

I chose the name Pink Bear because I love the colour pink and also the animal, it's so enormous and so big. So that's part of me, I am a bear and I am very enormous. I will start by the colours that I painted. The light green gives hope. You get motivation that you can do the job that you set out to do. When my mentor gave me my participant with the highest viral load I was like "seriously!!!, am I going to do this job correctly like she wants me to?" She encourages us to work hard and I kept telling myself that I have to be strong no matter what, so that's the tears. I visited my participant a couple times and managed to build the relationship with her. She told me her story, her background. At first, when she disclosed her background to me I did not show tears in front of her cos I did not want her to feel that this girl is oohhh totally something else. But when I was home I was like, why? I really felt empathy for the participant for what she told me about her story and I cried. **I also felt that I have to be strong as a woman to help this child, cos as I look at myself, I was helped by others so how can I not support my peer?** With the support and the care from our mentor and the team, I was able to.



So this heart is a heart but it is broken. It was broken because my participant seemed to be so stubborn. When I would send reminders on her phone she would just cut the phone. I asked myself am I doing something wrong to this girl? I am doing my best to help her. But as time went by we were clearly getting together. **She was telling me that she was motivated by my appearance because she never thought that when one was HIV positive they could have a good healthy life. She was just thinking that this is the end of her life.** She has a twin brother who is negative while she is positive so she felt like, "why me?" I started to motivate her to not think about that, but to have a positive mind so that your life can go on with the support. Also I managed to book a date with her to see the psychologist at Zvandiri centre. Lucky enough, her parents managed to tell me that there was a great change in her attitude towards her medication and at school as well. At times when I visited, though, she would tell people to tell me that she was not home when she was not in the mood to see me, but I never backed down. I did my home visits and my SMS reminders. **You can see that in my picture there are butterflies. They will be flying on blooming flowers and giving me hope in my job and that will give me joy. I am now ok and happy that I can see greatness in the job that I am doing.**

